

## Tell Me the Stories – Abraham

### **Week 4, Genesis Chapter 17 & 18** **Isaac Part 1**

**Recap:** This week has us reading Chapter 17 again. We looked at it when we looked at Covenant. We are not going to look in depth for the purpose of the Bible study. I invite you to re-read chapter 17 again looking specifically of Isaac and the response that Abraham has.

**All Age Question:** Do you believe all the promises that have been made to you? How do you decide which promises to believe and which ones not to believe?

#### **Isaac is a Covenantal Promise**

Read Chapter 17:1-27

After Abraham & Sarah receive new names and the covenant they are told that they will have a child between them! I think we would all do the same thing that Abraham & Sarah do. A 99 year old man and a 90 year old woman having a baby? Laughter. God takes the laughter and instead of being offended or correcting them, tells them to name this promised son Isaac, which means laughter. Abraham is also told that Isaac too will be included in the covenant and that it has no expiration date.

**All Age Question:** How do we respond to things that do not seem possible?

#### **Genesis 18**

Read Genesis 18:1-15.

A reminder that for the purposes of this series we are skipping the stories that do not directly connect to the story of Abraham & Sarah. Chapter 18:17-33 deal with Sodom & Gomorrah. We do learn some interesting things about Abraham & God but we will look at it another time.

We do not know how much time has elapsed since the end of chapter 17. All that we do know for sure is that Sarah is not pregnant and that apparently Abraham

did not share the promise for her to have a child with Sarah's response. Now many people are critical of Sarah's disbelief and laughter. In fact Sarah's response is nearly the same as Abraham's in chapter 17. Neither time did God speak harshly but was firm that the promise remains. In chapter 17 we learn the name of the child to come will be Isaac which means laughter. We do not know why Sarah lied but she did.

As much as this story is about the promise of Isaac, which happens in chapter 21, we also learn about hospitality and what is expected of us. Scholars have found both biblical & nonbiblical parallels that combine birth announcement & hospitality. We certainly see it in the Gospel of Matthew with the birth of Jesus and the Magi appearing. Scholars hold that the 3 strangers are God with 2 angelic attendants. There are many connections in the New Testament but welcoming strangers is the same as welcoming God. When we move to the story of Jacob & Rebekah we will again see men/angels.

Yahweh has assumed human form and Abraham welcomes these strangers without knowing they are divine. The hospitality that Abraham follows a specific protocol: seeing, running to meet, honoring, inviting, refreshing, preparing & serving.

**Question:** How do we welcome friends? Family? Strangers?

### **Announcement**

So Sarah is at least in ear shot of visitors and hears that she is to have a child. She knows that she has been unable to have a child, she also knows that according to physical requirements that she is no longer able to do that. It is also helpful to remember that Sarah's disbelief is similar to others who receive news that they are to have a child, (i.e. Mary).

**All age question:** Who else in scripture responds surprised that they will have a child?

### **What do these stories tell us about God?**

God fulfills promises. Continuing from the previous chapter, Sarah's illusive child will be coming soon – the stranger tells them that he will be back within a year. This is not like previous promises with no timeline. This story also causes us to ask the question: "is anything too hard for the Lord?" The easy answer would be to say no – nothing is too hard for God but we fail to account for the promises of God

that God will not do certain things again. If we say yes, then God is not the creator of the world. We get so caught up in black & white thinking that we fail to consider that answers can be both. What happens when we simply allow the mystery to fill us?

**Question:** What have you learned about God in these chapters?

**Prayer:** God Almighty, don't stop working in us and through us when we are struggling. Help us when we struggle so that we can live into the promises you've made for us. Amen.