

“The Last Laugh” (Genesis 21:1-21)

Two young girls were talking and one said she had ten pennies. The other girl looked at her hand and only saw five. So she said, “You only have five pennies.” The first girl replied, “I have five and my father told me he would give me five more tonight. So I have ten.” This little girl understood that her father’s promise was as good as done.¹

Our heavenly Father has a passion for you and me to become like this little girl. He longs for us to take Him at His Word and trust that His promises are as good as done.² Unfortunately, we are a bit cynical. We live in an era of unfulfilled promises. Nations sign important treaties and then break them at will. Married couples show little regard for their wedding vows. Employers promise one thing and deliver another. At times it seems that no one can be trusted—no one is honest—no one keeps his word. Thus, we have a sarcastic phrase for our jaded skepticism: “Promises, promises!”

In Genesis 21:1-21, we will be challenged with a truthful phrase: *God always performs what He promises*. Therefore, we can trust in God because He is faithful, powerful, sovereign, and compassionate.

1. Trust in God because He is faithful and powerful (21:1-7). The events of 21:1-7 can be seen in three different dimensions.³ In 21:1-2, we see the divine dimension in the birth of Isaac. Verses 3-5 record the response of Abraham to the birth of his son. Finally, in 21:6-7, we have the jubilation of Sarah over the arrival of the long-awaited child, who is the joy of her life.⁴

In 21:1-2, we see the divine dimension. Moses writes, “**Then the LORD took note⁵ of Sarah⁶ as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.**” After 25 years, God fulfills His Word to Abraham and Sarah—the miracle child is born (cf. 17:16; 18:14). Moses declares, “**Then the LORD took note of Sarah**” (21:1a). This phrase focuses on God’s supreme care and concern. Other translations render this phrase: He “visited” her (*NET, ESV, NKJV*) or “was gracious” to her (*NIV*). So here we see God’s grace and compassion showcased. Notice the phrase “**the LORD**” is repeated twice in the first verse. The point is that this is all God’s work. In addition to God’s grace, there are three important truths that will build our confidence in the Lord.

- ***You can trust God’s Word.*** Three times in these two verses there is a reference to God’s Word: “**as He had said**” (21:1), “**as He had promised**” (21:1), and “**of which God had spoken**” (21:2). It may have taken 25 years for this promise to come to pass but the Lord did for Sarah what He had promised—just as He always does. But the promise of a son was not fulfilled because Abraham was perfect in his obedience...he wasn’t. The promise was fulfilled because God was faithful to His Word.
- ***You can trust God’s power.*** The birth of Isaac was a precise, empirical validation of God’s power. God defied nature and biology. He intervened in the bodies of Abraham and Sarah and performed a miracle. God still performs miracles today, yet many of us are not seeking God’s supernatural intervention. We are trying to control the outcome of our situations.

Have you ever seen a “belt-and-suspenders” man? A “belt-and-suspenders” man is someone who wears both a belt and a pair of suspenders to hold his pants up. That way even if his belt breaks, he is still covered. In other words, he has an extremely cautious approach to life. He likes to have a strategy to deal with every possible problem before it occurs.⁷

While this may seem to make logical sense in the natural realm, God wants us to live out a supernatural existence. He wants us to trust in His miraculous power instead of always trying to cover all of our bases.

- ***You can trust God's timing.*** I know some people who are never on time. Getting somewhere on time is an impossibility for them. Not so with God. He is never early...He is never late...He is always right on time. In the case of Abraham and Sarah, God did what He promised, not a year early or a year late, not a day early or a day late.⁸ Now God does not operate on our timetables. Our wristwatches or palm pilots don't rule Him. His timing may be personally inconvenient for us and it may not make sense, but it is always **"at the appointed time."**⁹

This means there is no point in fretting, fussing, and fuming when God does not operate according to our schedule. How much better to say, "Lord, Your will be done in Your own time and in Your own way" (Matt 6:10). Today, why not implore the Lord for new strength and divine wisdom. Patience is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22). But for patience to grow, it must be tested. I have found that God repeatedly puts me in situations that require a great deal of patience. So why not just join in God's work instead of making yourself miserable?

These three truths demonstrate that *God always performs what He promises*. His Word is timeless. However, a note of caution is in order. Not all of the Bible's promises are applicable to all people. There are at least three questions you should ask before you decide to appropriate one of God's promises.¹⁰

- ***Is the promise universal in scope?*** A promise is universal when words like "whoever" or "anyone" are used. In Romans 10:13, Paul writes, "For 'whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Another example is Luke 9:23-24: "And He [Jesus] was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.'" Such universal promises are held out to anyone—anytime—anywhere, who follow their advice. When you find such a promise underline it. You may want to underline the promise in a unique color so you can easily find it as you page through your Bible.
- ***Is the promise personal in nature?*** A specific promise given to someone else is not necessarily meant for you. For example, consider God's Word to Paul in Acts 18:9b-10: "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." Genesis 15:13-16 holds another promise with a clearly marked nametag: "God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.'" It's tempting to claim the comfort intended for someone else's ear, but hoping in promises that were never made to you only invites disappointment.
- ***Is the promise conditional?*** Some promises are dependent upon personal action. That is, *if* you fulfill the condition, the promise will follow. James 4:10 is one of those promises: "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." The condition here is to humble ourselves before God. If and when we do this, the Lord will exalt us.

Another example is Philippians 4:19, where Paul writes, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” While many Christians quote this verse, this is not an unconditional, blanket promise, for the context makes it clear that this is dependent upon generous financial giving (4:13-18). So if you note a condition, make it your goal to obey God’s Word so that you can enjoy His promise.

In 21:3-5, Moses picks up Abraham’s response: **“Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.”**¹¹ **Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.**” Verses 3-4 emphasize Abraham’s obedience. The key phrase is **“as God had commanded him.”** Upon the birth of Isaac, Abraham immediately obeyed by calling the boy **“Isaac”** (21:3; cf. 17:19).¹² Isaac means, “he laughs” or “may He [God] smile.” The name Isaac was to stand out on the pages of history as a constant reminder to the world that, on the one hand, God’s promises are no laughing matter. On the other hand, this was a promise that was going to be a “laughing matter”—a hilarious event because of its impossibility from a human perspective.¹³ Abraham also obeyed God by circumcising his son **“when he was eight days old”** (21:4). This was God’s command to Abraham and His covenant with him (see 17:7-14).

Verse 5 concludes by emphasizing Abraham’s age (cf. 17:1, 24). The writer of Hebrews says that Abraham was “as good as dead” (11:12). And you may think you’re old! When Abraham could have been drawing Social Security payments for 35 years, he became a parent. And at the age of 113 he would enter into the teenage years with his son. Talk about challenging times!

In 21:6-7, the scene shifts to Sarah who says, **“God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.’ And she said, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’”** I imagine that every time Abraham and Sarah called “laughter” in for supper, they remembered how God had turned their laughter of disbelief to laughter of joy! Sarah becomes a ninety-year-old, nursing mother and Abraham becomes a father at 100! What a happy ending!¹⁴

[As is often the case in life, after a mountaintop experience, one usually descends into the valley. This section records another crisis in the story of Abraham. This is one the strangest and saddest portions of the Bible. Yet, in this section we learn that we can...]

2. Trust in God because He is sovereign and compassionate (21:8-21).¹⁵ In 21:8-9, Moses writes, **“The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned** [approximately three years after his birth, cf. 1 Sam 1:22-25]. **Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking”** (lit. “Isaacing”).¹⁶ Fourteen years earlier, Hagar had given birth to Ishmael and for most of the intervening period Abraham had treated Ishmael as the heir. By now Ishmael was a teenager (15 or 16). As a growing and alert teenager, he in no way would miss the message he was hearing. His parents had often told him that he was the promised seed and now he gradually began to realize that his folks were in error. They had deceived him as well as themselves. Bitterness and anger began to well up in Ishmael as Isaac, little by little, began to replace him.¹⁷ And no doubt the great feast and the glad speeches in Isaac’s honor caused these feelings of bitterness to reflect themselves in ridicule and persecution (21:9; cf. Gal 4:29). What he did and how he did it, we can only conjecture. But one thing is sure: Ishmael’s jealousy turned into mockery.¹⁸

Therefore, Sarah forcefully gave Abraham an ultimatum: **“Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.’ The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son. But God said to Abraham,¹⁹ ‘Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid;²⁰ whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.”** (21:10-13).²¹ Sarah was ticked off! She doesn’t want to share her husband with her servant girl. Sarah recognizes that it is impossible for a man to enter into an intimate relationship with a woman and then simply walk away. The relationship that Abraham had with Hagar was more than just physical. Abraham and Hagar became one. Sex is more than a physical act; it is a spiritual act that affects the mind, emotions, and soul. The evidence of the sexual union between Abraham and Hagar was Ishmael. Not only did Sarah not want to share her husband, she also does not want to share Isaac with Ishmael. Sarah recognizes that Isaac is the promised seed (Rom 9:6-9), so she doesn’t want anything or anyone to adversely affect him.

Of course, all of this **“distressed”** Abraham (21:11-12). Yet, God reassured Abraham that He was divinely guiding Sarah’s counsel.²² Husband, your wife is God’s gift to you (see 2:18). She is to be treated as a treasure—like any valuable gift. Draw on her wisdom and unique perspective. Nurture and facilitate her. You and your family will be blessed as a result.²³ Wife, when you speak to your husband do so with self-control. Follow Peter’s words and exude a “gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet 3:4).

In 21:14, Moses records these painful words: **“So Abraham rose early in the morning²⁴ and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder,²⁵ and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.”**²⁶ This parting must have been excruciating.²⁷ I’m sure that Abraham never dreamed that sleeping with Hagar would lead to so much heartache and confusion. In fact, I’m sure he justified it in his own mind as the best way to make his wife happy and also to “help” God keep His promise. But it didn’t work out that way. Sarah was wrong to suggest the idea and Abraham was doubly wrong to act on it. If he had been the proper kind of spiritual leader, so much heartache would have been avoided.

When we compromise our standards, lower our convictions, or when we try to take a moral or ethical shortcut, it never works out in the end. Choices have consequences...and sometimes they are painful. As believers, we need to learn this lesson well. We also need to make sure that our children and grandchildren learn this lesson early in life. Choices have consequences. When we sin and confess that sin we are forgiven but the consequences of those choices often carry on.²⁸ Please don’t learn this lesson the hard way. Determine today that you will learn from the experiences of Abraham and Sarah (Rom 15:4). Do not sow your wild oats and then pray for a crop failure. It is unlikely to happen.

Now back to our story. In 21:15-16, we read: **“When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, ‘Do not let me see the boy die.’ And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.”** Here we find the first record of a single mom in history.²⁹ Like other single moms, she is without child support. All that she was given was a few gallons of water and a picnic lunch. She is now at the end of her rope. So she lifts up her voice and cries.³⁰ Maybe you can relate to Hagar.

In 21:17-19, we read these touching words: **“God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.’ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water;³¹ and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.”**

Notice, it was not Hagar's cries that arrested God's attention, but the boy's. It is no coincidence that the name "Ishmael" means "God hears" (cf. 16:11). As a descendant of Abraham, Ishmael was the object of God's special care. His cries brought divine intervention. God loves children and He also desires to be the God of the outcast, the rejected, the abused, and the dying.³²

The following Scriptures powerfully reiterate the character of God:

- Psalm 68:5-6: "A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation. God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, only the rebellious dwell in a parched land."
- Isaiah 54:5: "For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth."
- Psalm 34:18: "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

When you have come to the end of your own resources, and you sit down to sob, remember God has a lot of options left—He hears, He calls, and He opens.³³ I love the fact that Hagar saw the well that had been there all along. Only her tears and her fears kept her from seeing it. God does provide but often we don't see it. Often, we're too busy crying or complaining. We're not looking with any hope or faith that God provides.

Those of you who are being emotionally or physically abused and continue in the relationship because you are afraid of the financial, emotional, and physical wilderness, pay attention to Hagar's situation. Even though she suffered greatly, her need for support was supplied (17-21). God did not forget Hagar. Nor did He forget His promise to greatly multiply her descendants (16:10). God had compassion on Hagar's plight and became like a father to Ishmael.

Doug Edmonds, the elder chairman at our previous church, loved to say, "God provides." He even signs his emails and letters that way. Do you believe God's provides? Single mom, can God meet your needs? Wife who is married to an unbeliever, can God be your husband? Can He provide for you? Child or teenager who has been victimized by divorce, can God provide? Yes, a thousands times, yes!

Our story closes in 21:20-21 with these encouraging words: "**God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.**" God demonstrates His sovereignty and His compassion. Moses says that "**God was with the lad.**" Some of you have watched a son or daughter make wrong decisions and choices. That child moved in destructive directions. He or she walked away from God. You watched your child go into the desert, and you desperately wanted to stop him or her. You knew there was nothing you could do. Your heart was broken, like the heart of Abraham. But may I remind you: (1) God hears your cry, (2) He can open a way in the life of your wayward child, and (3) He is with your child.³⁴ You can trust God because He is a sovereign and compassionate God.

Since the time our children were young, we have always read to them *The Chronicles of Narnia*, these wonderful children's stories about the magical land of Narnia. In the second book, *Prince Caspian*, Lucy enters Narnia again and sees Aslan, the great lion. She has not seen him in a long, long time, and so they have a wonderful reunion. Lucy says to Aslan, "Aslan, you're bigger now." Aslan says, "Lucy, that's because you are older. You see, Lucy, every year that you grow, you will find me bigger."³⁵

Hasn't that been the case for many of you? For many of us, every year we grow spiritually, we find the Lord bigger in His faithfulness, His power, His sovereignty, and His compassion. Why? God is always bigger than you and I could ever ask or imagine (Eph 3:19-20). Do not forget these words: God always performs what He promises. You can trust Him today. And the promises that He has given you, you can depend on all the days of your life.

Copyright © 2005 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Notes

¹ Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), Electronic Ed.

² A wonderful NT example of God's promises being as good as done is Rom 8:29-30: "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." The five words that are underlined are aorist active verbs that are accomplished facts.

³ This section that records the birth of Isaac picks up the narrative from Gen 18:10.

⁴ Robert Deffinbaugh, *Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs*. Lesson 22: What Happens When Christian's Mess Up, Genesis 21:1-34 (www.bible.org, 1997), 1.

⁵ The Hebrew word translated "took note" or "visited" (*paqad*) also appears when God intervened to save the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Gen 50:24-25; Exod 4:31) and when He ended a famine (Ruth 1:6). It also occurs when He made Hannah conceive (1 Sam 2:21) and when He brought the Jewish exiles home from Babylonian captivity (Jer 29:10). Thus its presence here highlights the major significance of Isaac's birth. Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2005), 161.

⁶ Deffinbaugh observes, "...the son seems to be given almost more for Sarah's benefit here than for Abraham's. 'The Lord,' Moses wrote, 'took note of Sarah . . . and . . . did for Sarah' (verse 1). I do not think it too far afield to suggest that Sarah wanted that son more than Abraham did. You will remember that Abraham besought God on behalf of Ishmael, seemingly to accept him as the son of promise (cf. 17:18). Neither did Abraham seem to take the promise of a son too seriously when he was willing to subject Sarah to the dangers of Abimelech's harem at the very time she was about to conceive the promised son (cf. 17:21; 18:14). And so, even though Abraham may not have had the desire for this child as much as his wife, God kept His promise." Deffinbaugh, "What Happens When Christian's Mess Up," 2.

⁷ Ian M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1999), 121.

⁸ The rescue of the enslaved children of Israel after 400 years is another fine illustration.

⁹ Ed Dobson, *Abraham: The Lord Will Provide* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 138-139.

¹⁰ Much of this material came from Charles R. Swindoll, *Abraham: The Friend of God* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1988), 103-104.

¹¹ Isaac is a wonderful picture or foreshadowing of the life of Jesus Christ:

- Both were the result of a promise.
- Both were born after a long period of waiting.
- Both mothers were assured of God's power (18:13-14; Luke 1:34, 37).
- Both were given names rich with meaning before they were born.
- Both were born at God's appointed time (21:2; Gal 4:4).
- Both births were miraculous and divinely accomplished.
- Both births were accompanied by joy (Gen 21:6; Luke 1:46-47; 2:10-11).

Pastor Bob Hallman, "A Promise Fulfilled" (Genesis 21:1-34): *Calvary Chapel Kauai* http://calvarychapel.com/kauai/teachings/genesis_pdf/gen_21_notes.pdf.

¹² Interestingly, only four other children are recorded in the Scripture as being named before birth (Ishmael, Gen 16:11; Cyrus, Isa 44:28; John the Baptist, Luke 1:13; and Jesus, Luke 1:31).

¹³ Gene A. Getz, *Abraham: Trials and Triumphs* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1976), 121.

¹⁴ Steven D. Matthewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 164.

¹⁵ Sailhamer writes, "The celebration of Isaac's coming of age was the occasion for the account of the expulsion of Ishmael. The similarities between this chapter and the events in chapter 16 can hardly escape the attention of even the casual reader. The writer's close attention to the similarities in the details of the two chapters is perhaps best explained by his frequent use of 'foreshadowing' to draw connections between important narratives. In this case the Lord's promise to Hagar (16:11-12) was recounted in a strikingly similar fashion to that of the fulfillment of the promise (vv. 18-21). The promise foreshadows the fulfillment." John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis: EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Electronic ed.

¹⁶ The word "mocking" (*tsachaq*) is an intensive form of Isaac's name—the verb "to laugh." Paul quoted part of this verse to show that only children of "promise," not "natural" children are Abraham's true descendants (Rom 9:6-8). In other words, being a physical descendant of Abraham is not a guarantee of also being his spiritual heir, a genuine believer.

¹⁷ Ishmael disdained Isaac as Hagar had despised Sarai (Gen 16:4).

¹⁸ Getz, *Abraham*, 123.

¹⁹ This is the sixth time that Abraham received a direct word from the Lord since coming to the land of Canaan.

²⁰ Previously, Hagar has been referred to as Sarah's maid, but here God calls her "your maid."

²¹ Getz writes, "Previously, Abraham had copped out as the head of the household and quickly placed the burden back on Sarah (Gen 16:6). He would not face the responsibility for his own mistake. But this time, rather than taking Sarah's advice, he faced the problem, squarely and waited on the Lord for a solution. And God did not forsake him. For in time, the Lord appeared to Abraham with a direct and confirming message." Getz, *Abraham*, 124-125.

²² It is interesting to note that while Sarah's motives may have been self-centered, God was using her to force Abraham's hand in setting aside his son born of the flesh. Another example of this is when the people of Israel asked for a king (1 Sam 8:6-9). The request displeased Samuel, but the Lord allowed it and used the king to discipline them for their rejection of Him.

²³ Charles R. Swindoll, *Abraham: The Friend of God* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1988), 112.

²⁴ Like Abimelech in Gen 20:8, Abraham rises early in the morning to carry out God's commands. The psalmist declared in Ps 119:60 "I hastened and did not delay to keep Your commandments." Rapid obedience is one of the marks of a maturing faith!

²⁵ Kaiser writes, "A number of commentators have insisted on the fact that Ishmael was placed on the shoulders of Hagar when she left. This would imply that at the time the boy was a mere infant who needed to be carried by his mother. Then in Genesis 21:15 he is spoken of as being cast or placed under a bush. Now after these interpreters have reached these conclusions about Ishmael being a mere infant, they go on to declare that this assessment is in conflict with Genesis 16:16, 17:25 and 21:5, where the boy seems to be at least thirteen or fourteen years old, and that this is the mark of multiple sources, for the texts were not edited as carefully as they should have been." Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997 [1996]), Electronic ed.

²⁶ As you look at this story, it's sobering to realize that once Abraham sent Ishmael away, he never saw him again. The deep rupture in the family was never repaired. Sarah and Hagar never became friends. And as far as we know, the only time Isaac and Ishmael ever met again was at the cave of Machpelah when they buried Abraham (25:9-10).

²⁷ Still the question remains: How could God ask Abraham to do evil if divorce is always a sin? The answer must be that divorce in this case is either not a sin or else is the lesser of two evils. See Joe M. Sprinkle, "Old Testament Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40:4 (December 1997), 535. For other instances where God apparently commanded divorce, see Deut 21:10-14 and Ezra 9-10. Since God makes the rules, He can also alter them according to His sovereign will.

²⁸ Several examples should suffice:

- The person who engages in illicit sex may face consequences of disease, pregnancy, a broken relationship or the guilt of having given away something precious.
- The person who lies has to try to rebuild the trust that was destroyed.
- The one who habitually abuses a substance has to face the consequences of the effect that substance has on their bodies and their relationships.
- The person who has (or had) abusive patterns with their family will find it difficult to establish any kind of relationship with those they have abused.
- The person who constantly feeds their mind with pornography will have a difficult time getting away from those images as they seek to live a life of purity.
- The person who has been ensnared in the insatiable desire for material things may have enormous debt to pay off.

See Rev Bruce Goettsche, "Necessary Losses" (Genesis 21:8-21): May 30, 1999:

<http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/061399.html>

²⁹ Gangel writes, "Although we do not see Hagar any more in Genesis, we may assume that this divine encounter led her into a life of service, and perhaps even sacrifice in raising her son. Her influence continued into his adulthood as she selected a wife from Egypt for her son." Kenneth O. Gangel, *Genesis: Holman Old Testament Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 186.

³⁰ Pritchard comments, "Many people reading this story have wondered about the fairness of God. On one level, it's easy to understand why Sarah and Hagar didn't get along and it's also easy to see why Ishmael and Isaac probably wouldn't grow up to be best friends. But why would God literally order Abraham to cast off Ishmael and Hagar in such a seemingly cold way?"

There are two answers to that question. One is that God knew something Abraham didn't know. He knew he (God) was going to take special care of Ishmael out in the desert. God never intended to see Hagar and Ishmael die in the hot sun. The other answer is that God wanted to protect Isaac because he was the promised seed of Abraham (21:12). As long as Ishmael remained in the house, he would be a threat to God's plan. He had to go, even though it meant hardship and deep sorrow and even though he and Hagar probably never understood why it happened. They felt rejected by Sarah and Abraham—as indeed they were.” See Dr. Ray Pritchard, “God's Good vs. God's Best” Genesis 21:1-21: <http://www.calvarymemorial.com/sermons/SMdisplay.asp?id=313>

³¹ Often in the pages of the OT, a spring or well of water is a symbol of spiritual salvation as well as physical deliverance (Isa 12:3; Jer 2:13). Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, H. Wayne House, eds. *New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson, 1999), 42.

³² Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002 [1988]), 381.

³³ Dobson, *Abraham*, 143.

³⁴ Dobson, *Abraham*, 143.

³⁵ Preaching Today Citation: “Rejoicing in Our Suffering,” *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 74.