

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Trouble in the Family
Genesis 16:1-16

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Youth leader should provide slips of paper and pencils for participants.

Worship Time Leader:

Prepare copies of the scripture found at the end of this session for each participant in Worship Time.

Have preschoolers or younger children hand those out as your group gathers for the Worship Time experience.

Music Sources:

We are One in the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #387; CCLI #14459

The Household of Faith, CCLI #11043

Let Everything That Has Breath, *WOW Worship*, 2003; CCLI #3220205

The Family of God, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #393; CCLI #17023

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Trouble in the Family*****Focal Text**

Genesis 16:1-16

Background Text

Genesis 16:1-16

Main Idea

God is present to help even in the midst of tangled family relationships.

Question to Explore

Where is God when trouble comes in families?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe how God ministered in the troubles of Abraham's family and how we can be more receptive to God's gracious care in our family relationships.

Gathering together:Sing, **We are One in the Bond of Love****First thoughts:**

Family situations sometimes make us laugh. Anne was the youngest in the family with four older brothers. The oldest two brothers were in their early twenties when Anne was born. Their mother had died in child birth many years before. The second family had two boys and then Anne was gladly received into the family. However, the oldest boys had themselves started families and related more as benevolent uncles than older brothers. Or so it was thought until Anne recently remarried after a seven year period following the death of her husband. Jim, the oldest brother, called David, the younger brother. The conversation went something like this.

Jim: "David, do you know Anne is getting married?"

David: "Well, yes, I do although I don't know when the wedding is to be and it is too far for me to travel to be there."

Jim: "Well, do you know anything about this man she's marrying? Who is he? Where did he come from? What does he do for a vocation?"

David: "No, I don't know much, but, Jim, Anne is almost 60 years old. I guess she can marry anyone she pleases."

A long silence followed.

Jim: "Sixty years old! Well, I guess you are right. I had not thought it through like that."

Jim had grown older, but his younger sister was still his younger sister and he felt protective of her. The dynamics of family life have an incredibly enduring influence on us; they sometimes slip up when we are least aware.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Trouble in the Family

Focal Text

Genesis 16:1-16

Background Text

Genesis 16:1-16

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Question to Explore

Where is God when trouble comes in families?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe how God ministered in the troubles of Abraham's family and how we can be more receptive to God's gracious care in our family relationships.

Introduction to your personal study:

How many times have you made a decision based on what seemed well and good at the time only to learn later that your decision has brought about heartache? The story is told of Kathy Boudin, daughter of a famous lawyer, who was raised in a wealthy home. She attended college with plans to become a lawyer, but along the way got involved in a revolutionary group during the 1960's. They denounced the government and sought radical solutions to civil problems. Secret bombings took place and people were killed. Kathy spent eleven years as a fugitive from justice, but in the end she returned to her roots and the government system she had scorned. For her part in the crimes she spent many years in prison. Rebellion is costly behaviour. Many reject and rebel against God's system of authority as well; the consequences can be disastrous.

Background:

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Trouble in the Family – 09-25-03-en

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Abraham had the promise of God that his offspring would number in the millions and be a blessing to all the nations. However, as years went by, and Abraham and Sarah became elderly, he became anxious about the details of the promise. He began to wonder if there might be other ways of bringing the prophecy to pass, such as designating an heir from among the slave children born in his home. God reassured Abraham that it would be his own flesh and blood that would carry on his lineage.

Focusing on the Meaning:

16:1,2 Sarah continued to grow older and remained childless. This condition was a great tragedy as far as the Hebrews were concerned. They equated barrenness with an absence of God's blessing. To Sarah, it was a continued frustration and shame. Because of her shame and lack of faith, she blamed God for her childless state. She began to devise a plan of her own involving a young slave whom she had brought with her from Egypt. She encouraged Abraham to take Hagar as his concubine and create a family with her.

16:3 After many years of waiting for an heir, Abraham agreed with Sarah's plan, a human attempt to solve their problem, and took Hagar as his concubine. This was a usual, legal practice among the people of that time. It was morally acceptable to have multiple wives and concubines to provide heirs. Since Sarah was unable to bear children, she could use a slave to bear children for her by her husband. Such children would be considered to belong to the head of the household, not the slave. Abraham's lack of patience and faith in God at this point in his life caused him to pursue a course that was inadequate, and in the long run, very troublesome.

16:4 When Abraham slept with Hagar she conceived a child. However, when she realised that she was pregnant, she became haughty and contemptuous of her mistress Sarah. Perhaps she felt that she was providing something to the master that Sarah was unable to, and that Abraham would favour her more than his first wife as time went by.

16:5 Immediately Sarah complained to Abraham about the abuse. The trouble escalated between husband and wife as she even blamed Abraham for letting Hagar get out of control.

16:6 Abraham told Sarah to do with Hagar whatever she wished. Obviously, Sarah took out her wrath and frustration on Hagar and, from then on, treated her so badly that Hagar decided to run for her life, escaping from her misery.

16:7,8 Hagar headed south toward Kadesh. Perhaps she was trying to make her way back to her homeland of Egypt, a journey of more than two hundred miles through the desert. As she stopped to rest near a spring almost halfway along the trek, an angel encountered her and asked where she was coming from and where she was going. Her reply was that she was fleeing from Sarah.

16:9 The angel's advice to her was to return to her mistress Sarah and be a submissive servant.

16:10 The focus of the passage then turns to Hagar's unborn child. The angel promises Hagar that she too will have uncountable numbers of descendants.

16:11,12 The child's name was to be Ishmael meaning "God hears". Hagar was assured that God was aware of her situation and was concerned for her and her baby. The angel's prediction that Ishmael would be a wild and hostile man proved to be true. There have been many years of struggle between the descendants of Abraham and those of Ishmael. We can only speculate as to the reasons for this. Perhaps growing up amidst discord, rivalry, and rejection in his family caused Ishmael to become a wild donkey of a man.

16:13,14 Hagar received a rare insight in the midst of this situation. She understood that God is a God who sees and cares for individuals, even an outcast foreign slave girl. She named that place of encounter Beer Lahai Roi meaning 'God who sees'. God is certainly aware of suffering and anguish in people's lives – he identifies with us and ministers to us in times of distress. Not only was God with her, but he also provided support for her and the promise of blessing for her descendants.

16:15,16 In obedience, Hagar returned to Abraham's household and in time gave birth to a son. Abraham, who was by now eighty-six years old, named his son Ishmael just as the angel had instructed.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

In this passage we see what happens when individuals try to work out God's plan according to their own agenda, rather than patiently waiting for God to reveal his perfect plan. Sarah thought of an idea to give Abraham an heir, but it resulted in turmoil and strife. In spite of their errors, God continued to work with this family, and eventually used them to bless all the nations of the world.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Trouble in the Family

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Genesis 16:1-16

Background Text

Genesis 16:1-16

Main Idea

God is present to help even in the midst of tangled family relationships.

Question to Explore

Where is God when trouble comes in families?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe how God ministered in the troubles of Abraham's family and how we can be more receptive to God's gracious care in our family relationships.

Connect with Life:

Invite the group to share ways we tend to get ahead of God by rushing to our own agendas. If they are comfortable doing so, have them share about the personal pain that has come out of hasty decisions.

After the discussion, tell the group: At the end of our Bible study, we will return to your comments, so try to remember what you have said here at the beginning.

Guide the Study:

IMPORTANT NOTE TO THE BIBLE STUDY LEADER: Be aware that barrenness (a woman's inability to have a child) might be a sorrow that some in your group may have suffered; be very sensitive as you discuss these biblical issues.

Explain to the group: In the early days of Old Testament history, the Hebrew language lacked a specific word for "family" as we understand the concept of family today—with a father, mother, and children as the basic family "unit". Even now we sometimes refer to everyone kin to us as our family. We may even include some who are close to us but would not actually fit the legal definition of family.

Regardless, it was as true then as it is today that the children of a parent would carry a high place of honour in the family. In those days, sons would be given special privileges. Usually the eldest son would inherit most if not all of the assets from the father. But the youngest might be the most cared for because he was the last of the children.

In the time of Abraham, terms such as "those within your gates or tent" were often used to define a family. Such a term meant that the head of a clan within a tribe was responsible for the welfare of all those who were in his blood family plus servants, slaves, and others.

It might even include some who were given brief hospitality while traveling through the area. Wives (often more than one), concubines, and other women and children had various status levels within the clan group, but all would have been considered a responsibility to and by the clan's leader and head.

Have someone read verses 1-3.

Urge the group to express opinions on why Sarah might have suggested this plan to her husband.

Now ask: Do you believe Sarah was bitter towards God because she was childless?

Help your group to discuss why the plan may have seemed perfectly legitimate and appropriate given the culture they lived in. (This is covered in the Teacher Preparation material).

Invite discussion as to why Abraham was so easily persuaded to listen to Sarah's idea.

Request a different person to read verses 4 through 6.

Encourage the group share ideas on this thought: Try to imagine Hagar's motivation for despising her mistress. Could she have had a different attitude in that culture and time?

Now seek an answer to this: How did Abraham get blamed for the turmoil as Sarah turned on Hagar?

Call for a person to read verses 7 through 16.

Ask the group: Why did God instruct Hagar to return and submit to Sarah in verse 9?

Urge the participants to share ideas of what else they see of importance in these verses (vs. 7-16).

Invite the members to respond with their ideas regarding the phrase spoken by Hagar ***“You are the God who sees me”***.

Now seek a brief discussion to this question: How should this knowledge influence our thinking as we go through every circumstance of our lives?

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Have the group think back to the situations they mentioned at the outset of the study.

Invite a few to share ways in which God has ministered to their families in spite of bad choices they may have made.

Ask: How we can be more receptive to God's gracious care in our family relationships.

Conclude with prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Trouble in the Family **Genesis 16:1-16**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Troublesome Family Members

This Old Testament story may seem very foreign to the realities of your life as a young person. On the piece of paper given to you, write the name of the most troublesome member of your family. Name a specific annoyance that recently occurred. How did you react to it? How might you have reacted to it if you had stopped to ask God to help you meet the challenge? Destroy the paper as you complete the exercise.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Trouble in the Family***
Genesis 16:1-16**Beginning the Service:**

To the leader of the Worship Time: Have preschoolers or younger children hand out the copies [already prepared] of the scripture found on the last page of this session.

Sing: **The Household of Faith**

Let Everything That Has Breath

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

A Kyrgyz believer has been leading home groups and churches for ten years. As his faith has matured, he has been challenged by Scripture to help new believers continue to grow in their relationship to Jesus Christ and to be “ambassadors” for Jesus in their communities. He trained twelve men to recognize spiritually receptive people and to work with them to start churches. These twelve have now returned to their own churches and are excitedly showing their members how to “naturally” identify receptive persons and begin new group studies that lead to house churches. Pray for those twelve to faithfully teach others to obey God completely and serve him wholly. Also pray for churches to multiply in Kyrgyzstan. Pray that homechurchonline.com resources which are available in Russian might aid in these house churches.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

The Best Solutions are God's Solutions

The role of women is still one of the most divisive issues the world faces today. The role of child bearing is still an important part of many women's identity. The fact of childlessness is for some women life's great grief. Sharing a husband's love with other wives is still a reality for women in many parts of the world. Can we read today's old, old story and make application to today's high tech world?

Several potent sentences stand out in today's scripture reading. Sarah, in her desperation to have a family says, ***"Perhaps I can build a family through her."***

Sarah's faith was weak at this point. We can understand how that would be so. God's promise to Abraham to bless him with many descendants had occurred some time before. Sarah waited as years passed and she grew older. She could see no human resolution to her problem but to let her servant bear the child she could not bear.

How often we seek a human solution to our problems even though God has clearly told us to wait on him. We may worry unnecessarily about finances for our children's education. We may fret about care for elderly parents. We may spend extraordinary amounts of time figuring out ways to extend our retirement income. These are important issues and waiting on the Lord does not mean that we do not plan wisely and spend prudently. These, however, are among the issues for which we must ultimately trust God to guide and provide. How real Sarah's need to take action seems to us when we compare her attitude to our own in difficult circumstances.

Sarah's plan did not go as she had thought. ***"When she (Hagar) knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress."*** What a tragic statement. It was understood in the culture in which Sarah and Hager lived that should a servant or a concubine bear a child, the child belonged to the father and he could, if he chose, have his first wife claim it as her own.

Sarah reacted very negatively to Hagar's attitude of superiority. Sarah had undoubtedly lived all of her married life suffering the proud remarks of other women who were able to bear children. But she would not meekly accept such remarks from the woman who belonged to her. She had given Hager to Abram, but she saw it only as a means of getting what she wanted. Her selfish attitude had not considered how Hagar would feel.

Hager ran away from the mistreatment she received from Sarai. We can only imagine what she was thinking. Did she expect to make it safely back to Egypt her homeland some 200 miles distant? Did she think Abram would come to the rescue of her son and his? Did she imagine that Sarai would grieve for having treated her badly?

Perhaps all of these things played a part in the complex emotions she was feeling.

The angel of the Lord told her, ***“Go back to your mistress and submit to her. I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.”***

We have no knowledge of Hagar’s relationship to the Lord before this incident. She was an Egyptian maidservant. Apparently, during their stay in Egypt, Abram and Sarai bought her as a servant to Sarai. We have no reason to believe she had ever been poorly treated. She must have understood something about the God that Abram and Sarai worshipped.

We are glad that Sarai’s negative treatment of her servant did not cause her to reject that God. Instead, this negative experience led her to a new and very personal discovery of her relationship to God. ***“You are the God who sees me, for she said, I have now seen the One who sees me.”***

Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. He was 99 years old when the visitors came to his tent and promised that within the year Sarah would bear a child.

We have no word as to the relationship Hagar and Sarah had during those fourteen years, but we do know that when Isaac was born to Sarah, she once again was jealous of Ishmael and of Hagar. They were sent away and, in the desert, Hagar despaired until God spoke to her and said ***“Lift the boy up and take him by the hand for I will make him into a great nation.”***

These are two women in one family who with difficulty lived together for a number of years.

Family life often does not work out as we anticipate. Sometimes elderly parents come to live with a family. Often young adult children must return, for financial reasons, to their parents’ homes. Blended families must learn to love and appreciate one another. New and unasked for, siblings, grandparents, and others automatically join blended families. Grandparents often are raising grandchildren because their children cannot raise their own children.

What words from the Genesis account of Sarai and Hagar may fit today’s difficult circumstances?

Sarai’s words, ***“Perhaps I can build a family through her”*** remind us of the futility of seeking a solution on our own. Lonely people often seek companionship in bars or on the Internet. Their desire to “build a family” may cloud their good judgement and they may enter into a relationship which God does not desire nor bless. Finding a like-minded mate will most often happen within the circle of friends, co-workers, or fellow church members who share similar values and goals.

After Hagar became pregnant, Sarai said to Abraham, “You are responsible for my suffering.” How like our human responses! It was Sarai’s idea to give Hagar to Abraham so that a child could be conceived. Like Sarai, we often blame those closest

to us for the consequences of mistakes we have made. “You are responsible for my suffering” may be said to the parent by the child who experiments with drugs, sexuality, and other risk-taking behaviour. Parents may respond with hateful words which echo the same sentiment, “You are responsible for my suffering”. Taking responsibility for the consequences of our actions is essential to family harmony, but it is, oh, so hard to achieve.

The angel of the Lord told Hagar, **“Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”** “No, no and a thousand times no!” Hager might have replied as we do when called upon to subjugate our wishes to the good of the family as a whole. Yet any family relationship is built upon submission—the giving up of my desires for the good of the family. Spouses may be called upon to wait on personal career goals while a husband or wife finishes school or moves to a better career position. Older siblings may sacrifice time and energy to care for younger siblings. Recently retired adults may spend significant time and energy caring for aging parents. They may spend travel and retirement funds carefully saved to help an adult child meet a crisis.

Hagar, in the midst of her desperation, heard the Lord and recognized him as having seen her. This amazing thought speaks to us in the midst of the daily trials of family life. When we are discouraged and tired, we can say with Hagar, **“You are the God who sees me”**. **“I have now seen the One who sees me”**. Even in the ordinary, everyday tasks of family life we live with the wonderful truth that we have seen the One who sees us—not an impersonal, rule-giving, demanding God, but a loving, heavenly Father who sees us—each one—every moment of every day.

Call to Commitment:

(Lead in this prayer)

“Father, we ask that this week as we go about the tasks of family life that we will know that you see us and know us and you are standing ready to strengthen us for the task. We commit each one of our family members—our parents, our siblings, our extended family near and far to your care.”

Concluding the Service:

Have the congregation stand and read together the following commitment to God's solutions in life: (Use the copies you have handed out—made from the final page of this session).

***Show me your ways, O Lord,
teach me your paths;***

***Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you all day long.***

***He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.***

***All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful
for those who keep the demands of his covenant.***

Psalms 25:4,5, 9, 10

Prepare copies of the following scriptures for each participant in Worship Time as a conclusion to your worship service.

***Show me your ways, O Lord,
teach me your paths;***

***Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you all day long.***

***He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.***

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