

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*The Mystery and Wonder of Life*  
Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7

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:**

Bring a selection of pictures which make us think of the wonder and mystery of life. These may include nature scenes, animals, babies, the moon and stars, people helping others, an aged face

### **Bible Study Leader:**

**Worship Time Leader:**

**Music Sources:**

**The Majesty and Glory of Your Name**, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #57; CCLI #18871

**Majesty**, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #297; CCLI # 1527

**Wonderful, Wonderful Jesus**, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #567; CCLI #67932

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***The Mystery and Wonder of Life***

### **Focal Text**

Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7

### **Background Text**

Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-18:15; 21:1-8

### **Main Idea**

We can trust God to fulfil God's promises, however difficult or delayed they may appear to be.

### **Question to Explore**

Is anything too difficult for the Lord to do?

### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to identify and celebrate the blessings, sometimes unexpected, God has brought to them.

### **Gathering together:**

Bring a selection of pictures which make us think of the wonder and mystery of life. These may include nature scenes, animals, babies, the moon and stars, people helping others, an aged face.

### **First thoughts:**

Give each participant a picture and ask him/her to explain what thoughts and feelings the picture engenders. Explain that we are thinking today about the mystery and wonder of life. If appropriate, have these pictures displayed to form a collage representing the mystery and wonder of life.

### **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

### *The Mystery and Wonder of Life*

#### **Focal Text**

Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7

#### **Background Text**

Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-18:15; 21:1-8

#### **Main Idea**

We can trust God to fulfil God’s promises, however difficult or delayed they may appear to be.

#### **Question to Explore**

Is anything too difficult for the Lord to do?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to identify and celebrate the blessings, sometimes unexpected, God has brought to them.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

This study is close to my heart because my wife and I have not been able to have children of our own. God has led us to adopt some children and it has taken us down some roads that we could never had experienced if God had not given us the opportunity to have these children.

Later in the study we will see Sarah’s joy of having a child. I remember when each of our three children joined our family and the great joy it brought.

#### **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

In the passages that precedes our study passage we see that Sarai had sent her maidservant, Hagar, in to Abram and they had a child when Abram was 86 years old. This child was the first of the descendants of Hagar that the angel of the Lord had promised would be “too numerous to count”.

### **Focusing on the Meaning:**

**17: 15-17** The study begins with God speaking to Abram and changing his name to Abraham and Sarai’s to Sarah. The name changes may have been intended to indicate that a new chapter was to unfold in the life of Abraham and Sarah. This new chapter included a fulfilment of God’s covenant through Sarah’s child.

When God indicated that Sarah would yet bear a child, Abraham falls to the ground and laughs. He laughs for simple joy. Here is a man who is almost 100 and his wife is 90 years old. They are about to be the instruments through which God will fulfil His promise of making Abraham’s descendants as numerous as the sands on the beach. Even in Abraham’s joy he does not forget his other child, Ishmael. He asks that Ishmael also might be under God’s blessing.

When you first read this passage, it sounds like a father lovingly remembering his child. But there was more to it. It appears that Abraham’s life was at critical place. His beliefs and his evaluation of reality were bumping head on. He and his wife were older and he could not see how God could fulfil His covenant through him. He also wanted Ishmael to love God and for God to love Ishmael.

In the verses that follow, Abraham, Ishmael and all the males in his household were circumcised as a physical reminder that God had bound himself in a covenant with Abraham. This covenant included Isaac and Ishmael.

**18: 11-13** In these verses we find Abraham being hospitable to three messengers, or angels (in Hebrew it is the same word for both). The ancient culture demanded that food, drink and shelter be offered to strangers that arrived unexpectedly at your home.

Sarah’s and possibly Abraham’s, faith in God’s promise that they were going to have many descendants was very low. Sarah was listening to the conversation of the messengers. When she heard again that she was to have a child, she remembers her age and she laughs. Sarah does not laugh from joy but from disbelief. She laughs with sarcasm.

Sarah’s disbelief at time parallels our own. We hear God say that He is going to do something which we think is impossible and we disregard it or even laugh at the idea.

**18:14** This is a critical verse for all Christians to remember, “**Nothing is too hard for God to do.**” We humans think in our simple way; we think every thing has an order and everything must come in that order. Our problem is we have forgotten who set up the order. God set it up, and God can change it if he wants to.

**18:15** Here we see Sarah challenged for her action by God. Even though she tries to deny what she did, God knew she had laughed. God knows what all of us do, all the time. For some this idea of the all knowing God could be scary, but for a Christian walking down the path that God has directed, it is comforting.

**21:1-5** These verses are a passage of joy. The long awaited child is coming and the household is excited. The baby arrives and Abraham not only names the baby Isaac (which means laughter), he also follows through with circumcision as God had outlined. The circumcision signified that Isaac was born within the covenant that God had made with Abraham. The passage is the fulfilment of God’s promise to Sarah that she would have a child even though everything seemed against it.

**21:5-7** Sarah gives God the credit for bringing this child into her life. The joy that she had was not only that of a new mother but probably a little jab at those like Hagar who looked down on her when she could not have a child. Sarah was a woman free from the old stigmatism of barrenness and she was filled with happiness.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

We often hear people say, “that’s impossible”. If this passage has anything to teach us, it is that nothing is impossible for God. If God says it will happen, it will. He will do his part and we must do our part which is to “trust and obey”.

### **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)

### ***The Mystery and Wonder of Life***

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 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7

#### **Background Text**

Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-18:15; 21:1-8

#### **Main Idea**

We can trust God to fulfil God's promises, however difficult or delayed they may appear to be.

#### **Question to Explore**

Is anything too difficult for the Lord to do?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to identify and celebrate the blessings, sometimes unexpected, God has brought to them.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Open with this story:

Like many couples who apply to adopt a baby, the couple who wrote this Bible study expected a long wait for a baby. They were hoping for a daughter since they had already adopted two sons. The social worker indicated that it would be a year or more before they would get a baby.

You can imagine their surprise on the first day of school after the summer holidays when these two teachers were called by the social worker and asked “Where have you been? I have been trying to contact you. Your baby daughter is here!”

For this family it was a clear picture of the truth that nothing is impossible with God.

### **Guide the Study:**

Share this: Have you ever wanted to start a new chapter in your life? What would you change to signify that you were not the same person as before? Your name? Your location?

Have someone read Genesis 17:15-17.

Ask: What was the seemingly impossible event described in 7:15-17?

Encourage a discussion: Has God ever asked you to do something that you thought was impossible?

Have someone read Genesis 18: 1-8.

Look for opinions on this: What was behind Abraham’s lavish hospitality for these three visitors?

Now have someone read Genesis 18: 11-15.

Explain what the difference was between Abraham’s laugh in 17:17 and Sarah’s laugh in 18:13.

Create a discussion among the group with the statement: **”There is nothing too hard for the Lord.”**

Have someone read Genesis 21:1-7.

Encourage the group to imagine Sarah’s feelings when she discovered she was pregnant. Have the group share times when they have experienced such joy.

Look for an answer to: Why did Abraham have Isaac circumcised? This indicated Isaac’s place in the covenant with God.

Urge responses to this question: Has God ever given you a promise which you felt was just too outlandish to count on?

Read Genesis 21:8

Seek responses to this: In 21:5-8 what are some feelings that Sarah may have at this time? Towards God? Towards Hagar and Ishmael? Do we feel critical of Sarah for these feelings when God had just answered her prayer for a son?

Comment: We sometimes endanger our own happiness by jealousy. Sarah, like us, was on the long, long journey of learning to truly trust God to fulfill His promises.

### **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 class make a list of some people that they know that need to have a relationship with the one true living Lord. Get class members to commit to pray, for the name they have suggested every day for a year.

**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.

### ***The Mystery and Wonder of Life*** **Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7**

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.

#### **Trusting God, Trusting God's Plans**

The lesson today portrays the long journey Abraham had to fulfil God's plan for his life. Abraham was the father of Isaac and through his many descendants the father of the Israelite nation.

Think today of the reality that God has a plan for your life as well. Teenagers grapple with issues of identity. What am I and what is my place in the world?

In Genesis 17: 3-8 we read, ***“Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”***

God has a plan for you as well. Think about what you know about that plan. What talents and gifts do you have that God may want you to use in His service? What special advantages or opportunities have you had which may be a part of God's plan for you? What promise do you need to make to God today?

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***The Mystery and Wonder of Life*****Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7****Beginning the Service:**

Sing

**The Majesty and Glory of Your Name**, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #57; CCLI #18871**Majesty**, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #297; CCLI # 1527**Wonderful, Wonderful Jesus**, *The Worship Hymnal*, 2008, #567; CCLI #67932**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

Ask someone to share the following prayer need. (Make a copy from the final page of this session).

Eight states in the center of Mexico have a combined population of 22,000,000 people with less than 2% claiming to be evangelical Christians. A new sub-division out of San Juan del Rio will be called Valle Dorado. Though it seems to be in the middle of nowhere, it will soon be home to 1,500 people. Prayer walking in the area has already been accomplished and house churches are planned. Ask God for open doors to begin relationships. Pray for families moving in the area to have a hunger to know Jesus and to open their homes where neighbours can gather to study the Bible.

**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 Mystery and Wonder of Life** **Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11-15; 21:1-7**

Several years ago, a young couple awaited the birth of their second child. However, the sonogram taken at five months indicated that this child had not developed properly. During the first crucial days after conception, something had gone wrong and the neural tube had not developed properly. This condition, called anencephaly, is not compatible with life outside of the womb. The couple decided that the child had been given to them to care for so they continued with the pregnancy until the baby was delivered naturally at seven months gestation.

Sadness filled their hearts as they held the perfectly formed little boy – perfect except for the condition which made it impossible for him to live. Yet joy was present too as they held this little one within their care for such a short time. They remembered the beautiful little two-year-old girl who awaited them at home and their hearts were comforted.

Parents of the couple came quickly to the hospital room after the birth. It was two o'clock in the morning when the mother's parents arrived after a long journey. In that hospital room they found a radiant daughter and a stalwart son-in-law. In that holy moment, those grandparents understood in a new and profound way the wonder and mystery of life. Light seemed to fill the room and God's presence was so real it was as if He could be touched or as if He held the young couple in his very arms.

At the memorial service for this little one, the words from Psalm 139:13-16 brought comfort to the family.

For you created my inmost being;  
You knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.  
My frame was not hidden from you  
When I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
Your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
Were written in your book  
Before one of them came to be.

Since that time, three healthy little boys have joined this family. With each birth, the family has come to know again the amazing miracle of a healthy child and the great reality of the wonder and mystery that surrounds each birth.

Our Bible study today focused on the birth of Isaac—so long awaited by Abram and Sarai. A year earlier, the Lord had appeared to Abram and told him of the covenant He was establishing with him. God changed Abram's name to Abraham and promised him that he would have many descendants. God would be the God of Abraham and the God of his descendants.

As we think of the birth of Isaac and the birth of those children who are part of our families and our church, we are reminded of the magnificent passage in Psalm 39:14, ***"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."***

Isaac had an unusual place in the plans of God. He was Abraham's long awaited son and he would keep the covenant made between Abraham and God.

Yet, especially for Sarah, Isaac's birth was the fulfillment of God's promise, and also the timeless miracle of new birth – the amazing perfection of a new baby. And this baby was her baby.

But each one of us is important as well. The Psalmist reminds us that we are created by God – knit together in our mother's womb. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. The complexity of the human body amazes us. Modern day research on the brain almost overwhelms us with the ways in which the brain functions. When some part of the process goes wrong, learning difficulties may arise. These will impact life for the child and for the family.

Yet, most children are born with abilities that enable them to develop into healthy adults, to relate to others, to fulfil the plans ordained for them before the foundation of the earth.

Many years after the birth of Isaac we rejoice that Abraham was faithful. Genesis 18: 18-19 tells us, ***"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just."***

### **Call to Commitment:**

The title of our study today is ***The Mystery and Wonder of Life***. We have thought about Abraham and Sarah and their long wait for a child. We may have remembered

the birth of a beloved child in our own home. We may have felt grief for a child whose life was, by our measure, shortened.

We want to remember the amazing fact of our own birth and God's plan for our lives. Some are young. May you understand that God has a plan for your life and it is essentially the same plan he had for Abraham and for Isaac – you are chosen to direct your children and your household to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Others are older and your direct parenting days may be past. Yet, you too have the responsibility and the privilege of influencing your family and others to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.

### **Concluding the Service:**

Let's conclude today by bowing our heads, closing our eyes, and recommitting ourselves to fulfill God's plan for our own lives. As well, let each of us commit ourselves again to help those that God has entrusted to our care or influence to become all that God wants them to be—not to remake them over into our image—but to help them grow to be in God's image.

After a moment of prayer, simply say: "**Amen**".

**Say to the congregation:**

**May God be gracious to us and bless us**  
**and make his face shine upon us;**  
**May your ways be known on earth,**  
**Your salvation among all nations.**

**Psalm 67: 1-2**



Copy for a person to read during the time of “Praying for the World” during the **Worship Time**.

Eight states in the center of Mexico have a combined population of 22,000,000 people with less than 2% claiming to be evangelical Christians. A new sub-division out of San Juan del Rio will be called Valle Dorado. Though it seems to be in the middle of nowhere, it will soon be home to 1,500 people. Prayer walking in the area has already been accomplished and house churches are planned. Ask God for open doors to begin relationships. Pray for families moving in the area to have a hunger to know Jesus and to open their homes where neighbours can gather to study the Bible.