

INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE

Week 7

SESSION TITLE: "Failure: When We Take Charge"

FOCAL PASSAGE: (Genesis 16:1-16)

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner discover the correct way to make God-wise decisions.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Share the following true account:

"The Lives" column in *New York Times Magazine* carried a first-person account of Amy Richards and her decision to abort two of three fetuses she carried.

Richards stopped taking birth control pills because it affected her mood. Though unmarried, she and her boyfriend determined to keep a baby should there be a pregnancy. After pregnancy occurred, Richards was shocked to learn she was carrying triplets. She chronicled her reaction to the news:

My immediate response was, I cannot have triplets. I was not married; I lived in a five-story walk-up in the East Village; I worked freelance; and I would have to go on bed rest in March. I lecture at colleges, and my biggest months are March and April. I would have to give up my main income for the rest of the year. There was a part of me that was sure I could work around that. But it was a matter of, Do I want to?

I felt like: It's not the back of a pickup at 16, but now I'm going to have to move to Staten Island. I'll never leave my house because I'll have to care for these children. I'll have to start shopping only at Costco and buying big jars of mayonnaise. Even in my moments of thinking about having three, I don't think that deep down I was ever considering it.

Richards chose a procedure that administered a shot of potassium chloride into the hearts of two of the fetuses. She later delivered a healthy boy.

Ms. Richards is an abortion rights advocate, associated with Planned Parenthood, and a co-founder of a feminist organization that finances abortions, the Third Wave Foundation.

Amy Richards as told to Amy Barrett, "When One Is Enough," The Times Magazine (7-18-04)

State - Ms. Richards decided to kill two of her children because it would have been an inconvenience to have triplets. She took God's plan into her own hands.

Ask – Not sharing such a personal example how do you tend to take decisions into your own hands? (Allow time for responses)

Read – (Genesis 16:1-6) Ask members to listen for bad decisions that were made.

State - Today we are going to discuss how failure occurs when we try and make our own decisions without the guidance of God.

B. Optional Method – Share the following true account:

In Phuket, Thailand, Tilly Smith, a determined 10-year-old girl, saved her parents and dozens of fellow vacationers from the deadly tsunami because she had studied a school geography lesson, and then courageously spoke what she knew to be true.

As Tilly's family enjoyed a day at Maikhao Beach, the sea began to bubble and rush away from the shore. While the adults were merely curious, Tilly was petrified with fear.

"Mummy, we must get off the beach now!" she said. "I think there's going to be a tsunami."

The adults didn't even understand her warning until Tilly referred to it as a tidal wave. Once they understood, they all believed the youngster and evacuated the area. Minutes later the water surged right over the beach and demolished everything in its path. The resort was destroyed, but that section of the beach was one of the few places along the shores of Phuket where no one was killed or even seriously hurt.

Tilly was praised for raising the alarm.

"I think it's phenomenal that Tilly's parents and the others on the beach are alive because she studied hard at school," said the hotel's manager. "She's a hero."

Tilly gave the credit to her geography teacher for his lesson on how earthquakes cause tsunamis.

She explained, "I was on the beach, and the water started to go funny. I recognized what was happening and had a feeling there was going to be a tsunami."

As those who know that judgment is coming, but also know that God has provided a way to escape, are we ready, willing, and courageous enough to tell others?

Duncan Larcombe, "Quake Angel," www.nypost.com (1-1-05)

State – Sometimes good decisions are made from knowledge gained. Other times we make poor decisions based on limited knowledge, feeling, emotion and our own power.

Read – (Genesis 16:1-6) Ask members to listen for examples of bad decisions.

State - Today we are going to discuss how failure occurs when we try and make our own decisions without the guidance of God.

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip “The Money Pit”

Start: 38:45

Stop: 41:15

Synopsis: A couple buys a fixer-upper and it turns into a nightmare. In this scene everything falls apart like the domino affect, as a result of a poor decision.

Ask – What bad decisions do we make daily that can have a domino affect in our lives?

State - Today we are going to discuss how failure occurs when we try and make our own decisions without the guidance of God.

II. Book

A. **Utilize** the discussion guide to examine the Scripture passages.

III. Look

A. **Distribute** the handout “Making God-Wise Decisions” and guide members to complete it. Note: this would be an excellent group exercise.

IV. Took

A. **Share** the following story:

Jason Grisham shouldn't be alive. During his attempt to scale an electrical tower, the 22-year-old man received a shock that is usually fatal. Partway up the tower, 69,000 volts of electricity coursed through his body, knocking Grisham to the ground. Despite suffering burns to his chest and having his pants explode, the young man was admitted to the hospital in good condition.

How did Grisham get into such a predicament? It was no accident. A seven-foot-tall fence, topped with barbed wire, surrounded the electrical tower. Electric company spokeswoman Angeline Protegere said the spot where Grisham climbed over the fence was bracketed by signs saying "Danger/High Voltage."

"Indiana Man Survives 69,000-Volt Shock," Chicagotribune.com (6-2-04)

State – How many times do we try to do things in our power even though we have been warned and burned in the past? This week let's determine to make God-wise decisions.

B. Optional Method – Have members close in group prayer. Have them share about any decisions they need to make and ask members to pray for them. Challenge them to make God-wise decisions.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Teacher's Copy)

1. List the poor decisions in the first 6 verses of (Genesis 16).
 - a. Sarai blamed the Lord for her barrenness
 - b. Told her husband to take her maid to conceive
 - c. Abram listened to Sarai's bad choice
 - d. Abram got Hagar pregnant
 - e. Sarai turned on Hagar and treated her harshly
- 2a. How do bad choices seem to spiral into catastrophes?
 - b. When has this happened in your life?
3. How did Sarai's jealousy affect her actions?
4. How has jealousy effected your actions recently?
5. What instructions did the Angel of the Lord give to Hagar? (vs. 7-9)
(**The Angel of the Lord told Hagar to return to Sarai and submit to her authority**)
6. Have you ever had to submit to someone's authority even though you feared that person?
When?
7. How did the Lord reward the obedience of Hagar? (vs. 10-12)
(**He promised to bless her with so many descendants that they could not be counted**)
8. How are the descendants of Hagar still a source of "trouble" even today?
9. What was the significance of Hagar naming the Lord "El-Roi the God who sees"?
- 10a. Are you trusting in the "God who sees" in your decision making or are you making decisions in your own power?
 - b. If you are, how can you change your decision making?

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Student's Copy)

1. List the poor decisions in the first 6 verses of (Genesis 16).

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2a. How do bad choices seem to spiral into catastrophes?

b. When has this happened in your life?

3. How did Sarai's jealousy affect her actions?

4. How has jealousy effected your actions recently?

5. What instructions did the Angel of the Lord give to Hagar? (vs. 7-9)

6. Have you ever had to submit to someone's authority even though you feared that person?
When?

7. How did the Lord reward the obedience of Hagar? (vs. 10-12)

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10a. Are you trusting in the "God who sees" in your decision making or are you making
decisions in your own power?

b. If you are, how can you change your decision making?

Making **God-Wise** Decisions



Step 1

Seek God's Counsel First

- a. Go to God in prayer – Do you do this first when faced with a difficult decision?

- b. Go to God's Word – What passages help you in decision making?

Step 2

Seek Godly Counsel From Other Christian's

- a. To whom can you go for trusted advice?

- b. How/when would you approach him/her?

Step 3

Move Forward In Your Decision Only When Motivated By Faith

- a. Do not act on fear – How does fear motivate your decisions?

- b. How can you develop a deeper faith?

Step 4

Only Act When God Has Clearly Given You The Responsibility And Authority

- a. What decisions are hanging over you currently?

- b. What step are you at in each decision?

THE Word For The Week

Genesis 20:1-21:5 "Risk: How God Protects His Children"

Monday

- This excerpt is the 5th major movement of 10 in the account of Abraham's life (Genesis 11:27-25:10). Thumb through the pages of your Bible beginning with Genesis 11:27 through Chapter 20 and try to see what other major movements have taken place in Abraham's life up to this point.
- Chapter 20 and 21 really focus on Abraham's relationship with the nations, or people groups, begin this week by reading Chapter 20:1-21:5.
- Breakdown your reading by outlining the main ideas of the 23 verses
- Pray and ask God to give you wisdom and understanding when it comes to the life of Abraham and the story of God, and even the role you play in His story.

Tuesday – Read Genesis 20:1-2

- Moses was leaving a location mentioned in Genesis 18:1. Where was Moses coming from? In which direction was he traveling?
- What ideas do you have as to why would the author include such details in the account?
- Why would Abraham call Sarah his sister? Read the account of Genesis 12:10-20, what strikes you about this account and the account of Abraham in Hebrews 11:8-12?

Wednesday – Read Genesis 20:3-16

- Break down and summarize the following verses:
 - 3-4 _____ & God
 - 6-7 The _____ of Abimelech
 - 8-10 _____ confronts _____
 - 11-13 Abraham _____
 - 14-16 _____ restores
- What strikes you about the response of Abimelech after the dream?
- What do you think the conversation was like as far as the confrontation...heated? Angry? Loud? Confused?

Thursday – Read Genesis 20:17-18

- According to the account what was God healing in the home of Abimelech?
- Read verses 6-7. What was it that God said he would do if Abimelech did not restore Sarah?
- Was this dying an immediate death? Or can we see by looking ahead to verses 17 and 18 that it might be a death of the line of his family? How important is the lineage of the characters in the Scriptures?

Friday – Read Genesis 21:1-5 and 18:10

- The author shifts quickly to a new account; do you feel that there is an anti-climactic account here?
- Read 1-5 again of 21 and circle all of the actions taken by God.
- How does this, in addition to the simultaneous individual stories going on in this passage of Abimelech, Abraham, and Sarah show that God protects His children?
- How will that affect your spiritual walk and development?
- Pray that God will help you own this truth and help you spiritually lay this brick of truth into the foundation of your spiritual life, never to doubt again. Lean on it in temptations of doubt!

Ancient/Future - A Journey through Genesis
"Failure: When we Take Charge"
Genesis 16:1-16

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to Israel back THEN)
**THE BIRTH AND NAMING OF ISHMAEL, THE "FALSE SEED" CONCEIVED OUT OF
IMPATIENT UNBELIEF AND FLESHLY CUSTOM,
PROVOKED RESENTMENT WITHIN THE FAMILY OF ABRAM,
BUT ALSO PROVIDED A TESTIMONY THAT GOD HEARS AND SEES
TO BLESS THOSE WHO CALL UPON HIM.**

NOTE: Genesis 12-22 presents the journey of Abram/Abraham as he struggles to walk in faith before God (Hebrews 11:8-19).

Many of Moses' stories tell of Abram's trust in the One Who had called him. But on a few occasions, Abram failed. Failure was typically marked by Abram's "taking charge" of his own situation. Abram had lied to Pharaoh in Genesis 12:10-20 when he had feared for his life. His lie, however, placed the promise of God in jeopardy. Abram was to be the father of a great people, but he gave his wife away to Pharaoh so save his own skin.

In Genesis 16, Abram became impatient with God. God had promised him a son, but that had been eleven years earlier. Abram was pushing one ninety and Sarai, who had been unable to conceive, was near eighty. So, Abram decided to help God make good on His promise. He took one of the maidservants and made a baby with her. Not a good idea! The result was sorrow, shame, and millennia of conflict.

Yet, through all the sin and separation, God revealed Himself as the God of grace. Israel's YHWH was "The God Who Hears . . . Sees" even the outcasts of this world. He will bless the nations in spite of Abram's, and Israel's, failures. But the warning also rang true: when you "take charge" of blessing yourself, you stir up a mess.

- I. Abram's compliance with Sarai's fleshly solution to her barrenness [which threatened the fulfillment of the seed promise] followed the custom of her culture, but also produced a "false seed" and a deep resentment/division that caused Hagar to flee, (1-6).
 - A. Sarai's response to the circumstance of her barrenness revealed her impatient unbelief, (1-2a).
 - B. Sarai's fleshly solution to the fulfillment of the seed promise (12:2; 15:15:4) followed the custom of her culture, (2b).
 - C. The compliance of Abram with Sarai's fleshly solution to the fulfillment of the seed promise resulted in a fruitfulness that produced both a "false seed" and a deep resentment/division within Abram's family, (3-5).
 - D. The unjust mistreatment of Hagar by Sarai caused Hagar to flee, (6).
- II. Hagar's candid response to the Angel of the LORD's questioning announced her belief that God had heard her cry and seen her plight, (7-8).
 - A. The Angel of the LORD's seeking after Hagar in the desert demonstrated that the LORD knew about (heard and saw) her plight, (7-8a).
 - B. Hagar's candid response to the Angel of the LORD implicated not only Sarai's unbelief and mistreatment, but also her own lack of submission, (8b).

- III. Hagar's naming the LORD "You are the God Who Sees Me," in response to His instruction to return to Sarai and His promises regarding her descendants and her son, demonstrated her belief that God Hears and Sees Those Who Call Upon Him, (9-14).
 - A. The LORD'S instruction to Hagar sent her back to submit to her abusive mistress, (9).
 - B. The LORD's promise to Hagar included numerous descendants, a son to be named Ishmael ("God Hears"), and that son's troubled destiny, (10-12).
 Note: The birth of Ishmael and the conflict that immediately followed explained the trouble Israel experienced with Ishmael's descendents in the days of wandering and entrance into the land. These "troubles" continue into this 21st century. Abram's unbelief certainly had consequences.
 - 1. The LORD's message to Hagar promised her many descendants, (10).
 - 2. The LORD's message to Hagar announced her son's, Ishmael's, birth, (11).
 - 3. The LORD's message to Hagar predicted Ishmael's troubled destiny, (12).
 - C. Hagar's naming the LORD "El-Roi" in response to His revelations, demonstrated her belief that "God Sees – to help" those who call upon Him, a belief to which "Beer Lahai Roi" (The Well of the Living One Who Sees) testified, (13-14).
- IV. Abram's naming the son Hagar bore to him in his eighty-sixth year served to remind all of Abram's descendants that ("Ishmael") God Hears, (15-16).

(Theological . . . What it means to believers ALWAYS)

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL BLESSING

(in spite of the troublesome consequences of faithless action)

COMES TO ANY WHO DESPERATELY TRUST HIM.

- I. Seeking human means to gain divine blessings inevitably complicates the problem, (1-6).
 - A. Difficult circumstances challenge believers' faith in God's promises, (1).
 - B. Seeking human means to gain desired blessings conforms to cultural customs, (2).
 - C. Applying human solutions to spiritual problems only makes things worse, (3-6).
- II. A trust in God that endures hardship realizes divine blessing, (7-16).
 - A. God hears and sees to bless those who trust him through hardships, (7-12).
 - B. Remembering that God hears, sees, and blesses those who trust Him alone encourages faith, (13-16).

(Pedagogical . . . What it means to us NOW)

PATIENTLY WAIT FOR GOD'S PROMISES

- I. The circumstances of life challenge our faith, (1).
 - A. Sarai and Abram felt the challenge of faith, (1).
(See 11:30; 12:2; 15:4-5, 16:1)
 - B. Our faith is challenged by life's circumstances.
 - 1. Family circumstances challenge our faith.
 - 2. Financial circumstances challenge our faith.
 - 3. Health circumstances challenge our faith.

4. etc.
- II. Fleshly solutions to spiritual challenges abound, (2).
 - A. Surrogate childbearing was "the way to go," (2).
 - B. Our culture offers a multitude of "ways to go."
 1. "Me first" is the way to go.
 2. Financial irresponsibility is the way to go.
 3. "Safe sex" is the way to go.
 4. Entertainment and escape is the way to go.
- III. Fleshly solutions to spiritual challenges make things worse, (3-6).
 - A. Rivalry decimated Abram's household, (3-6).
 - B. Cultural "norms" will decimate our lives.
 1. Neglected children and divorce decimate us.
 2. Excessive debt and bankruptcy decimate us.
 3. Relational conflicts decimate us.
 4. Unhealthy lifestyles decimate us.
- IV. **TRUST GOD TO BLESS YOU**, (7-16).
 - A. God answered Hagar's call for help, (see 11d).
 1. God heard and saw Hagar's hardship.
 2. God blessed Hagar for trusting in Him, (see 13-14).
 - B. God has promised to answer your call for help.
 1. God will hear and see your patient trust.
 2. God will bless you in his time and in his way.
 - C. Wait expectantly for God to bless you whatever your circumstances.