

INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE

Week 8

SESSION TITLE: "Risk: How God Protects His Children"

FOCAL PASSAGE: (Genesis 20:1-21:5)

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner commit to resting in God's plan for his/her life and trusting in His protection as he/she lives out His plan.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Share the following information:

Prince Charles recently announced that he would marry his long-time mistress Camilla Parker Bowles. The two have been close for more than 30-years. Both are divorced and are currently living together. They will be married in a civil ceremony on April 8 not in the church because the Church of England disapproves of church marriages for previously divorced people.

Princess Diana had blamed Camilla for the breakup of her marriage. She once said, "There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded."

Ask – Do you think this is a wise decision for Prince Charles to remarry? Prince Charles tried to conceal his affair with Camilla for years, how are relationships damaged when lies and secrecy occur?

State - Today we are going to discuss how Abraham's misplaced trust led to his failure in judgment and how God protected him anyway, God protects His children.

B. Optional Method – Share the following information:

According to columnist Cecil Adams, of the 15 people who have attempted to go over Niagara Falls, 10 survived.

The first person to attempt the feat, on October 24, 1901, was a woman:

Annie Edson Taylor, a plump 63-year-old schoolteacher who claimed to be in her early 40s. She used a four-and-a-half-foot oak barrel packed with inflated pillows, a mattress, and an anvil (for ballast). Her ride was fairly uneventful, apart from the fact that she plunged roughly 170 feet over the falls in the middle of it; she was fished out 75 minutes after she'd gone in, bruised and shaken but alive. (She reportedly told onlookers, "No one ought ever do that again.")

The most recent Niagara Falls daredevil was Robert Overacker, who went over on a jet ski in 1995. Overacker died because his "rocket-assisted parachute deployed at the brink of the falls as planned, but wasn't tethered to his back."

But even those who stared death in the face at Niagara Falls and lived couldn't cheat death forever. Take, for example, Bobby Leach, who went over the falls in a steel barrel in 1911. "The first man to go over the falls, he survived, only to die 15 years later after slipping on an orange peel in Christchurch, New Zealand."

Citation: Cecil Adams, "The Straight Dope," The Reader's Guide (7-18-03), p. 2

Ask – Why do people make bad choices even when people before them warn against it? Have you ever made a risky decision and you knew God protected you in spite of that decision?

State - Today we are going to discuss how Abraham's misplaced trust led to his failure in judgment and how God protected him anyway, God protects His children.

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip “The Bourne Supremacy”

Start: 53:00

Stop: 55:45

Synopsis: Snipers and agents cover a public square where Nicky stands, waiting for Jason Bourne. A huge group of people enter the square. Bourne makes his move and grabs Nicky, slipping away with her unseen by all of the people assigned to protect her.

Ask – Do you think a person can ever be snatched out of God's protection? Why or why not? Have you ever made a risky decision and felt that God protected you?

State - Today we are going to discuss how Abraham's misplaced trust led to his failure in judgment and how God protected him anyway, God protects His children.

II. Book

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

III. Look

A. **Distribute** the handout “Standing Tall” and guide members to complete it.

IV. Took

A. **Place** members into groups. Ask them to share decisions they are facing and to spend time in prayer for one another to allow God to work in their lives.

B. Optional Method – Movie Clip “The Day After Tomorrow”

Start: 01:20:40

Stop: 01:23:30

DVD: Scene 23

Synopsis: Three climatologists are trekking through a violent snow storm. They are attached together by a cord. They have a mishap and the end result is they are hanging on for dear life. One of the climatologists cuts himself loose plunging to his death to save the other two.

State – Just as the one sacrificed himself to save the other two, God has sacrificed His Son to save us. We should discover God’s plan for our lives and trust God to help us live it out. He has done the hard work for us now we must live in faith carrying out His will.

Ask – Have you deviated from God’s plan for your life? Have you tried to take matters into your own hands? What do you need to do this week to “let go and let God”?

DISCUSSION GUIDE (Teacher's Copy)

1. Why did Abraham conceal Sarah's true identity from Abimelech? (Gen. 20:1-2; 11)
(He felt that Abimelech would have him killed because they did not fear God in that place and the king would take his wife.)
2. Abraham had a lapse of faith in God's ability to protect he and his family. Has this ever happened in your life?
3. Abraham was trying to save his life, how could he have jeopardized God's plan of a promised seed?
(Because Abimelech could have slept with Sarah and made her impure.)
4. Outline the following verses to see how God intervened to protect His plan:

Passage	Action	Result
vs. 3-5	God confronts Abimelech in a dream	Abimelech denies relatives
vs. 6-7	God tells Abimelech to restore Sarah	Abimelech will live
vs. 8-10	Abimelech confronts Abraham	Abimelech expresses fear
vs. 11-13	Abraham defends his decision	Abraham confronts Abimelech's unbelief
vs. 14-18	Abimelech restored Sarah and gave an offering	God blessed Abimelech

5. List some of the truths gleaned from God's intervention.
6. Outline the events that took place in (Genesis 21:1-5).
 - a. (v 1) God fulfilled His promise in Sarah.
 - b. (v 2) Sarah gave birth at God's appointed time.
 - c. (v 3) Abraham named his son Isaac.
 - d. (v 4) Abraham circumcised Isaac.
 - e. (v 5) Abraham had waited 25 years for God's promise to be fulfilled.
7. How patient are you when waiting on God to answer prayer?
8. Are there prayers that you have requested that you have abandoned too quickly? Recommit those to God.
9. What recent decisions have you made that were not part of God's plan for your life? What do you need to do to reverse those decisions?

DISCUSSION GUIDE (Student's Copy)

1. Why did Abraham conceal Sarah's true identity from Abimelech? (Gen. 20:1-2; 11)

2. Abraham had a lapse of faith in God's ability to protect he and his family. Has this ever happened in your life?

3. Abraham was trying to save his life, how could he have jeopardized God's plan of a promised seed?

4. Outline the following verses to see how God intervened to protect His plan:

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vs. 8-10		
vs. 11-13		
vs. 14-18		

5. List some of the truths gleaned from God's intervention.

6. Outline the events that took place in (Genesis 21:1-5).
 - a. (v 1) _____
 - b. (v 2) _____
 - c. (v 3) _____
 - d. (v 4) _____
 - e. (v 5) _____

7. How patient are you when waiting on God to answer prayer?

8. Are there prayers that you have requested that you have abandoned too quickly? Recommit those to God.

9. What recent decisions have you made that were not part of God's plan for your life? What do you need to do to reverse those decisions?

Standing Tall

Abraham did not stand tall in trusting God to protect he and his family. He took matters into his own hands but God protected him anyway. Work through the following acrostic to determine where you need to stand tall and trust in God's plan for your life.

S

Seek Advice From...

a. The Bible – What truth is gained from (2 Tim. 3:13-17)?

b. Prayer – What lessons are taught in (James 1:5-8)?

c. Other Christians – What does (Proverbs 1:7-8) teach about listening to others?

T

Toughen up! Through trials (James 1:12)

a. What lessons have I learned in enduring trials?

b. How has it made me stronger?

A

Arm yourself (Eph. 6:10-17) Complete the chart below

The Full Armor		
Armor	Source	Application for me
Truth		
Righteousness		
Gospel of Peace		
Shield of Faith		
Helmet of Salvation		
Sword of the Spirit		

N

Never give Satan a foothold

a. What does (2 Cor. 2:11) teach?

b. How do I let Satan into my Life? Where are my weak points?

c. According to (James 4:6-10) how can I guard against Satan's attacks?

D

Determine to stay the course

a. What does (Isa. 50:4-7) teach about perseverance?

b. How can I set my "face like flint" and live a committed, determined Christian life?

THE Word For The Week

Genesis 22:1-19

“Belief: Why God Demands Sacrifice”

Monday - Read Genesis 22:1-2

- In the case of Abraham, verses 1-2, did he know he was being tested?
- The idea of testing here is “to prove.” What do you sense the goal of this testing is going to be?
- When God calls your name to be tested, how will you respond? Is your relationship with God intimate enough that you would hear His instructions?
- Think and pray about how you can “hear God’s” instructions.

Tuesday – Read Genesis 22: 3-5

- How long was the testing process for Abraham? Is that too long or too short?
- Is there any reason God may have prolonged this test of Abraham?
- Each day Abraham rose early. What does that say about his eagerness to follow the Lord’s command?
- Are you eager to obey the Lord? Why or why not?
- What was Abraham expecting God to do after He offered Isaac as a sacrifice? (see Hebrews 11:19)
- Do you have faith that God will “give back” those things you offer to Him? Write down some ways you can build you faith.

Wednesday – Read Genesis 22: 6-10

- When the wood was being stacked on Isaac for the sacrifice, how do you think he felt?
- What else was Isaac asked to carry that indicated that he might get a little warm and bloody (v. 6)?
- How did Isaac’s obedience demonstrate his faith? Who did Isaac trust?
- Are you able to trust others for input and counsel?
- Is there Godly counsel that has been given to you that you are unwilling to follow?
- How would listening and following Godly counsel demonstrate your faith in God?

Thursday – Read Genesis 22: 11-14

- It has been said, “God may not be early but He’s never late.” Have you ever experience a time when, at the last moment, God miraculously intervened in some way?
- What was the goal of Abraham’s test (v. 12)?
- The one who truly fears the Lord obeys the Word of God, no matter what the cost. Is there an area of obedience to God’s Word where you are not in obedience? Will you share that area with someone else?
- Ask them to hold you accountable to move forward in obedience in that area as an act of worship to the Lord.

Friday – Read Genesis 22:15-19

- How did God respond to Abraham’s obedience?
- Most grandparents are giddy about their grand children. Why?
- Do you care about a Godly heritage being passed down through your siblings?
- What does this story of Abraham being commanded to sacrifice Isaac, demonstrate about building a Godly heritage? Is it true then that “more is caught than taught?”
- Meditate on the promises given to Abraham “because you have obeyed my voice” (v. 18). What are steps you can take for this to be said of you?

Ancient/Future - A Journey through Genesis
"Risk: How God Protects His Children"
Genesis 20:1-21:5

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to Israel back THEN)
WHEN ABRAHAM'S DECEPTION JEOPARDIZED THE SEED PROMISE
(WHICH THE LORD DID FULFILL, AS HE HAD SAID, BY ISAAC'S BIRTH)
GOD'S INTERVENTION THROUGH A DREAM
PROVIDED A WAY OF ESCAPING JUDGMENT FOR KING ABIMELECH, EVOKED
AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FLAWED FAITH
ON THE PART OF ABRAHAM,
SECURED THE RESCUE OF THE SEED BEARER, AND
RESTORED FRUITFULNESS IN THE KING'S HOUSEHOLD.

- I. Abraham's deception in saying Sarah was his sister, during his sojourn in Gerar, jeopardized the seed promise when Abimelech, the king of Gerar, took Sarah into his harem, (20:1-2).
 - A. Abraham's pilgrimage in the land of promise led him to sojourn in Gerar, (1).
 - B. Abraham's deception in saying Sarah was his sister once again jeopardized the seed promise, (see 12:13 & 16:2), (2a).
 - C. Abimelech's taking Sarah into his harem placed Sarah, the seed bearer, in danger of being impregnated by a pagan king, (2b).
- II. God's intervention provided Abimelech escape from certain judgment after God had brought an accusation against Abimelech and the king had appealed to God's justice and his own integrity, (3-7).
 - A. God's accusation against Abimelech carried with it a death sentence for taking a married woman as his own (adultery), (3).
 - B. Abimelech's defense appealed to God's integrity in judgment and his own integrity of heart, since he had taken Sarah in ignorance and had not engaged in sexual relations with her, (4-5).
 1. Abimelech's defense appealed to God's integrity in judgment (cf. 18:22-25), (4).
 2. Abimelech's defense appealed to his own integrity of heart, (5).
 - C. God's acknowledgment of Abimelech's innocence provided Abimelech a way of escape from judgment, (6-7).
 1. God's acknowledgment of Abimelech's innocence disclosed that God had personally intervened to keep the king from even touching Sarah, (6).
 2. God's acknowledgment of Abimelech's innocence provided escape from certain death if the king would return Sarah and convince Abraham to intercede for him, (7).

NOTE: Even though his faith was flawed, Abraham would be a means of blessing for the king and his nation (cp. 12:3).
- III. Abimelech's vindication followed his restoration of Sarah, his rebuke of Abraham (who offered a faithless defense of his deception), and his restitution for any share in the wrong that had jeopardized the seed promise, (8-16).
 - A. Abimelech's report to his officials of God's intervention caused great fear to fall upon the court, (8).

- B. Abimelech's rebuke of Abraham's deception challenged Abraham to defend his outrageous behavior, (9-10).
- C. Abraham's shameless defense of his deception revealed a long-standing flaw in his faith that God would provide for and protect him, (11-13).
 - 1. Abraham's shameless defense of his deception assumed the worst of Abimelech; that he did not fear God and would kill him for his wife, (11).
 - 2. Abraham's shameless defense of his deception rested on a half-truth (she is my sister) that covered the real truth (she was his wife), (12).
 - 3. Abraham's shameless defense of his deception revealed a long-standing flaw in his faith, (13).
- D. Abimelech's restitution for his share in the wrong of jeopardizing the seed vindicated both Sarah and himself, (14-16).
 - 1. Abimelech's restitution included livestock and servants, (14a).
 - 2. Abimelech's restitution included the restoration of Sarah to Abraham, (14b).
 - 3. Abimelech's restitution included choice real estate, (15).
 - 4. Abimelech's restitution included twenty-five pounds of silver, (16a).
 - 5. Abimelech's restitution vindicated both Sarah and himself, (16b).

- IV. Abraham's intercession on behalf of Abimelech and his kingdom resulted in God's restoring to the king's household the fruitfulness he had previously withheld as an act of judgment, (17-18).

NOTE: It is likely that "the closing of the wombs" included the impotence of the men. Abimelech couldn't have had relations with Sarah since God had rendered him unable. Note too how the chapter ends with the reference to "the closing of the wombs," a problem from which Sarah was about to be freed (21:1-2).

- A. Abraham's intercessory prayer on behalf of Abimelech and his kingdom resulted in God's restoring fruitfulness to the king's household, (17).
- B. God's previous withholding of fruitfulness from Abimelech's household had signified his judgment against the king, (18).

NOTE: The next five verses (21:1-5) seem too quick and too easy. After all the waiting for God to make good on His promise, after all the tests of faith, after all the false moves, the promise came in an understated anticlimax, in just a few short verses. Moses made his readers think, "And it was all so simple after all!" (cp. 18:14 – "Is anything too hard for the Lord?").

- V. The result of the Lord visiting ["singling out" cp 20:18 where the women of Gerar were barren] Sarah to cause her to conceive and give birth to a son, whom Abraham, in his one hundredth year, named Isaac and circumcised him according to God's command, fulfilled what the Lord had spoken, (21:1-5).

NOTE: The phrases "as He had said . . . as He had spoken . . . of which God had spoken," reminded the readers that God did fulfill His promises, in His time and in His way! (See 12:2; 15:4-5; 18:10, 14.) It had been a twenty-five year wait. Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. Certainly the promised birth of Isaac was a miracle of God.

**(Theological . . . What it means to believers ALWAYS)
A FAULTY FAITH REQUIRES GOD'S INTERVENTION
FOR PRESERVATION AND BLESSING.**

- I. Faithless acts by God's people jeopardize God's plan of blessing, (20:1-2).
- II. Only God's gracious intervention preserves His plan, (3-7).
 - A. God's warnings of judgment encourage the innocent not to frustrate God's plan, (3).
 - B. Those innocent of sin may defend their integrity, (4-5).
 - C. God's conditions of vindication protect the innocent, (6-7).
- III. Restitution by the innocent demonstrates their integrity, (8-16).
 - A. The revelation of faithless acts by God's people shames their integrity, (8-13).
 - B. Restitution by the innocent vindicates their integrity, (14-16).
- IV. Restoration to blessing follows the intercession of God's (even unfaithful) people, (17-18).
- V. The Lord's promises (to protect, provide for, and bless His people) will be fulfilled in His time and in His way, (21:1-5).

**(Pedagogical . . . What it means to us NOW)
CONFESS YOUR FAITHLESSNESS
(TO THE ONE WHO IS FAITHFUL)
RATHER THAN EXCUSE IT.**

- I. Faithless acts threaten God's blessing, (1-7).
 - A. Faithless acts take circumstances out of God's hands and into our own hands.
 1. Deception takes things into your own hands.
 2. Cheating takes things into your own hands.
 3. Stealing takes things into your own hands.
 4. Worry takes things into your own hands.
 5. Any faithless act takes things into your own hands.
 - B. Faithless acts threaten God's blessing in our lives, (1-2).
 1. Abraham's deception threatened the seed promise.
 2. Our faithless acts threaten our prosperity, (see Matthew 6:33; John 15:2; 3 John 2-4).
 - C. Faithless acts threaten God's blessing in others' lives, (3-7).
 1. Abimelech's life was threatened and his house made barren.
 2. Our faithless acts threaten others' blessing, (see Exodus 20:5; Joshua 8; 2 Samuel 12:14; Romans 1:32).
- II. Faithless acts cause shame and restitution, (8-16).
 - A. Abraham was shamed by Abimelech's Rebuke and his own feeble defense.
 - B. Our faithless acts embarrass unbelievers, shame ourselves, and dishonor God.
 - C. Abimelech was forced to make restitution or face judgment.
 - D. Our faithless acts force others into "paying for" our sins.
- III. Intercessory prayers restore blessing out of sure judgment, (17-18).
 - A. Abraham's prayer restored Abimelech to fruitfulness.
 - B. Our repentant intercessions preserve God's ability to bless others and us.

IV. (When you fall into faithlessness that threatens God's blessing in you own life and in the life of others . . .)

Confess your faithlessness rather than excuse it (Proverbs 28:13).

A. You will sin in this life.

B. Your sins will invite God's judgment.

C. Your sins will shame you.

D. Confess your faithlessness . . . to be restored to blessing.

V. **AND, BY THE WAY . . . GOD ALWAYS MAKES GOOD ON HIS PROMISE, (21:1-5).**

[This understated, anticlimactic paragraph is THE point of the story. Even though we fail Him, He never fails, but is faithful to do what He says, in His time and in His way. That's the gospel . . . the good news.]