



**Individual Responsibility**  
**Regarding Family Leadership**  
**Abraham-Sarah vs Ishmael**  
*Living in the Image of God*  
*Module 04 Session 17*

Banking Blessings Ministry  
 San Antonio, Texas  
 USA



**Living in the Image of God**

- God creates every person to represent him in interactions with others
- Be for others what God would be for them if he lived with us in human form
- He provides resources for people to perform the responsibilities
- He blesses those that do

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**Living in the Image of God**

- Program seeks to understand
- Meaning of *Living in the Image of God*
- Resources God has provided to guide us
- Human responsibilities
- Benefits of *Living in the Image of God*


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**Summary**  
**What We Have Learned**

- Summarize what we have learned
- Regarding family leadership based on bible examples of husband-wife relationships
- Regarding Shunammite Couple
- Blessed abundantly through honor and support for family leadership
- Husband as overall leader
- Wife as leader in specific matters

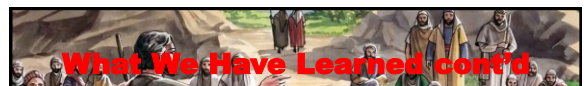
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**What We Have Learned cont'd**

- Based on the creation account of Adam and Eve
- God created marriage to combine a man and woman to form a union of seamless complements
- Adequate for the mission of representing him among all creation
- He created man first but found him inadequate
- Then he created woman as comparable companion and helper from within

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**What We Have Learned cont'd**

- Abraham-Sarah union in four segments
- To focus enough on the details
- 1<sup>st</sup> segment: Call of Abraham-Sarah
  - God spoke to Abraham
  - On behalf of Abraham-Sarah union
  - Relied on Abraham leadership of union
  - Seamless communication with Sarah
  - To ensure Abraham-Sarah shared information and commitment seamlessly

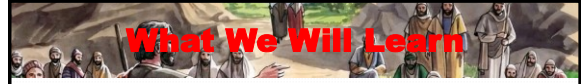
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### What We Have Learned cont'd

- 2<sup>nd</sup> segment: Abraham-Sarah versus Hagar
  - Tempted by having child through Hagar
  - Hagar sought to disrupt Abraham-Sarah
  - Abraham-Sarah called on strength of union to defeat Hagar disruption
- 3<sup>rd</sup> segment: Abraham-Sarah Blessing
  - God's promise for husband or wife
  - Is a promise for husband-wife union
  - To be fulfilled for them as one

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### What We Will Learn

- 4<sup>th</sup> segment of Abraham-Sarah
- To protect Isaac, Sarah demanded Ishmael and mother be sent away
- Dilemma for Abraham
  - Sarah was his wife
  - Ishmael was his son (through Hagar)
- God intervened to resolve dilemma
  - Directed Abraham to separate Ishmael from Isaac as Sarah demanded
  - Promised offspring expansion for Ishmael separately

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### Lessons Based on Abraham-Sarah vs Ishmael

- Four specific lessons of individual responsibility regarding family leadership
- Honor and support family leadership
- Conflict resolution strategy
- Quick and permanent resolution of potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement
- Selective development of family opportunities

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### Separation of Ishmael from Isaac

- Bible account of separation of Ishmael from Isaac
- Genesis 21:2 and 8–14

2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.

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### Genesis 21 (NIV)

9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking,  
 10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

- Isaac: 8-day old child of promise
- Ishmael: older child of temptation through Hagar
- Could cause bad influence on Isaac
- Potential dispute regarding inheritance of God's promise of offspring expansion for Abraham-Sarah

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### Genesis 21 (NIV)

11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

12 But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

13 I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring."


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### God's Guidance to Abraham Regarding Ishmael

- Listen to Sarah and implement what she says regarding Ishmael
- God's promise regarding Abraham-Sarah offspring will be fulfilled through Isaac
- Ishmael will become father of nations also

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### Genesis 21 (NIV)

14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

- Abraham separated Ishmael from Isaac
- Four lessons based on the separation help understanding individual responsibility regarding family leadership

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### Honor and Support Family Leadership

- Sarah was custodian of information regarding need to separate Ishmael from Isaac
  - Recognized need to separate them
  - Accepted responsibility to seek the separation
- Sarah honored Abraham over-all leadership by presenting demand to him
- Abraham honored Sarah leadership of the specific matter by taking her demand seriously

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### Internal Conflict for Abraham

- Sarah's demand to expel Ishmael and his mother from Abraham-Sarah household
- Dilemma for Abraham
  - Parental responsibilities to Ishmael
  - Responsibilities to Abraham-Sarah union
- Received God's guidance to resolve conflict
  - Conflict resolution strategy
  - Quick and permanent resolution of husband-wife conflict
  - Selective development of family opportunities

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### Conflict Resolution Strategy

- Mediation strategy
  - Look beyond the immediate points of dispute
  - Understand the underlying concerns
  - Seek to address the underlying concerns
- Abraham's underlying concern regarding long-term wellbeing of Ishmael
- Concern addressed based on God's promise of care and offspring expansion for Ishmael

**Genesis 21:13** I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

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### Quick Permanent Resolution

- Quick and permanent resolution of potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement
- Necessary for husband-wife unity before God
- Abraham's conflict was resolved the same day as Sarah's demand
- Resolution implemented next morning
- Resolution was quick so dispute did not have time to grow in complexity
- Resolution was permanent: Separation of Ishmael from Isaac was permanent

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## Opportunity Selection

- Separation of Ishmael from Isaac provides message of selective development of family opportunities
- Facing multiple competing opportunities
- Select opportunities to develop
- Opportunities to abandon
- And others to delay or de-emphasize
- To focus better on proper development of selected opportunities

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## What We Learned

- Separation of Ishmael from Isaac provides four lessons for understanding individual responsibility regarding family leadership
- Honor and support family leadership
  - Sarah recognized the need to separate Ishmael from Isaac
  - Asked Abraham to send Ishmael and his mother away
  - Abraham considered the demand seriously

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## What We Learned

- Conflict resolution strategy of focusing on the underlying concerns regarding a dispute
- Quick and permanent resolution of potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement to preserve husband-wife unity before God
- Selective development of family opportunities
- Select opportunities to develop
- Those to abandon, delay, or de-emphasize
- To focus better on proper development of selected opportunities

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# **Abraham-Sarah vs Ishmael: Individual Responsibility Regarding Family Leadership**

## **Living in the Image of God M04S17**

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The bible account of the separation of Ishmael from Isaac provides four lessons toward understanding the individual responsibility in family leadership. First, after recognizing the need for the separation, Sarah honored Abraham's overall leadership by asking him to send Ishmael and his mother away. Abraham honored Sarah's leadership of the specific matter by taking her demand seriously and seeking God's guidance toward resolving his personal conflict regarding the demand. Second, God's guidance to Abraham provides a conflict resolution strategy of focusing on the underlying concerns regarding a dispute. Third, Abraham's response illustrates quick and permanent resolution of a potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement, to preserve their unity before God. Fourth, the separation highlights selective development of family opportunities: based on selecting the opportunities to develop and those to abandon, delay, or de-emphasize; in order to focus better on the selected opportunities.

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We continue the bible study series toward understanding the individual responsibility regarding family leadership, based on bible examples of husband-wife interactions and relationships. Previous studies in the series led to understanding the husband as overall leader of the household and the wife as spiritual gateway of the family and occasional leader in specific matters. Both husband and wife are individually responsible to honor and support family leadership. The family will benefit greatly if they do.

### **Previous Studies in the Series**

The series began with the Shunammite couple to illustrate the family leadership structure and benefits of honor and support for family leadership. The Shunammite woman honored her husband as overall leader, whereas the husband honored his wife as spiritual gateway and leader in specific matters. The couple was blessed abundantly.

The next study in the series led to understanding the family leadership structure through the creation account of Adam and Eve. God created marriage to combine a man and woman to form a union of seamless complements, adequate for the mission of representing him among all creation. He created man for the mission but found him inadequate. Then he created woman as comparable companion and helper from within.

The next four studies in the series discuss the Abraham-Sarah union. First, the call of Abraham-Sarah led to understanding that God uses the family leadership structure to communicate his will to the family. Because he called Abraham-Sarah to a mission by speaking to Abraham, we surmised that he relied on Abraham's leadership of the union and seamless communication with Sarah to ensure that Abraham-Sarah shared the information and commitments seamlessly.

Second, the Abraham-Sarah segment on their interactions with Hagar provides an example on defeating an external aggression by working together in honor and support of family leadership. In the example, Abraham-Sarah sought to have the child of promise through their maidservant Hagar, pregnant Hagar attempted to disrupt the Abraham-Sarah union by despising Sarah, and the couple dug deep into the strength of their union to defeat the attempt. Third, God's interactions with Abraham regarding the covenant led to understanding that his promise for a husband or wife is a promise for the husband-wife union that will be fulfilled for them as one.

## Current Study in the Series

The current study is the fourth and final segment of Abraham-Sarah and discusses their interactions regarding the separation of Ishmael and Isaac. The segment begins with Sarah's demand that Abraham should expel Ishmael and his mother Hagar from the household, in order to protect Isaac from Ishmael. The demand raised a dilemma for Abraham. Sarah was his wife, so he needed to respond well to her demand. However, Ishmael was his son, so expelling him from the household was problematic. God intervened to resolve the dilemma. He directed Abraham to separate Ishmael from Isaac as Sarah demanded and promised offspring expansion for Ishmael separately.

The interactions provide four lessons of individual responsibility regarding family leadership: honor and support for family leadership, conflict resolution strategy, quick and permanent resolution of a potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement, and selective development of family opportunities.

## Separation of Ishmael from Isaac

The separation of Ishmael from Isaac started from an event that occurred when Isaac was eight days old. Abraham had organized a feast to celebrate the child's weaning. During the feast, Sarah recognized a behavior from Ishmael that she considered threatening to Isaac: "But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking" [Genesis 21:9]. She asked Abraham to expel Ishmael and his mother from the household: "and she said to Abraham, 'Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac'" [Genesis 21:10].

To understand better, recognize that Isaac was the child of promise for Abraham-Sarah and only eight days old at the time. In contrast, Ishmael was the child of Abraham-Sarah temptation through Hagar and was a few years older than Isaac. Therefore, Ishmael could be a bad influence on Isaac if they were to grow up together. Further, there was potential misunderstanding regarding the inheritance of God's promise of offspring expansion for Abraham-Sarah.

Sarah's demand raised a dilemma for Abraham. Sarah was his wife, so he needed to respond well to her demand. However, Ishmael was his son, so expelling him from the household was problematic: "The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son" [Genesis 21:11]. God spoke to Abraham regarding Sarah's demand and Abraham's concern for Ishmael. He told Abraham to listen to Sarah and implement what she said regarding Ishmael. He explained that God's promise of offspring expansion and blessing for Abraham-Sarah would be fulfilled through Isaac. Also, he promised Abraham that Ishmael will become a father of nations [Genesis 21:12–13]: "But God said to him, 'Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.'"

On the next morning, Abraham packed some supplies for Hagar and Ishmael and sent them off and, thus, separated Ishmael from Isaac [Genesis 21:14]: "Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba." The

separation of Ishmael from Isaac provides four lessons toward understanding the individual responsibility regarding family leadership, as we discuss presently.

## **Honor and Support Family Leadership**

The first lesson comes from their honor and support for family leadership. Sarah was the custodian of information regarding the need to separate Ishmael from Isaac. She recognized the need and accepted responsibility to seek the separation. She honored Abraham's overall leadership of the household by presenting him with a demand to separate Ishmael and his mother from the household. Abraham honored Sarah's leadership of the specific matter by taking her demand seriously, seeking God's guidance, and implementing the demand.

## **Internal Conflict for Abraham**

The other three lessons arise from Abraham's internal conflict regarding Sarah's demand. The demand to expel Ishmael and his mother from the household was a dilemma for Abraham. He could violate his parental responsibilities to Ishmael by accepting the demand, or violate his responsibilities to the Abraham-Sarah union by refusing the demand. He received God's guidance to resolve the conflict. Based on the interactions regarding the conflict, we learn about conflict resolution strategy, quick and permanent resolution of a husband-wife conflict, and selective development of family opportunities.

## **Conflict Resolution Strategy**

We learn a conflict-resolution strategy, based on God's guidance to Abraham regarding his conflict with separating Ishmael and his mother from the household. In resolving a conflict, we should look beyond the immediate points of disagreement and focus on understanding and seeking to address the underlying concerns. Abraham had an underlying concern of securing the long-term wellbeing of Ishmael. The concern was addressed based on God's promise of care and offspring expansion for Ishmael: "I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring" [Genesis 21:13].

## **Quick Permanent Resolution**

Also, we learn about quick and permanent resolution of a potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement. A quick and permanent resolution is necessary to maintain husband-wife unity before God. Abraham's conflict was resolved the same day that Sarah made the demand, and the resolution was implemented the next morning. The resolution was quick, so the dispute did not have time to grow in complexity. Also, the resolution was permanent, as the separation of Ishmael from Isaac was permanent.

## **Opportunity Selection**

The separation of Ishmael from Isaac also provides a message regarding selective development of family opportunities. When faced with multiple competing opportunities for the family: select the opportunities to develop, opportunities to abandon, and others to delay or de-emphasize, in order to focus better on proper development of the selected opportunities. After the separation,

Abraham-Sarah focused on Isaac's development as the child of promise, having received God's promise that Ishmael would develop well separately.

## **Summary of What We Learned**

The bible account of the separation of Ishmael from Isaac provides four lessons toward understanding the individual responsibility in family leadership. First, after recognizing the need for the separation, Sarah honored Abraham's overall leadership by asking him to send Ishmael and his mother away. Abraham honored Sarah's leadership of the specific matter by taking her demand seriously and seeking God's guidance toward resolving his personal conflict regarding the demand.

Second, God's guidance to Abraham provides a conflict resolution strategy of focusing on the underlying concerns regarding a dispute. Third, Abraham's response illustrates quick and permanent resolution of a potentially dividing husband-wife disagreement, to preserve their unity before God. Fourth, the separation highlights selective development of family opportunities: based on selecting the opportunities to develop and those to abandon, delay, or de-emphasize; in order to focus better on the selected opportunities.

**Key Words:** Abraham, Conflict Resolution, Family, Husband, Isaac, Ishmael, Leadership, Sarah, Wife