



LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

TEXT: Genesis 20–21

MAIN IDEA: In the wilderness, God gives us purpose to our pain and helps us to see the goodness of his promises.

LEADERS:

- Worship night is coming up on Sunday, November 21, at our Totowa campus. No registration is needed.
- Discover Emergence is happening. If you want to get more plugged in and become a member, this is for you. Classes go for three weeks, beginning the first Sunday of every month. Classes are at 10:30 in suite 300 in Totowa, and in Impact Central in Ringwood. Sign up on our digital bulletin.
- If you've got a kid in middle or high school, be sure to register them for our upcoming student ministry winter retreat. It's happening January 14–16 and will be at Camp Orchard Hill in PA. Registration is through the digital bulletin until November 18 (this Thursday).

GETTING STARTED:

- Watch this week's Community Extras Video.
 - **Icebreaker:** What is the most exciting thing you've ever seen God do?
 - **Opener:** What did you take away from the sermon this week?
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THE PATTERN OF SIN

Read: Genesis 20:1–18

Recall that Abraham did pretty much the same thing when he sojourned in Egypt back in Genesis 12:10–20, and that it didn't end well for him. Now, not only does he do it again, but he confesses that this was a common practice for him (20:13). Especially now, in light of the promises of God made to him and Sarah in chapter 18, did he not expect God to protect him? Clearly, this does not portray Abraham in a flattering light, and now the woman who was to give birth to the son of the promise is taken off into another foreign ruler's harem.

☺ It's easy to point our finger at Abraham for not learning his lesson—that is, until we look in the mirror. What repeated patterns of faithlessness or sin do you struggle with, despite having seen their fruitlessness in the past?

☺🧠 In the sermon, Steve talked about how powerful sinful patterns can only be broken by radical change. How have you experienced radical change in your life, and how does this glorify God?

🧠 What aspects of this “wife-sister episode” make it worse than what happened in chapter 12?



 What is ironic about what Abraham says in verse 11?

 In what ways does fear of man cause us to compromise our mission as God's witnesses to the world?

THE PURPOSE OF PAIN

Read: Genesis 21:1–7

After years of anticipation, God has finally given Abraham and Sarah the son he promised them. Isaac's birth is told in a way that stresses God's fidelity to his word and Abraham's obedient response.

 How have you seen God work to do the impossible?

  How many things in these verses can you find that underscore God's miraculous fulfillment of his promise? How can this truth make us more confident in the promise of the gospel?

Read: Genesis 21:8–13

 Here we see Sarah treating Hagar and Ishmael coldly, despite the goodness that God has shown her. Can you give an example from your life, or the life of someone you know, that illustrates how God's grace enables us to overlook the wrongs that others perpetrate against us?

 How would you respond to someone who claims that God is being cold and callous towards Hagar and Ishmael, in telling Abraham to send them away in accordance with Sarah's wishes?

  How has God used pain in your life, and what good has he accomplished by it?

  Think of a time when God brought something painful in your life. What did people do or say that helped, and what did they do or say that was unhelpful?

THE PROMISE IS SEEN

Read: Genesis 21:14–21

 Have you ever had a time when despair stopped you from seeing God's love and provision?

  What are some of the "wells" that God provides for us to nourish our souls in the wilderness of life?



PRAYER TIME

Pray for the Lord to help you with patterns of sin in your life, and to reveal the paths to radical change so that you can walk in victory and holiness.

Boldly thank God for the pain that he has used to do the hard work of making you more like Christ.

Pray that God would help you to see his goodness when you are struggling in the wilderness.