

## CbC to March 8

March 2 Su Reading A61 — Genesis 21 — God Provides for Ishmael

Audio: [Genesis 21 \(ESV\)](#)

**From Feast to Famine** — This chapter starts with a feast given in honor of Abraham's just-weaned son, Isaac, the son God had promised to give to Abraham and Sarah many years earlier. That miracle of birth deserved to be celebrated, and many people laughed in joy because of what God had done (v. 6). There was another kind of laughter at that party, however, when the young teenager, Ishmael, laughed in apparent mockery (v. 9). Sarah saw that response of Ishmael and succeeded in getting Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away with only some bread and water (v. 14). God agreed with Sarah's desire and told Abraham that He would use her plan to provide for Ishmael *"because he is your offspring"* (v. 13). The Lord did it not only for Ishmael but also in honor of Abraham. There is an interesting paragraph that follows, talking about the voices of ejected Hagar and Ishmael, who had run out of food and water. Although it was Hagar who *"lifted up her voice and wept"* (v. 16), twice in the next verse it says that *"God heard the voice of the boy"* (v. 17). We are not told what Ishmael said, but it was to him that God responded. Do you happen to be in some kind of "famine" after having enjoyed a time of "feast"? God is with you there as well. Although we may not see the solution, God has a plan that includes caring for those He loves.

March 3 M Reading A62 — Genesis 22-23 — Offering Isaac

Audio: [Genesis 22-23 \(ESV\)](#)

**Testing Faith** — There are many wonderful connections of ancient events in chapter 22 to our Christian era. The chapter begins with, *"God tested Abraham"* (v. 1). He was testing Abraham's faith, which was already very strong. God's command was a devastating order: *"Take your son, your only son Isaac ... and offer him ... as a burnt offering"* (v. 2). No one could ever do that unless he or she had complete confidence in God's love and wisdom. Abraham didn't think about it, pray about it, seek the counsel of others, or procrastinate; instead, he *"rose early in the morning"* (v. 3) to begin this painful and confusing journey. Somehow his faith remained strong. After a three-day trip, he told his two servants to wait with the donkey while *"I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you"* (v. 5). He expected to return with a living Isaac whom he was intending to kill and burn. When Isaac asked his father about the missing lamb, Abraham replied, *"God will provide for himself the lamb"* (v. 8). More evidence of faith. With his knife poised in the air, God stopped him because *"you have not withheld your son, your only son"* (v. 12). What a contrast that was to what we learn from Paul that *"He who did not spare his own Son ... gave him up for us all"* (Rom. 8:32), and from John that *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..."* (John 3:16). God saved Abraham's only son, but He was willing to sacrifice His only Son! What a Father! What love and grace! Another especially meaningful connection is that the crucifixion of Jesus was on the same Mount Moriah where Solomon built the temple (2 Chron. 3:1), and probably the same mountain in *"the land of Moriah"* (Gen. 22:2) where God had directed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. The mount of testing had become the mount of surrender.

March 4 Tu Reading A63 — Genesis 24 — Isaac Marries Rebekah

Audio: [Genesis 24 \(ESV\)](#)

**Guided to Go** — This longest chapter in Genesis features faith and guidance. Abraham had faith that God would provide a wife for Isaac from his own relatives in Mesopotamia (meaning "between the rivers"—Tigris and Euphrates), which was 550 miles (900km) from his home in Hebron. God's guidance is seen throughout the story, as Abraham's unnamed servant was led to the exact water source at just the time Rebekah came to draw water. The servant showed faith by giving the expensive gold nose ring and bracelets to Rebekah even before she told him her name or the family she came from. Rebekah's brother, Laban, and their father, Bethuel, showed faith in offering

Rebekah in marriage just hours after they heard the story from Abraham's servant, responding with, "*take her and go*" (v. 51). Rebekah also showed faith by agreeing to marry a man she had never met, saying immediately and simply, "*I will go*" (v. 58). Just as Abraham left that same area in Mesopotamia about 100 years earlier to go where God directed him, so Rebekah left, trusting God to guide and provide. The faith of these people was remarkable. How outstanding is ours? Many Christian missionaries travel far distances because they feel that God called them to bring the gospel to lost people. How willing are we to cross the street for the same purpose? Does this show our lack of faith that God will go before us to prepare the way? If He is guiding, we should be going.

March 5 W Reading A64 — Genesis 25 — The Generations of Abraham **Audio:** [Genesis 25 \(ESV\)](#)

**Choosing His Own** — This chapter shows the gradual, but purposeful, narrowing of God's choice of those whom He would call "My people." It began with the call of Abraham to leave his family and go south to the land of Canaan. It followed with Sarah's substitute plan, resulting in Ismael being later rejected and sent away. Another complication came with Abraham's marriage to Keturah, who bore six sons that were also rejected and sent eastward (v. 6). Finally, only the promised Isaac was left in God's chosen line, but further division resulted with the birth of his twins, Esau and Jacob, who struggled together in Rebekah's womb (v. 22). God told her that the nations formed from these twins "*shall be divided ... [and] the older shall serve the younger*" (v. 23). God's choice was again narrowed when Esau rejected his birthright, selling it to Jacob who would later be called "Israel"— God's people. All this selection process happened within the 175-year span of Abraham's life. The next change in God's choice came with the birth of another promised Son, Jesus. After His death on the cross, "His people" broadened to include all those who accepted Jesus for personal salvation. Although it is no longer connected to belonging to the family of Israel, God still works through families today. We are part of His plan as He works through us, our children, and grandchildren, to influence their spiritual future by modeling and teaching the gospel of the family of God.

March 6 Th Reading A65 — Genesis 26 — Isaac's Wells

**Audio:** [Genesis 26 \(ESV\)](#)

**Forced Moves** — God uses different ways to lead His people to where He wants them to go. As He earlier led Abraham to go to Egypt because of a famine in Canaan, so He used a famine to lead Isaac toward the southern end of the Promised Land. As Abraham had become rich with many servants, flocks, and herds, Isaac also had greatly added to that wealth. Although they lived as wandering nomads, dwelling in tents, it was not easy to relocate. In this chapter, Isaac moved to the "city" of Gerar, was then forced to move to the valley of Gerar, and finally went to the area of Beersheba. Sometimes God rather forces us to be where He wants us to be. Isaac's family was led not only by famine but also by conflict with others. Six times in this chapter it says that Isaac's servants dug new wells in this arid region. Quarrels with other herdsmen about water kept Isaac on the move. Have you ever had to relocate unwillingly? It is often hard on relationships and on finances. When that happens, we should seek God's purpose for putting us there. When Isaac first arrived in the city of Gerar, "*God appeared to him*" (v. 2) to give him instructions. When Isaac arrived in Beersheba, "*the LORD appeared to him the same night*" (v. 24), telling him that He was with him and would bless him. Isaac didn't ask, "Why here?" Instead, "*he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD*" (v. 25). If we must move, we should stop to worship God and look for His purposes!

March 8 F Reading A66 — Genesis 27 — Jacob Cheats Esau

**Audio:** [Genesis 27 \(ESV\)](#)

**Using Wrong** — This chapter does not hide the sins of Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau. God even uses their sins to accomplish His purposes. Rebekah is behind the plan of deceiving Isaac. Three times,

she orders Jacob to “*obey my voice*” (vv. 8, 13, 43). Three times, Jacob lies to his father, saying that he was Esau (vv. 19, 24) and that God granted him success in hunting game (v. 20). The sins of disappointed Esau were to hate Jacob and to intend to kill him (v. 41). Rebekah schemed, Jacob lied, and Esau despised. Have we not done the same kinds of things, even as Christians? Yes, and God has forgiven us and even used our failings to bring about good. Paul later wrote that “*all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*” (Rom. 8:28). This does not give us an excuse to sin, but it does give us encouragement that even when we do, God will fit it into His plan to help us to grow and to guide us along His way.

March 8 Su Reading A67 — Genesis 28 — Jacob’s Heavenly Encounter **Audio:** [Genesis 28 \(ESV\)](#)

**Pillow to Pillar** — The process of choosing a wife for Isaac, and then for his two sons, was quite different. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac only from his relatives in Mesopotamia, but Isaac was not allowed to go there. Rebekah was selected, agreed upon, and sent away quickly. Isaac’s son, Esau, seems to have gone on his own without the approval of his parents to marry two Hittite women, and later, he married a daughter of his separated uncle, Ishmael. Perhaps in reaction to that disappointment, Jacob was not only allowed to go to Mesopotamia but was intentionally sent to marry one of the daughters of Laban, Rebekah’s brother. On the way, he had a powerful encounter with God at a place he named Bethel (“House of God”). He slept with a stone for a pillow and saw a vision of a gateway to heaven involving angels and Yahweh Himself, who repeated the promises made to Abraham and Isaac about their descendants and the land. Jacob was greatly moved, and he turned his stone pillow into a stone pillar, setting it up as a monument and making a rather conditional vow to God. He said, “*If God will be with me ... keep me ... will give me ... then the LORD shall be my God*” (v. 20-21). Notice the significant “*if ... then*” pair of words on each end of this vow. Isn’t that like ideas you hear from some probing seekers and marginal Christians? “If God will give me what I want, then I will serve Him.” It is selfish, and it is based on circumstances and not on faith. God owes us nothing in this life—remember Job! Yet, the best kind of life we can experience is found in being fully yielded to God and trusting in Him entirely. Jacob still had things to learn.