An open book with a cross resting on it. The background is a close-up of the book's pages, which are slightly blurred. The cross is made of a light-colored material, possibly wood or stone, and is positioned in the center of the frame. The text is overlaid on the book's pages.

# Case Study: Abraham & Sarah

*It's worth the wait when it impacts your fate!*

Central Figures in Genesis 12-23  
Destiny & Erica

# Background Context

Abraham (originally Abram) and Sarah (Sarai) are central figures in Genesis 12–23. God calls Abraham to leave his homeland with a promise: land, descendants, and blessing to all nations. The promise, however, comes with a long delay—particularly painful because Sarah is unable to conceive.





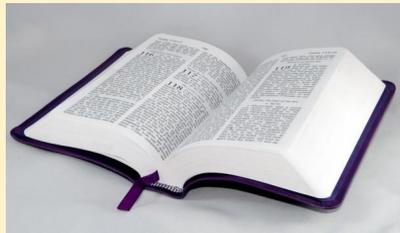
*Abide*  
*Scenario*

# Part I: The Calling (Genesis 12:1-5)

**12** The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you. **2** I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing.

**3** I will bless those who bless you,  
But I will curse those who curse you.  
And through you I will bless all the nations."<sup>[a]</sup>

**4** When Abram was seventy-five years old, he started out from Haran, as the LORD had told him to do; and Lot went with him. **5** Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the wealth and all the slaves they had acquired in Haran, and they started out for the land of Canaan.



**Situation:**

God instructs Abraham to leave his country, family, and security without a clear destination.

**Decision Point:**

Abraham chooses obedience without full information.

**Key Tension:**

Trusting a promise without evidence.

**Case Insight:**

Leadership often begins with obedience before clarity.

# Part 2: The Waiting and the Struggle (Genesis 15–16)

## God's Covenant with Abram

**15** After this, Abram had a vision and heard the LORD say to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I will shield you from danger and give you a great reward."

**2** But Abram answered, "Sovereign LORD, what good will your reward do me, since I have no children? My only heir is Eliezer of Damascus." **3** You have given me no children, and one of my slaves will inherit my property."

**4** Then he heard the LORD speaking to him again: "This slave Eliezer will not inherit your property; your own son will be your heir." **5** The LORD took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and try to count the stars; you will have as many descendants as that."

**6** Abram put his trust in the LORD, and because of this the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him.

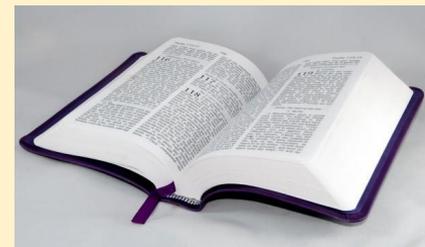
**7** Then the LORD said to him, "I am the LORD, who led you out of Ur in Babylonia, to give you this land as your own."

**8** But Abram asked, "Sovereign LORD, how can I know that it will be mine?"

**9** He answered, "Bring me a cow, a goat, and a ram, each of them three years old, and a dove and a pigeon." **10** Abram brought the animals to God, cut them in half, and placed the halves opposite each other in two rows; but he did not cut up the birds. **11** Vultures came down on the bodies, but Abram drove them off.

**12** When the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and fear and terror came over him. **13** The LORD said to him, "Your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land; they will be slaves there and will be treated cruelly for four hundred years. **14** But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and when they leave that foreign land, they will take great wealth with them. **15** You yourself will live to a ripe old age, die in peace, and be buried. **16** It will be four generations before your descendants come back here, because I will not drive out the Amorites until they become so wicked that they must be punished."

**17** When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch suddenly appeared and passed between the pieces of the animals. **18** Then and there the LORD made a covenant with Abram. He said, "I promise to give your descendants all this land from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River, **19** including the lands of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, **20** the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, **21** the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."



## Hagar and Ishmael

**16** Abram's wife Sarai had not borne him any children. But she had an Egyptian slave woman named Hagar, **2** and so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Why don't you sleep with my slave? Perhaps she can have a child for me." Abram agreed with what Sarai said. **3** So she gave Hagar to him to be his concubine. (This happened after Abram had lived in Canaan for ten years.) **4** Abram had intercourse with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When she found out that she was pregnant, she became proud and despised Sarai.

**5** Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's your fault that Hagar despises me. I myself gave her to you, and ever since she found out that she was pregnant, she has despised me. May the LORD judge which of us is right, you or me!"

**6** Abram answered, "Very well, she is your slave and under your control; do whatever you want with her." Then Sarai treated Hagar so cruelly that she ran away.

**7** The angel of the LORD met Hagar at a spring in the desert on the road to Shur **8** and said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"

She answered, "I am running away from my mistress."

**9** He said, "Go back to her and be her slave." **10** Then he said, "I will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them. **11** You are going to have a son, and you will name him Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your cry of distress. **12** But your son will live like a wild donkey; he will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. He will live apart from all his relatives."

**13** Hagar asked herself, "Have I really seen God and lived to tell about it?" So she called the LORD, who had spoken to her, "A God Who Sees." **14** That is why people call the well between Kadesh and Bered "The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me."

**15** Hagar bore Abram a son, and he named him Ishmael. **16** Abram was eighty-six years old at the time.

**Situation:**

Years pass. No child. Sarah suggests using Hagar to produce an heir.

**Decision Point:**

Abraham agrees, leading to the birth of Ishmael.

**Consequences:**

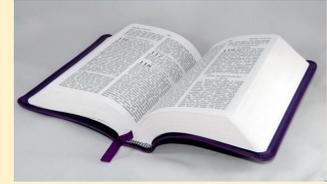
- Family conflict
- Emotional pain for Sarah
- Long-term relational and generational tension

**Case Insight:**

When people act to “help” God’s promise along, unintended consequences often follow.

# Part 3: Renewed Promise and Testing

## (Genesis 17–18)



### Circumcision, the Sign of the Covenant

**17** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the Almighty God. Obey me and always do what is right. **2** I will make my covenant with you and give you many descendants.” **3** Abram bowed down with his face touching the ground, and God said, **4** “I make this covenant with you: I promise that you will be the ancestor of many nations. **5** Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, because I am making you the ancestor of many nations. **6** I will give you many descendants, and some of them will be kings. You will have so many descendants that they will become nations.

**7** “I will keep my promise to you and to your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant. I will be your God and the God of your descendants. **8** I will give to you and to your descendants this land in which you are now a foreigner. The whole land of Canaan will belong to your descendants forever, and I will be their God.”

**9** God said to Abraham, “You also must agree to keep the covenant with me, both you and your descendants in future generations. **10** You and your descendants must all agree to circumcise every male among you. **11-12** From now on you must circumcise every baby boy when he is eight days old, including slaves born in your homes and slaves bought from foreigners. This will show that there is a covenant between you and me.

**13** Each one must be circumcised, and this will be a physical sign to show that my covenant with you is everlasting. **14** Any male who has not been circumcised will no longer be considered one of my people, because he has not kept the covenant with me.”

**15** God said to Abraham, “You must no longer call your wife Sarai; from now on her name is Sarah. **16** I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will become the mother of nations, and there will be kings among her descendants.”

**17** Abraham bowed down with his face touching the ground, but he began to laugh when he thought, “Can a man have a child when he is a hundred years old? Can Sarah have a child at ninety?” **18** He asked God, “Why not let Ishmael be my heir?”

**19** But God said, “No. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you will name him Isaac. I will keep my covenant with him and with his descendants forever. It is an everlasting covenant. **20** I have heard your request about Ishmael, so I will bless him and give him many children and many descendants. He will be the father of twelve princes, and I will make a great nation of his descendants. **21** But I will keep my covenant with your son Isaac, who will be born to Sarah about this time next year.” **22** When God finished speaking to Abraham, he left him.

**23** On that same day Abraham obeyed God and circumcised his son Ishmael and all the other males in his household, including the slaves born in his home and those he had bought. **24** Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, **25** and his son Ishmael was thirteen. **26** They were both circumcised on the same day, **27** together with all of Abraham’s slaves.

## A Son Is Promised to Abraham

**18** The LORD appeared to Abraham at the sacred trees of Mamre. As Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day, **2** he looked up and saw three men standing there. As soon as he saw them, he ran out to meet them. Bowing down with his face touching the ground, **3** he said, "Sirs, please do not pass by my home without stopping; I am here to serve you. **4** Let me bring some water for you to wash your feet; you can rest here beneath this tree. **5** I will also bring a bit of food; it will give you strength to continue your journey. You have honored me by coming to my home, so let me serve you."

They replied, "Thank you; we accept."

**6** Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick, take a sack of your best flour, and bake some bread." **7** Then he ran to the herd and picked out a calf that was tender and fat, and gave it to a servant, who hurried to get it ready. **8** He took some cream, some milk, and the meat, and set the food before the men. There under the tree he served them himself, and they ate.

**9** Then they asked him, "Where is your wife Sarah?"

"She is there in the tent," he answered.

**10** One of them said, "Nine months from now I will come back, and your wife Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was behind him, at the door of the tent, listening. **11** Abraham and Sarah were very old, and Sarah had stopped having her monthly periods. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself and said, "Now that I am old and worn out, can I still enjoy sex? And besides, my husband is old too."

**13** Then the LORD asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Can I really have a child when I am so old?' **14** Is anything too hard for the LORD? As I said, nine months from now I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

**15** Because Sarah was afraid, she denied it. "I didn't laugh," she said.

"Yes, you did," he replied. "You laughed."



## Abraham Pleads for Sodom

**16** Then the men left and went to a place where they could look down at Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on their way. **17** And the LORD said to himself, "I will not hide from Abraham what I am going to do. **18** His descendants will become a great and mighty nation, and through him I will bless all the nations. **19** I have chosen him in order that he may command his sons and his descendants to obey me and to do what is right and just. If they do, I will do everything for him that I have promised."

**20** Then the LORD said to Abraham, "There are terrible accusations against Sodom and Gomorrah, and their sin is very great. **21** I must go down to find out whether or not the accusations which I have heard are true."

**22** Then the two men left and went on toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham. **23** Abraham approached the LORD and asked, "Are you really going to destroy the innocent with the guilty? **24** If there are fifty innocent people in the city, will you destroy the whole city? Won't you spare it in order to save the fifty? **25** Surely you won't kill the innocent with the guilty. That's impossible! You can't do that. If you did, the innocent would be punished along with the guilty. That is impossible. The judge of all the earth has to act justly."

**26** The LORD answered, "If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the whole city for their sake."

**27** Abraham spoke again: "Please forgive my boldness in continuing to speak to you, Lord. I am only a man and have no right to say anything. **28** But perhaps there will be only forty-five innocent people instead of fifty. Will you destroy the whole city because there are five too few?"

The LORD answered, "I will not destroy the city if I find forty-five innocent people."

**29** Abraham spoke again: "Perhaps there will be only forty."

He replied, "I will not destroy it if there are forty."

**30** Abraham said, "Please don't be angry, Lord, but I must speak again. What if there are only thirty?"

He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty."

**31** Abraham said, "Please forgive my boldness in continuing to speak to you, Lord. Suppose that only twenty are found?"

He said, "I will not destroy the city if I find twenty."

**32** Abraham said, "Please don't be angry, Lord, and I will speak only once more. What if only ten are found?"

He said, "I will not destroy it if there are ten." **33** After he had finished speaking with Abraham, the LORD went away, and Abraham returned home.

**Situation:**

God renames Abram → Abraham and Sarai → Sarah, reaffirming the promise of a son through Sarah herself.

**Response:**

Both laugh—mixing faith, disbelief, and hope.

**Case Insight:**

Doubt does not disqualify people from God's plan; persistence in faith matters.

# Part 4: Fulfillment and Faith Confirmed (Genesis 21)

## The Birth of Isaac

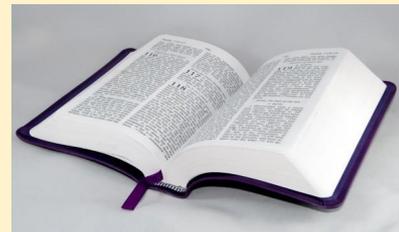
**21** The LORD blessed Sarah, as he had promised, **2** and she became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham when he was old. The boy was born at the time God had said he would be born. **3** Abraham named him Isaac, **4** and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded. **5** Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. **6** Sarah said, "God has brought me joy and laughter.<sup>[a]</sup> Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me." **7** Then she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

**8** The child grew, and on the day that he was weaned, Abraham gave a great feast.

## Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away

**9** One day Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, was playing with<sup>[a]</sup> Sarah's son Isaac.<sup>[a]</sup> **10** Sarah saw them and said to Abraham, "Send this slave and her son away. The son of this woman must not get any part of your wealth, which my son Isaac should inherit." **11** This troubled Abraham very much, because Ishmael also was his son. **12** But God said to Abraham, "Don't be worried about the boy and your slave Hagar. Do whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that you will have the descendants I have promised. **13** I will also give many children to the son of the slave woman, so that they will become a nation. He too is your son."

**14** Early the next morning Abraham gave Hagar some food and a leather bag full of water. He put the child on her back and sent her away. She left and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. **15** When the water was all gone, she left the child under a bush **16** and sat down about a hundred yards away. She said to herself, "I can't bear to see my child die." While she was sitting there, she<sup>[a]</sup> began to cry.

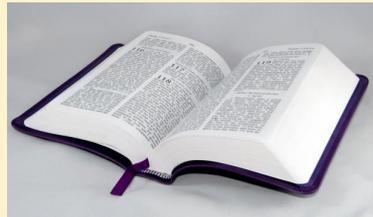


**17** God heard the boy crying, and from heaven the angel of God spoke to Hagar, "What are you troubled about, Hagar? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy crying. **18** Get up, go and pick him up, and comfort him. I will make a great nation out of his descendants." **19** Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. She went and filled the leather bag with water and gave some to the boy. **20** God was with the boy as he grew up; he lived in the wilderness of Paran and became a skillful hunter. **21** His mother got an Egyptian wife for him.

### **The Agreement between Abraham and Abimelech**

**22** At that time Abimelech went with Phicol, the commander of his army, and said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. **23** So make a vow here in the presence of God that you will not deceive me, my children, or my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so promise that you will also be loyal to me and to this country in which you are living."

**24** Abraham said, "I promise."



**25** Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well which the servants of Abimelech had seized. **26** Abimelech said, "I don't know who did this. You didn't tell me about it, and this is the first I have heard of it." **27** Then Abraham gave some sheep and cattle to Abimelech, and the two of them made an agreement. **28** Abraham separated seven lambs from his flock, **29** and Abimelech asked him, "Why did you do that?"

**30** Abraham answered, "Accept these seven lambs. By doing this, you admit that I am the one who dug this well." **31** And so the place was called Beersheba,<sup>[1]</sup> because it was there that the two of them made a vow.

**32** After they had made this agreement at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol went back to Philistia. **33** Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and worshiped the LORD, the Everlasting God. **34** Abraham lived in Philistia for a long time.

**Situation:**

Sarah gives birth to Isaac in her old age.

**Outcome:**

The promise is fulfilled exactly as God said, but on His timeline.

**Case Insight:**

Delayed promises are not denied promises.

# Let's Talk About It!

Break into three small groups.

## **Waiting on the Promise**

Abraham and Sarah waited many years for God's promise to be fulfilled.

→ *What emotions or challenges do you think they faced while waiting, and how do people today respond when waiting feels too long?*

## **Taking Control vs. Trusting God**

Sarah and Abraham chose to have a child through Hagar instead of waiting for God's plan.

→ *Why do people sometimes take control instead of trusting God, and what consequences can come from that choice?*

## **Faith with Doubt**

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they heard God's promise.

→ *What does this story teach us about having faith even when we feel doubt or disbelief?*

The  
End

