

**Heartgard**  
**Genesis 21:8-21; Philippians 4:4-7**  
**6/22/08**

You have heard the old sayings –  
*Women, you can't live with them, you can't live without them.*  
*Men, you can't live with them, you can't shot them.*

Part of the struggles between husband and wives is they try to fix the other! How you ever tried to fix your spouse, child, parent, brother, sister...?

This morning we will look at Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. God is trying to do something wonderful but they keep getting in the way by trying to fix the situation for God.

Abraham's story begins when God comes to him and invites him and his family to move to a new land, start over again and become a new nation of people who will serve God. God promises to bless him with a son and he will be a blessing to countless people. Abraham agrees and his adventure begins at 75 years old.

After many miles of traveling and time seems to be passing quickly, Abraham becomes afraid – maybe this whole son –being –born thing was a dream and not really God initiated? God comes to him again to affirm the promise. Abraham attempts to fix the situation – sort of help God along the way with God's plan. "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house will be my heir." God says, "No, he will not be your heir. Your very own son will be your heir." (15:1-4)

More time passes...Sarah's doubts lead her to try to fix the situation. She says to Abraham, he husband, "You see the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go and sleep with my slave-girl and produce a child from that relationship." She does not consider how this will change Hagar's status or who it will make Sarah feel. Abraham sleeps with Hagar for the purpose of having a son. She becomes pregnant. Now this produces some major conflict within their household. Hagar develops an attitude of arrogance towards Sarah. I am pregnant and you are not! Sarah begins to mistreat her out of jealousy and fear. Hagar tries to fix the situation by running away. God catches up with her and tells her to go back to the Abraham-Sarah dysfunctional household. God tells her she will have a son and to give him the name Ishmael (means "God hears"). She returns.

Now Abraham is 99 years old. Ishmael is born. 24 years ago God made a promise that he would have a son after not being about to have children for his whole adult life. I wonder how many times Abraham prayed, "God, remember me (remember your promise)?" God affirms the promise made 24 years ago. God changes Abraham and Sarah's names. God even makes a covenant with Abraham. Abraham cannot help but laugh at the 24-year promise. Abraham offers God some help to fix the situation. My servant Ishmael will be the heir you have been talking about for all these years?

God says, "No. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you will call him Isaac ("He laughs"). God actually makes a promise to bless Ishmael too. Ishmael is now 13 years old.

A few angels visit later on that year to announce the birth. Sarah laughs at the impossibility of their situation. The anxiety is too much for her! The angels ask Abraham "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?"

Now we come to our passage this morning. The big day arrives! Sarah conceives and nine months later bears a son who is named Isaac. The celebration must have been wonderful! However, sibling rivalry has always been a problem. Sarah sees Ishmael making fun of Isaac. Isaac is probably 3 years old and Ishmael is 14. We do not really know what the Hebrew means, "playing with her son." It seems Sarah does not want to have her son share the inheritance of Abraham with the slave-boy Ishmael. Sarah attempts to fix the situation by telling Abraham to send her away. Abraham is caught in the middle.

The wife of an overworked pastor took her husband to the doctor. After a few minutes, the doctor pulled the wife aside and said, 'I just don't like the way your husband looks at all.' The wife replied, "well I don't really either, but he's a pretty good father to the children."

It seems that the complex situation has fallen on the shoulders of Abraham. Sarah tells Abraham to fix the situation. God affirms Abraham. I will take care of Hagar and Ishmael. I will keep my promise to you to bless them. God does provide for them and leads them to a new life.

This story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac is a story about humans trying to fix their situation when God delays. There are many reasons we try to fix our situations:

(Ask for ideas)

Impatience with waiting

Like to move things along (kind of like a slow driver in the left lane, when we are in a hurry)

Anxiety and worry sneak into our hearts

Some of us feel we have to be busy and active

Often activity hides insecurities, but also builds a false sense of confidence.

Society also hurries us along – keep busy – fast food, short lines and no waiting

Sometimes we just think we know what needs to happen – pride, arrogance

I work with some churches who assume that God is leading them to keep doing what they have always done even though they are declining in membership, attendance, energy, and excitement for God's work. They have not stopped long enough to ask God where we go from here.

One of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life is waiting on God, especially when we are in a hurry. We easily get anxious like Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. Each time one of these Biblical characters gets into a troubles situation they try to fix it. However, they cannot get away from one fact that we cannot get escape either – the human reality has no ground for hope.

The Philippians passage reminds us do not be anxious for anything (easier said than done!). In everything pray – pray for everything. God makes a promise, just as reliable as the promise to Abraham and Sarah, the peace of Christ will guard your hearts in Christ Jesus. To guard something means to watch over it, protect it, keep it safe and from harm, to take precautions against danger.

My dog Scamper takes a Heartgard pill once a month. This prevents heart worms from attacking him which could kill him. The pill provides protection for his heart.

Prayer is our protection. Amidst the difficult situations, anxiety and waiting on God, pray. Prayer puts back into the resources of God – abundance, promises, presence instead of relying on our limited resources that are often demishing and leading us to despair. God's freedom is not limited by our barrenness, age or birth order. Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?

God sent his son into our world and into our lives to find us and bring us home. Jesus saves us from our sins and meaninglessness, walks with us in our stress and struggles and loves us deeply and completely. Jesus comes to us. We do not need to improve ourselves, reach a quota of good works or even feel good about ourselves. God keeps coming to us in Jesus Christ.

Refer to prayer outline put in bulletins.

### **Prayer Outline**

**Encouraging Scripture Verses:** Matthew 11:28-31,  
Psalm 18:16-19, Psalm 40:1-3, Psalm 23, Philippians 4:13, Romans 8:38-39

### **Prayer**

*Almighty God our Creator,*

*You have promised to protect and strengthen us. We can be assured we are never alone.*

*We need your help and strength. Life has gotten very difficult and frustrating (with describe the situation, including the feelings...).*

*Please comfort and guide us so we can experience the peace you intended for us and that we may give you the praise. Strengthen our faith to face our struggles so our lives can be a display of your grace and love. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. Amen.*

### **Outline of Prayer:**

1. Begin your prayer with a title for God  
Father, Almighty, Creator, Comforter, Helper

2. Describe the character, promises or nature of God

Character- kind, loving, faithful

Nature- all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful

Promises- never left alone, hears our prayers, concerned about us

3. Now define the reason of your prayer

What are you asking God to do? Your Request?

4. Next, expound on the results of the answered prayer

-healing, help, encouragement, direction, strength

-this will extend the prayer beyond us to something much bigger

5. The conclusion of the prayer is always in the name of Jesus Christ because it is Jesus who invites us to pray and makes it possible for us to pray (John 16:23-24)