# God Cares for Hagar and Ishmael

**Genesis 21:8-21**

## Worship Theme:
- God hears our prayers.

## Weaving Faith Into Life:
- Children will talk to God because God hears every prayer.

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<tr>
<th>Session Sequence</th>
<th>What Children Will Do</th>
<th>Supplies</th>
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| Let’s Praise God!  | Sing  
  • "I Sing the Mighty Power of God" (track 16)  
  • "Be Thankful" (1 Thessalonians 5:18a) (track 6)  
  • "Dona Nobis Pacem" (track 11)  
  • "He Remains Faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13) (track 8)  
  • "Worship Only You" (track 13) | KidsOwn Worship Kit:  
  Songs From FaithWeaver  
Classroom Supplies:  
CD player |

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<th>Preschool</th>
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| Let’s Learn the Point!  | *Hagar and Ishmael Move*  
  Eat a salty snack, and learn about how thirsty Hagar and Ishmael got when they moved away from Abraham’s home.  
  *Crying Contest*  
  Play a game in which they guess who's crying.  
  *God Hears Us*  
  Say a poem about all the times God hears them. | Classroom Supplies:  
  Pretzels, plastic cup of iced soda pop, towel, small paper cups of soda pop  
Classroom Supplies:  
  Blindfold |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Learn the Point!</strong> <em>(up to 25 minutes)</em></td>
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| * How Do You Know? | Watch a video and talk about how they know that God hears them. | **KidsOwn Worship Kit:**  
  * KidsOwn Worship DVD: “Hearing Our Prayers”  
  * Classroom Supplies: TV, DVD player |
| Hagar and Ishmael | Listen to and quietly reflect on the story of Hagar and Ishmael. | **KidsOwn Worship Kit:**  
  * Classroom Supplies: Watch, ball, masking tape |
| * Many Prayers | Play a game to explore different types of prayer. | **KidsOwn Worship Kit:**  
  * “Prayer Poster”  
  * Classroom Supplies: |

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<th>What Children Will Do</th>
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<td><strong>Let’s Pray!</strong> <em>(up to 10 minutes)</em></td>
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| The Offering | Offer their gifts to God. | **Classroom Supplies:**  
  * Offering bowls |
| Whisper a Prayer | Pray quietly for different needs. | |
| A Prayer of Leading | Close the session in a song prayer. | **KidsOwn Worship Kit:**  
  * Songs From FaithWeaver, “He Leadeth Me” (track 14)  
  * Classroom Supplies: CD player |

* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together.  
Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Let’s Learn the Point!  
Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.
It was typical in Abraham’s culture to have a celebration when a child was weaned, which was usually around 2 to 3 years of age. The celebration for Isaac was probably even bigger than most because he was something of a miracle child.

Unfortunately the joyous occasion soon turned to bitterness. We don’t know if Ishmael’s mocking of Isaac happened on the day of the celebration, but it must have occurred soon afterward. Ishmael had been born to Abraham through Hagar, Sarah’s maidservant, after Sarah had decided to take things into her own hands and had Abraham sleep with Hagar to “build a family” (Genesis 16:2). By the time Isaac was two, Ishmael was about 16 (Genesis 16:16; 21:5).

It’s easy to understand why a mother would be upset by a 16-year-old teasing her 2- or 3-year-old. But the animosity ran deeper than the teasing. Sarah and Hagar had been at odds since Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael (Genesis 16:4-10). Abraham’s decision to send Hagar and Ishmael away had probably been a long time in coming.

Abraham didn’t want to send Hagar and Ishmael away. He knew it was wrong according to his culture and according to anyone’s standards of fatherhood. When God told Abraham to go ahead and do what Sarah wanted, God didn’t say it was right. But God did promise to take care of Ishmael, eventually making a great nation of his descendants as well as Isaac’s.

The area where Abraham lived was desert, so Hagar and Ishmael would have had a tough time finding food and water. The skin of water and the food Abraham gave them was probably as much as they could comfortably carry but wouldn’t have lasted very long. Abraham had to have known that without God’s help, the two wouldn’t live a week.

Remember that Ishmael was at least 16 by this time. If Hagar had to put him under a bush, he must have been terribly weakened by fluid deprivation. He likely wasn’t far from death, as Hagar estimated (Genesis 21:16). We don’t know for sure why God responded to Ishmael’s crying and not to Hagar’s sobs. It may have been because of God’s commitment to Abraham to take care of Ishmael.

It seems odd that God responded to Ishmael’s cry but sent an angel to speak to Hagar. It may be that Ishmael was simply too weak to even get water for himself. It also seems likely that the well had been there all the time but Hagar didn’t see it until God made it visible to her. God was actually there taking care of them and providing the water they needed, but they couldn’t see it until they acknowledged their need for God. When they cried out to God, God heard and responded. And we can count on God to always do the same for us!

**Devotion for Leaders**

Jesus, because of you we know that God always hears us. We praise you for that and for revealing the power of God to meet every need, even before we ask.

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** Look through a photo album, and pick one picture that represents a challenging time for you. During that time, did you seek God’s help or sense his presence? Or was it more difficult to rely on him? Pray about a challenge you’re facing right now. Ask God to reveal some ways that show he hears you.
Why We Worship for Leaders

There are so many things about God that are simply beyond our understanding. One of those things is God’s ability to hear the prayers of every person on earth no matter when they pray and no matter how many other people are praying. This is especially good news for kids. Children spend a lot of time looking for attention from adults. Adults are often too busy to give kids the time or personalized attention they crave. But God has plenty of time and attention to give to each of his children. God hears us no matter what. And God is patient and loving with us. He hears us when we’re spiteful, when we’re sinful, when we’re hurting, and when we’re afraid. God celebrates our joys and triumphs. He gives comfort when things aren’t going right. He wisely considers our requests and gives us what is truly good and helpful to us. Such a God is worthy of our worship.

Easy Prep for Leaders

How Do You Know?—Set up a TV and DVD player. Prepare the KidsOwn Worship DVD to play “Hearing Our Prayers” (12). You’ll want to watch the clip at least once before the children arrive.

Many Prayers—Tape the “Prayer Poster” from the KidsOwn Worship Kit to the wall. Then place a tape mark on the floor about 20 feet away.

Preschool Activities—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

Web Help—Get bonus leader tips and ideas at kidsownworship.com.

Let’s Praise God!

Play Songs From FaithWeaver, Fall 2011 as children arrive. Choose some volunteer greeters to welcome children as they enter the room.

Say Hello, everyone! To begin our worship session today, let’s praise God with our voices. When I lift my hands in the air, we’ll all say “hallelujah” together. Hallelujah is a Hebrew word that means “praise God.” Let’s say it so it can be heard all the way in heaven. Ready?

Lift your hands in the air, and have the kids say “hallelujah.” Repeat at least three times.

Say Today we’re worshipping God because he hears us when we talk to him, and he hears us when we praise him. Let’s say “hallelujah” together again. This time say it loudly if my hands are lifted high in the air, and say it softly when I hold my hands lower in the air. Ready?

Lift your hands high in the air, and have the kids say “hallelujah.” Then lower your hands a little, and have the kids say “hallelujah” more softly. Continue lowering your hands until the “hallelujahs” are barely audible.
Does God hear us better when we talk louder? Why or why not? (No, he always hears us; yes, it's always easier to hear someone talking loudly.)

How is God able to hear us no matter how loudly we talk to him? (He always hears us; he's everywhere all the time.)

We serve a mighty God. No matter what, God hears us when we talk to him. We can talk loudly or softly—we can even just think our prayers—and God hears us. Isn't that great? Let's sing a praise song to God. Lyrics for all songs are at the back of this book.

Sing "I Sing the Mighty Power of God."

It's great to know that when we offer our prayers of praise to God, he hears them no matter what. God listens to us because he created us; we're important to him. Let's thank God for loving us so much.

Sing "Be Thankful" (1 Thessalonians 5:18a).

I'm going to ask you a few questions, and I'd like you all to answer out loud.

What is your name?

How old are you?

What is your favorite color?

What is the first animal that comes to your mind?

After you have asked these questions and any others you'd like to include,

When you gave your answer, how many other answers did you hear and understand? (Only two or three; just the person next to me.)

What made it difficult to hear all the answers? (We were all talking at once; it was too loud in here.)

It was impossible for us to hear and understand what everyone in the room was saying. But God hears all our prayers even if we all pray at the same time. Let's sing a prayer song to God. This song is a round; we all sing the same words but at different times. The words are in Latin and they mean, "Grant us peace." By singing this song, we'll be recognizing God for hearing each person's prayer no matter how many other people are praying. We'll also be recognizing God for hearing us no matter what language we pray in. Designate three groups so children can sing the song as a round.

Sing "Dona Nobis Pacem."

Another reason to praise God is his faithfulness to us. God faithfully listens to us. He's always available to us. We can pray in the middle of the night when we wake up scared. We can pray at school when we're tempted to
do something wrong. We can pray when we’re thankful. We can pray when we’re mad. No matter when and no matter what, God promises to be faithful and to hear our prayers. Let’s sing “He Remains Faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13).

Sing “He Remains Faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13).

**Ask**

- **Why do you think God wants us to pray?** (He likes to hear from us; he wants to have a friendship with us.)
- **Why is prayer good?** (It keeps us connected to God; it’s a good way to praise God; God can hear what’s on our hearts.)
- **What happens when we pray?** (God listens to us; God comforts us and gives us peace.)

**Say**

God made us to be his children. God wants to spend time with us as if he were our very best friend. When we pray, we’re spending time with God just as we spend time with friends. We become closer to God, and our relationship with him gets better and better. Let’s praise God, who hears us when we pray.

Sing “Worship Only You.”

**Let’s Learn the Point!**

**Preschool Activities, pages 173-174**

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let’s Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

**Elementary Activities**

**How Do You Know?**

Have the children form discussion groups of three to four. If you have adult or teenage helpers to sit with each group, you can have children form larger groups of about five to six children.

Show the KidsOwn Worship DVD clip titled “Hearing Our Prayers” (12). Then have the discussion groups talk about these questions:

**Ask**

- **When has God heard your prayers?** (All the time; I don’t know if God hears my prayers because I can’t hear his answer.)
- **How did you know that God had heard your prayer?** (He answered it; I just felt God’s peace; I had faith in God.)
• Have you ever felt like God wasn’t listening to you when you were praying? What made you feel that way? (Yes, my prayer wasn’t answered the way I thought it should be; yes, I didn’t understand how God was responding; no, I know that God always hears me even if I don’t know what he’s saying back.)

• Sometimes we don’t get what we pray for. Does that mean God didn’t hear the prayer? Why or why not? (Yes, because God gives us everything we need; no, God still hears us, but may not give us what we ask for.)

• Why doesn’t God always give us what we ask for? (He knows what’s best for us; God’s plans might be different.)

After a few minutes of discussion, have volunteers share their insights with the group.

**Worship Leader Tip**

Consider playing soft music or dimming the lights to help kids quietly reflect on the questions.

**Say**

God always hears our prayers. But sometimes it feels like God isn’t listening. But God hears us no matter what. And God knows what’s best for us. Even if we don’t get what we pray for, we can know that God is always right there with us, hearing our prayers and answering them according to what’s best for us.

**Hagar and Ishmael**

**Say**

While I tell you today’s Bible story, I’d like you to listen quietly. I’ll stop several times during the story and ask a question. Think about how you’d answer that question. Then you’ll have time to talk to God about your answer.

A family in the Bible faced a tough decision. This family didn’t get along very well. There was Abraham and his wife, Sarah. They had a little boy named Isaac. Then Abraham had another family. He had a teenage son named Ishmael. Ishmael’s mother was named Hagar.

The two mothers didn’t get along very well. Sarah told Abraham that Hagar and Ishmael should move away. But Abraham loved his son Ishmael and didn’t want them to move away. Abraham didn’t know what to do. Now let’s take a few moments to think about these questions quietly.

**Ask**

• What tough decisions do you face?

• Are there relationships in your life that are rocky?

**Say**

Tell God about your problem. (Pause.)

But God knew all about Abraham’s problem. God told Abraham to do what Sarah asked—to send Hagar and Ishmael away. God told Abraham that he would take care of them. Abraham didn’t have to worry.

**Ask**

• How has God taken care of some of the problems you’ve had?

• How do you think God will take care of the problems you face now?
God Cares for Hagar and Ishmael
Genesis 21:8-21

Worship Theme:
God hears our prayers.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Hagar and Ishmael Move—You’ll need one large plastic cup of iced soda or juice and a salty snack such as pretzels. Put the glass of iced soda pop out of sight under a towel on the floor in front of you. You’ll also need small paper cups of soda for the children. Keep these out of sight until they’re called for in the story.

Using Theo
Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo participate in the crying contest in the “Crying Contest” activity.
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today’s worship session.

* Hagar and Ishmael Move

Have the children sit in a circle, and give each child a handful of pretzels to eat while they listen to the story.

Say
Today our Bible story is about two families that didn’t get along very well. Sarah and Abraham and Isaac were one family. Sarah and Abraham were the mom and dad, and Isaac was their little boy. Isaac was about 3 years old when this story happened. Are any of you 3 years old?

Now Abraham had another family. He had a son named Ishmael. Ishmael’s mom was named Hagar. Ishmael was a teenager.

Sarah and Hagar didn’t like each other very much. There was a lot of arguing and bickering. Finally Sarah told Abraham that Hagar and her son Ishmael should move away.

Abraham didn’t know what to do because he loved his son Ishmael. But he also loved Sarah and his son Isaac. He didn’t know what to do to solve the problem and stop all the fighting. But God heard Abraham’s worries, and God had a plan.

God told Abraham not to worry about Ishmael, that it was OK for Ishmael to move away. God promised to take care of Ishmael.

So early the next morning, Abraham packed some food and water and gave them to Hagar and Ishmael. They went on their way into the desert.

The desert was hot and dusty. Hagar and Ishmael drank the water that Abraham had sent with them. Uncover the soda, and take a long drink. Soon the water was all gone, and Hagar and Ishmael got very thirsty. They couldn’t find any water.

Soon they were so thirsty that they thought they would die.

Ask
Have you ever been that thirsty? What happened?

Say
There wasn’t anything to drink anywhere. There were no stores to buy juice or pop from. There wasn’t a water faucet or a sink anywhere. There wasn’t even a lake or a stream or a pond. Everywhere Hagar and Ishmael looked, all they found was hot, dry, dusty desert.

Ishmael was so thirsty he started to cry. His mother put him under a bush where there was a little bit of shade from the hot sun. Then she walked a ways off. It hurt her to know that her son was crying and there was nothing she could do to help him. Hagar began to cry, too.

Allergy Alert
Be aware that some children have allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have. Also be sure to read food labels carefully as hidden ingredients may cause allergy-related problems.
Preschool Activities

* Hagar and Ishmael (continued)

Say: God heard Hagar and knew that she was worried. God asked, “What’s wrong, Hagar? Don’t be afraid. I hear your son crying, and I’ll take care of him.” Then God showed Hagar a well that she hadn’t seen before. Hagar and Ishmael hurried to the well and drank and drank. Distribute the paper cups of soda, and let the children drink. God took care of Ishmael just as he had promised Abraham he would.

Crying Contest

Say: Let’s play a game to remind us that God heard Ishmael’s cries. Choose a volunteer, and put the blindfold on him or her. I’m going to choose someone in the circle to cry like Ishmael cried in the desert. Then I’ll take off your blindfold, and you’ll have two tries to guess who was crying. When you think you know who it was, sit in front of that person and say, “God hears you.” Then we’ll tell you if you guessed correctly.

Ask: • How did you guess who the crier was? • Were we always right? • How can God always hear us?

Say: We serve an amazing God. No matter what, he always knows who’s sad and who’s happy. God hears us all the time. Let’s praise God for hearing us.

God Hears Us

Say: Say this poem with the children several times. To begin, just have them follow your motions. Then on the second time through, have them say the words along with you.

God hears me when I whisper. (Put a finger to your lips.)
God hears me when I think. (Put a finger to your temple.)
God hears me when I yell real loud. (Loudly say the words “real loud!”)
God hears me when I laugh. (Hold your stomach.)

Ask: • Can you think of other times God hears you? Tell us about one. • Why does God listen to your prayers?

Say: God loves us so much that he listens to what we have to say. God listens to our prayers always; it doesn’t matter if we’re singing or crying or laughing or whispering. God always hears us.
Ask God to help you, and ask God to take away your worry. (Pause.)

Abraham did what God told him to. He packed some food and water for Hagar and Ishmael and told them they needed to move away.

Hagar and Ishmael started out in their journey through the desert. But soon their water ran out. They searched for water, but they found nothing. Time passed, and they got thirstier. Hagar worried because she knew they couldn’t survive in the desert very long if they didn’t have water to drink.

Hagar told Ishmael to rest in the shade of a bush. Ishmael was so thirsty that he was crying. Hagar sat by herself, and she began to cry, too.

Have you ever faced a situation that was this desperate? (Yes, my family ran out of food when my dad lost his job; we were very hungry during the blizzard last year.)

Have you ever been this scared? (Yes, I didn’t think we’d make it through the tornadoes this summer; I was afraid that my family would fall apart when my parents got a divorce.)

Tell God about your fear, and ask him to help. (Pause.)


And then God opened Hagar’s eyes so she saw a well. Hagar filled their containers. She and Ishmael drank their fill. God had heard them.

God helped Hagar and Ishmael in an unusual way. He showed them a well they hadn’t seen before. How do you think God might help you with your problems? (He could show me a new way to solve it; he could send friends to help my family.)

Invite volunteers to tell the group what they thought about during the story.

God had a plan for Hagar and Ishmael. God was watching out for Hagar and Ishmael; he wouldn’t let anything happen to them that would hinder his plan for them. God’s watching out for us, too. He knows the problems you face, and he cares about you. God hears your prayers when you’re hurting and confused. God will help you know what to do.
* Many Prayers

Direct kids' attention to the “Prayer Poster” on the wall. You’ll also need a watch with a second hand and a ball or a beanbag.

Say

This poster shows many different kinds of prayer. A praise prayer is telling God how great he is. A thanks prayer tells God “thank you” for something he’s done. To confess means to tell God we’re sorry about a sin. A help prayer asks God to help us with a problem. A guidance prayer asks God to help us know what to do. A wonderings prayer means we just talk to God about things we don’t understand. And “just stuff” means we talk to God about the stuff that happens to us. Let’s play a game with all these kinds of prayer. You’ll each have a turn to toss the ball at the wall. We’ll all watch which section of the poster the ball hits. Then the entire group will have 30 seconds to think of all the different things we could talk to God about in that category. For example, if the ball hit the Help section, we’d think about all the problems we could ask God’s help with. Let’s play.

Have the children take turns standing at the tape mark and tossing the ball at the poster. Take note of where the ball lands, and call out the category. Then have the children call out different things they could talk to God about in that category.

Continue until everyone has had a turn.

Say

You had great ideas about the things we can talk to God about.

Ask

• What did this activity teach you about prayer? (We can pray in many different ways; God wants to hear about everything on our hearts.)

• Why do you think God wants us to talk to him about all of this stuff? (He cares about us; God wants to have a friendship with us.)

• Why do you think God listens to our prayers about all of this stuff? (God wants to help us; God is a good listener; God promises to be there for us.)

Say

God listens to our prayers because he wants to help us and guide us. God listens to our prayers because he loves us. Let’s thank him with our offerings.

Let’s Pray!

The Offering

Say

God hears us when we speak our prayers, when we sing our prayers, when we whisper our prayers, and when we think our prayers. As we take the offering today, let’s pray in an unusual way. I’ll give you one minute to find something either in this room or in your pockets that represents something you’d like to say to God. For example, maybe a wadded-up gum wrapper...
would represent your desire to “throw away” a sin. A songbook could represent your desire to sing praises to God. When you’ve found an item, return to your seat. You’ve got a minute. Let’s do this prayerfully and silently.

Invite the children to bring their prayer items and their offerings to the front of the room.

**Whisper a Prayer**

*Say* One of the most amazing things about God hearing us is that he can hear us even if we whisper and even if we just think our prayers. Let’s try it out.

Give children some examples of what to pray about—for example, for a friend who is having a hard time, or for a brother or sister. After each item, have 10 seconds of silence.

*Say* You can be certain that God heard you. God is always ready to hear our prayers.

**A Prayer of Leading**

*Say* Let’s close with a song that reminds us how God leads us. God led Hagar when he heard her prayer, and God will do the same for us.

Sing “He Leadeth Me.”