

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Genesis 17:15-17; 18:9-15; 21:1-7

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L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be the answers to the discussion questions. These indeed are “hints” a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

**Five Questions for Discussion
and Thinking Further**

1. In what ways did God show His love and concern for Sarah?

God changed her name, just as He changed Abraham’s name, because He was their heavenly Father and wanted to bless them both. He wanted her to be happy by giving her a son, even in her old age. He also wanted her to have the joy of knowing that some of her descendants would be great. God did not condemn her or judge her for laughing, because God knew her well.

2. What is the difference between laughter that expresses joy and laughter that expresses doubt? What might have been the difference between Abraham's laughter and Sarah's laughter?

Both types of laughter can be almost spontaneous and involuntary because of the situation. Abraham's laughter probably expressed joy almost spontaneously, because he had previously talked with God personally before this; he knew God personally, and he knew what God could do and planned to do. Sarah's laughter may have expressed the inward thought, also spontaneously, "This is impossible, because we are too old." Her laughter may have expressed doubt to some extent. Her laughter did not express the doubt of the unbeliever. Her doubt did not express the doubt of derision that will ridicule someone because they believe in God or believe the Bible is true.

3. Read Genesis 18:1-10. In Genesis 18:9, who do you think "They" refers to?

Since "They" asked the one question; since the LORD appeared to Abraham, and since Abraham saw and talked to three men when he talked to the LORD, it may be that "They" refers to the Father, the Son (before He came to earth incarnate in Jesus), and the Holy Spirit (Who is the Comforter). This is my opinion, though some might say One Person of the Trinity appeared with two angels: consider the two who entered Sodom to rescue Lot. We need the entire Bible in order to learn more about God than what the Book of Genesis alone can teach us.

4. Why do you think the LORD made Abraham and Sarah keep waiting for their child to be conceived by Sarah, after telling Abraham that he would have many descendants through the birth of her son?

God wanted to build up their faith and inspire them to keep believing in and trusting God. God may have wanted to show the world that Abraham was a man of great faith and also teach why the righteous are saved by their faith or how someone is accounted righteous for their faith. God may have also wanted Abraham and Sarah to serve as examples to encourage others who also must wait for God's perfect timing. To teach that sometimes we too must wait a long time for God to fulfill His promises to us and others.

5. What happens to people sometimes when God does not do what they want done when they want it done?

They may quit believing in or trusting in God. They may see that what they want is not the best for them, so God does not want to give it to them and harm them or others. They may see that God never promised to give them what they want, either by telling them personally or by promising what they want in the Bible. They may see that God has a perfect time for everything He does, and that God only gives good gifts. They may be inspired to study the Bible more carefully and thoroughly in case they have

misinterpreted the Bible or have been taught incompletely or wrongly.

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