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Playing the Waiting Game

Key References: Genesis 16; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chap. 13, pp. 145-147; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 1, pp. 156-161; Our Beliefs, nos. 7, 23, 22.















Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 32.

powertext

"And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised" (Hebrews 6:15, NIV).

powerpoint

Following God's plan helps us avoid conflicts.

Waiting. It's such a hard thing to do. Wait for Christmas. Wait for your birthday. Wait till school's out. Wait till you can drive. "Be patient," your parents say. That's because parents know that the results of impatience are usually a disaster.

Abraham and Sarah lived at a time when a large family was a great honor. But at the age of 75 they were still childless. By then they had probably given up on having children. Then God spoke to Abraham and told him he would be the father of a great nation. No doubt the promise gave Abraham and Sarah new hope, and the waiting began again. Yet even several years after the promise, no child was born.

"You have given me no children," Abraham finally said to God, "so a servant in my household will be my heir" (Genesis 15:3, NIV).

"This man will not be your heir," said God, "but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." Then God showed to Abraham by night the starry sky and said to him, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." The Lord then promised to Abraham, "So shall your offspring be" (verses 4, 5, NIV).

So they waited and waited and waited some more. Ten years went by, and still there was no baby. Abraham and Sarah finally ran out of patience. They decided to take matters into their own hands.

3

Sunday

READ Read Proverbs 3:5, 6 and this week's story, "Playing the Waiting Game."

CHOOSE Choose an object that symbolizes patience and write your power text on a piece of paper next to it. Begin to learn the power text.

PRAY Pray that you may wait patiently for God's plans.

Monday

READ Read Genesis 16:1-4.

SEARCH Search the newspaper and find a story in which people have chosen to solve a problem their way rather than God's way.

CLIP Clip out the story and write how the story would turn out if they solved the problem God's way.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for the people involved in the story you have found.

Tuesday

READ Read Genesis 16:5, 6.

THINK How could Sarah and Abraham have avoided having a conflict with Hagar? In what ways could they have solved the conflict with her?

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write your responses.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for patience so that you may avoid conflicts.

Sarah gave her servant Hagar to Abraham as another wife. But ignoring God's plan would have disastrous consequences. Even though he lived among heathens who thought nothing of marrying several wives, until now Abraham had not adopted their customs. Yet Abraham didn't ask God when deciding to take Hagar as another wife. He was desperate. He had run out of patience.

So he took Hagar as his second wife, and sure enough, it wasn't long until she was pregnant. Abraham might have thought that would solve his problem, but he was mistaken. Disregarding God's plan for his family was disastrous.

In no time at all wife number one and wife number two were not getting along. Hagar was expecting the child that Sarah couldn't have, and she probably reminded Sarah about it every chance she got.

Sarah ran to Abraham. "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering," she wailed. "I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me."

"Your slave is in your hands," he replied. "Do with her whatever you think best" (Genesis 16:5, 6, NIV).

Sarah was certainly angry. Jealous. Even mean. She mistreated Hagar, and Hagar ran away to the desert.

Out there in the desert, near a spring, an angel found Hagar all alone.

"Go back to your mistress," he said, "and submit to her. . . .

"You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him

Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery" (verses 9, 11, NIV). So Hagar returned, and Ishmael was born. At long last Abraham had a child, a son whom he loved, and things seemed to settle



Wednesday

READ Read Genesis 16:7-10.

THINK How do people run away from family problems?

SHARE Share Psalm 40:1-3 with someone who may be struggling with family conflicts.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for those who feel that they can't cope.

Thursday

READ Read Genesis 16:11-16.

CREATE Write a poem about how God solves conflicts.

THINK What was Hagar's experience after she met the angel?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that He is willing to help us work through our problems.

Friday

READ Read Psalm 40:1-3.

SHARE Share the poem that you wrote yesterday with your family.

ACT Act out the story of Hagar and the angel.

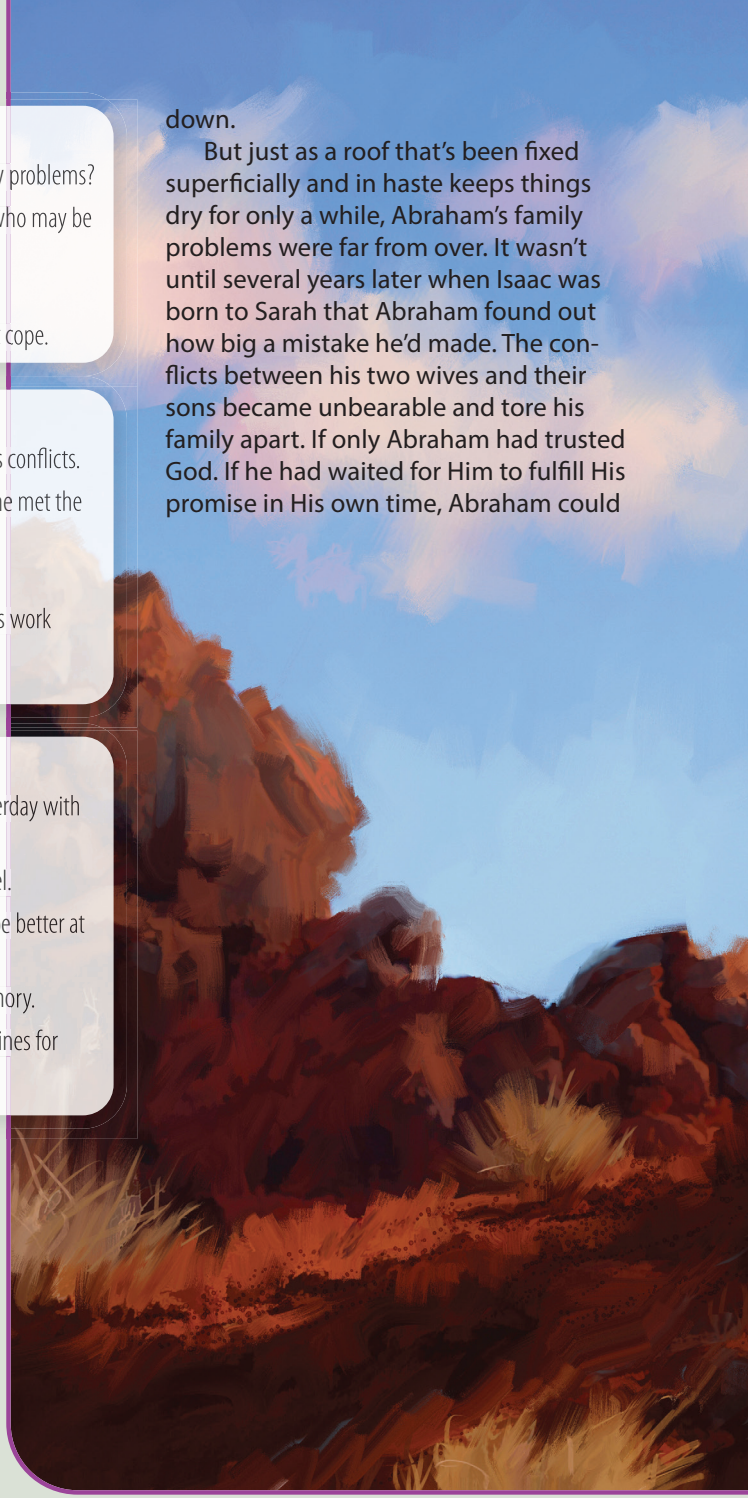
DISCUSS Discuss how you can, as a family, be better at managing conflict.

REPEAT Say aloud the power text from memory.

PRAY Thank Jesus for giving you safe guidelines for solving conflicts.

down.

But just as a roof that's been fixed superficially and in haste keeps things dry for only a while, Abraham's family problems were far from over. It wasn't until several years later when Isaac was born to Sarah that Abraham found out how big a mistake he'd made. The conflicts between his two wives and their sons became unbearable and tore his family apart. If only Abraham had trusted God. If he had waited for Him to fulfill His promise in His own time, Abraham could



have saved himself a lot of grief.

Abraham was desperate for the heir God had promised and charged ahead with his own plan for a son. It wasn't until he was an old man that he finally learned he could trust God with everything in his life, especially what was most precious to him—his family.



PUZZLE
3

GOD'S COMMAND

Below is a Bible quote and four clues.
The numbers (which represent letters) in the clues match the numbers in the verse.

"
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11	12	13	14

."

CLUES

1	3	5	10
9	2	7	14
13	12	8	
11	6	4	

What Eve was to Adam.

Difficult.

Decay.

Abraham's nephew.