5

Bickering Brothers

Key References: Genesis 21:1-21; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chap. 13, pp. 145, 146; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 1, pp. 168-176; Our Beliefs, nos. 8, 7, 23.















Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 46.

powertext

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21, NIV).

powerpoint

God helps us have a loving attitude even in difficult circumstances.

If you watch or listen to the news on just about any night, you'll probably hear a story about the Middle East. This is not a new conflict. The people in the Middle East have been fighting for a long time—about 4,000 years, to be exact. Much of the conflict goes back to two boys.

Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born. As you can imagine, Isaac's birth brought great joy to his parents. This was the child God had promised when He first called Abraham 25 years earlier. After 10 years, when no child appeared and Abraham wondered aloud if his servant would get his inheritance, God restated His promise of this son. After Ishmael was born, God again promised Abraham a son with Sarah. Abraham asked for God's blessing on Ishmael, his first son. But Sarah's child was the son of promise, the one with whom God would establish His covenant. The nation promised so long ago would be Isaac's descendants, not Ishmael's.

After Isaac's birth the tension in Abraham's home only increased. Abraham threw a great feast for Isaac when he was a small boy, and the huge party certainly irritated Ishmael and his mother. When Ishmael began to bother Isaac, it was more than Sarah could bear.



5

Sunday

READ Read Genesis 21:1-7 and this week's story, "Bickering Brothers."

CREATE Cut out two paper people. Write the power text across both and place them where you will see them.

LEARN Begin to learn the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you live peacefully with your siblings.

Monday

READ Read Genesis 21:8-13.

INTERVIEW Interview other Christians and ask them to tell you about a time God said, "Wait."

REFLECT How do you respond when God says, "Wait"?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to give you patience when you need it.

Tuesday

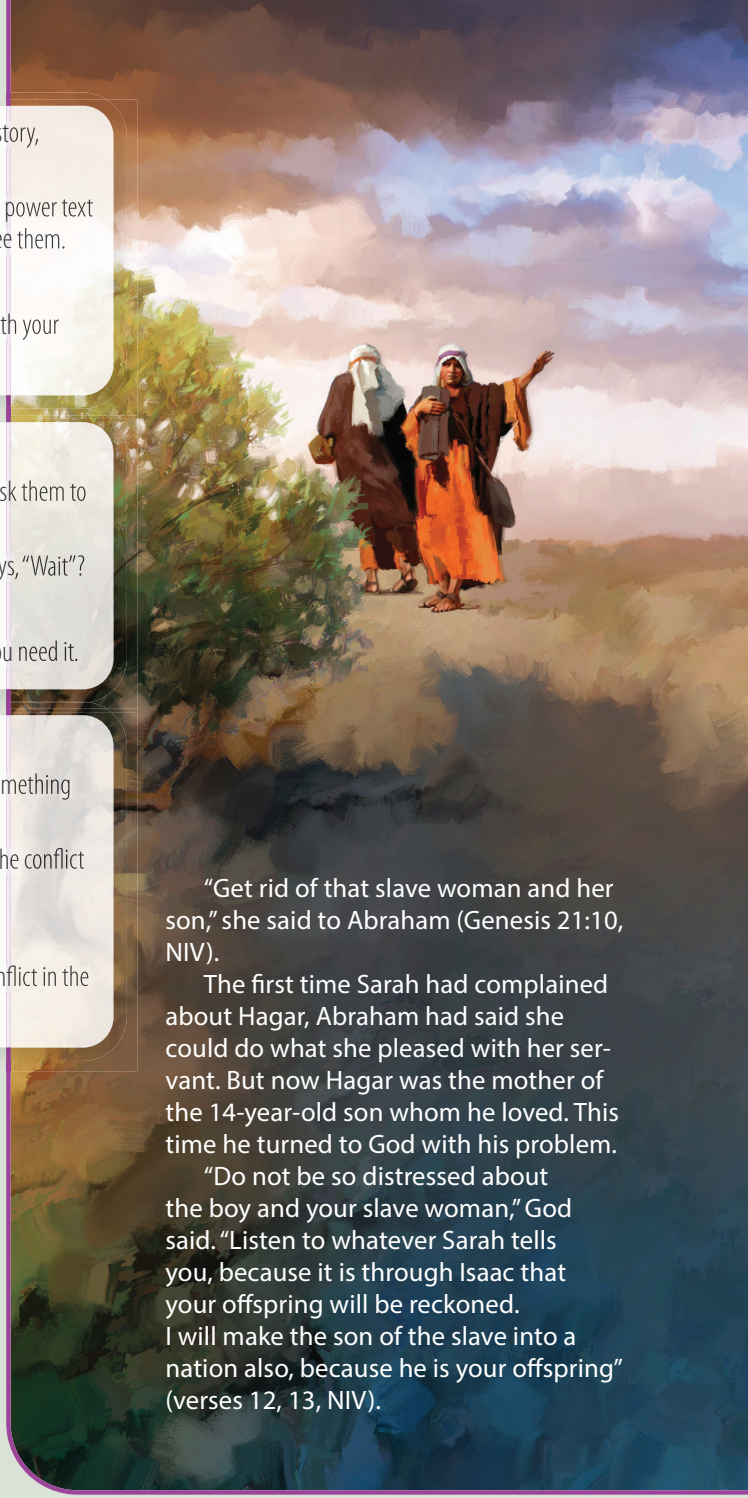
READ Read Genesis 21:14-21.

MAKE Make a card, send an e-mail, or do something nice for a brother, sister, or close friend.

TRACK Track via the news and newspapers the conflict between two nations.

REVIEW Review the power text.

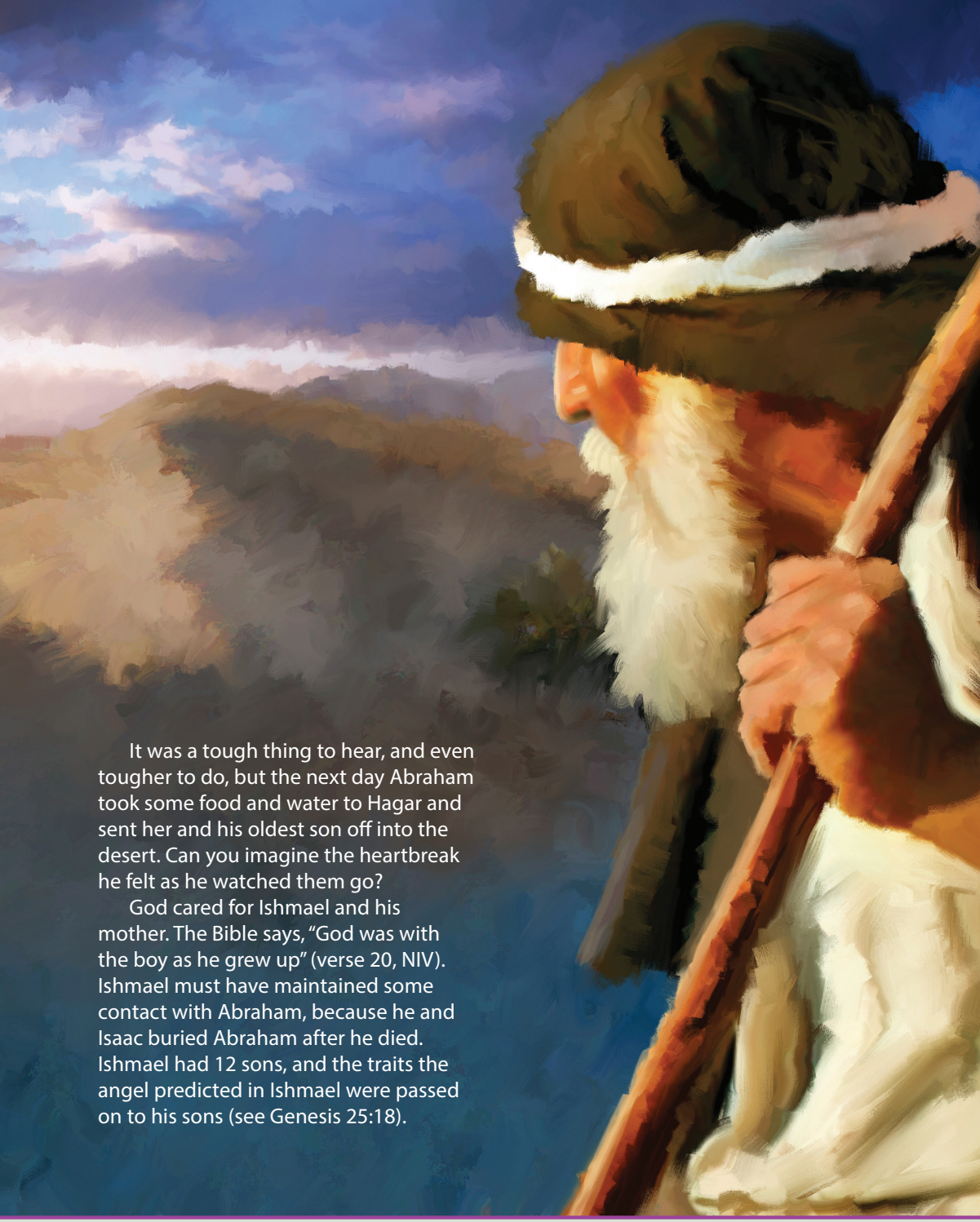
PRAY Pray for the people affected by the conflict in the Middle East.



"Get rid of that slave woman and her son," she said to Abraham (Genesis 21:10, NIV).

The first time Sarah had complained about Hagar, Abraham had said she could do what she pleased with her servant. But now Hagar was the mother of the 14-year-old son whom he loved. This time he turned to God with his problem.

"Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman," God said. "Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring" (verses 12, 13, NIV).



It was a tough thing to hear, and even tougher to do, but the next day Abraham took some food and water to Hagar and sent her and his oldest son off into the desert. Can you imagine the heartbreak he felt as he watched them go?

God cared for Ishmael and his mother. The Bible says, "God was with the boy as he grew up" (verse 20, NIV). Ishmael must have maintained some contact with Abraham, because he and Isaac buried Abraham after he died. Ishmael had 12 sons, and the traits the angel predicted in Ishmael were passed on to his sons (see Genesis 25:18).

Wednesday

READ Read Ephesians 5:21-33.

CREATE Create a chart, based on these verses. Name it "How to Have Healthy Relationships."

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for your family members as well as for your extended family.

Thursday

READ Read Mark 12:31.

REFLECT What does it mean to love someone else as much as yourself?

DO Create a song/poem about how to treat one another.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for His help in difficult situations.

Friday

READ Read Genesis 21:1-21 with your family.

TEACH Teach your family your song or read them your poem.

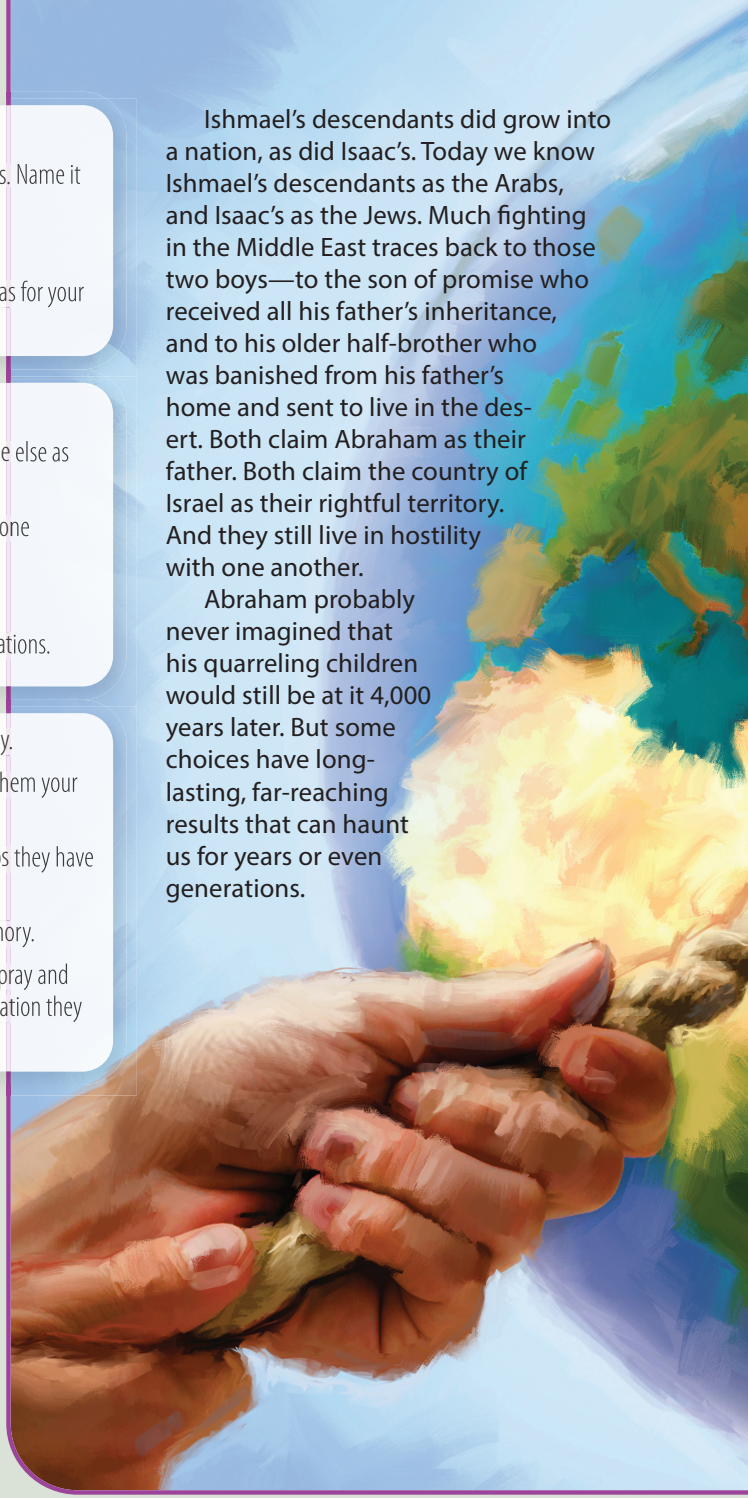
ASK Ask the others in your family for any tips they have for solving conflicts.

REPEAT Say the power text aloud from memory.

PRAY Invite each member of your family to pray and ask God to help them resolve any conflict situation they may be experiencing.

Ishmael's descendants did grow into a nation, as did Isaac's. Today we know Ishmael's descendants as the Arabs, and Isaac's as the Jews. Much fighting in the Middle East traces back to those two boys—to the son of promise who received all his father's inheritance, and to his older half-brother who was banished from his father's home and sent to live in the desert. Both claim Abraham as their father. Both claim the country of Israel as their rightful territory. And they still live in hostility with one another.

Abraham probably never imagined that his quarreling children would still be at it 4,000 years later. But some choices have long-lasting, far-reaching results that can haunt us for years or even generations.





Abraham's decision to take a second wife went against God's plan for family happiness. We still live with the consequences of that decision.

God knows the formula for a successful home, and He asks us to follow it for our own good. He has outlined a plan for relationships that will not lead to years of heartache and regret. He wants us to be able to look back on our lives without saying, "If only I had never . . ."

PUZZLE
5

KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Consider the following Bible verse:

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit
through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3, NIV).

Use the phrase "BOND OF PEACE" to find
24 words of four letters or more.
Do not use a letter more often than
it appears in the phrase.

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