

**Life Group Notes**  
**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

**Title:** If only Ishmael ...

**Read:** Genesis 17v1-8, v15-18

**Who was Abraham?** He was called by God to leave his homeland and go to another place and establish a new culture. He was to be a father of many nations but that meant that he had to keep moving. He left his present certainties preferring promised realities.

**Who was Ishmael?** He was Hagar's son, fathered by Abraham because his wife Sarah was barren. Ishmael was part of Abraham's household and the heir apparent. Yet God had chosen to build the family line through a son promised to Sarah.

**Why did Abraham laugh?** Because of his mindset ... It all sounded brilliant but Abraham just didn't believe what God had said. Although this is understandable it is not excusable.

**Why did Abraham pray his prayer?** His mindset was the result of his experience; it had been conditioned by pressures ... so he prayed "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing".

- *Conditioned by weight of circumstances* – Sarah could not conceive and it was too painful to go again, their years of failures in this area had conditioned him.
- *Pressures from others* – as he looked at his wife, her maid and his son Ishmael he must have thought why change things?
- *Desire to settle* – the present was good enough. He has no emotional fight left for another round of miracles!
- *Failure at point of delivery* – He was losing his nerve to believe after years of disappointment, even though the promised son was soon to be conceived.
- *He was experiencing demonic counter attack* – he may not have seen it like that but we do not fight against flesh and blood, and the blood line of Jesus was at stake here.

Abraham was not simply an isolated person, rather his story was written in heaven and he was part of a huge unfolding story of salvation.

**Suggested questions:**

- 1) Have you ever known delay or disappointment in things you felt God had promised you? How did you cope / what did you learn?
- 2) Abraham didn't settle; he pressed on even though he made mistakes ... what about you?
- 3) What has shaped your mindset or expectations? What adjustments do you need to make?