

God Cares for Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 21:8-21

Third-and fourth-graders take the concept of prayer seriously. But sometimes they can take it too far by treating prayer as a personal wish list. You can affirm kids for their belief that God hears us and does answer our prayers while helping them understand that our prayers don't always have to be about what we need or want. Use this lesson to guide kids' understanding of communicating with God about anything they'd like and to assure them that God always hears us when we pray.



► Bible Point

God always hears us when we pray.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Blah, Blah! <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Attempt to communicate by using only the word <i>blah</i> .	copies of the "Blah, Blah" handout (at the end of this lesson), scissors	Cut apart the "God hears us" and "Talk to God" phrases along the dotted lines.
2 Bible Exploration	Wilderness Journey <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Hear about Hagar and Ishmael, and make bushes to hide behind.	Bible, CD player, items from around the room, salty crackers, antibacterial gel (optional) Teacher Pack: CD	
	Are You Listening, God? <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Find out what happened to Hagar and Ishmael, and discuss times God has answered their prayers.	Bible, CD player, paper, pens, 1 cup of water per child, bushes from previous activity Teacher Pack: CD	

Key Verse

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9).

Weaving Faith Into Life

Children will communicate with God about their needs.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Open Doors <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Make doors to remind them that God will answer when they knock.	Bible Truth Sleuth, CD player, copies of the lyrics page (at the end of this lesson), several pairs of scissors, stapler Teacher Pack: CD	Tear out the Lesson 13 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
	Prayer Journals <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Make Prayer Journals to talk to God.	pens, 2 sheets of paper and 1 pairs of scissors per child, washable markers, stapler	
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth, Prayer Journals from previous activity	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



God Cares for Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 21:8-21

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

Ishmael Mocks Isaac

It was typical in Abraham’s culture to have a celebration when a child was weaned, which was usually when the child was around 2 or 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 bitter. 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 2, Ishmael was about 16 (Genesis 16:16; 21:5).

Sarah and Hagar had been at odds ever 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 Casts Out Hagar and Ishmael

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 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, and the skin of water and the food Abraham gave them was probably as much as they could comfortably carry, but it wouldn’t have lasted very long.

God Responds to Hagar and Ishmael’s Suffering

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).

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 is likely that the well had been there all the time but Hagar didn’t see it until God “opened her eyes”—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.

The Jesus Connection

Pray about a challenge you’re facing right now. You can cry out to God. Because of Jesus, we can trust that God always hears us. You can write your prayer here.





Blah, Blah! Supplies

copies of the “Blah,
Blah” handout (at the
end of this lesson)
scissors

Blah, Blah! Easy Prep

Cut apart the “God
hears us” and “Talk to
God” phrases along the
dotted lines.

1 GETTING STARTED

Blah, Blah!

What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went. Have kids spread out around the room in pairs.

Say: **In this game, you’ll get a slip of paper with a phrase you need to share with your partner. But the only way you can communicate will be by making motions with your body and saying the word “blah.” You can’t use any other words. If your partner guesses what you’re trying to say, raise your hand and I’ll give your partner something to say to you in return. In your pair, decide who’ll go first.** Give a “God hears us” slip from the “Blah, Blah” handout to the first person in each pair, and allow kids time to read and plan what they’ll do. **Ready? Go!** Allow time. Then give a “Talk to God” slip to the other person in each pair and repeat the activity.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What was it like to try to get your partner to understand?
- What was it like to try to understand your partner?
- Tell about a time you had a hard time understanding someone.

Say: **It’s difficult to communicate when we’re unsure if the person we’re talking to understands us. Because of that, it can be hard to communicate with God. When we can’t see him in front of us or hear a voice talking back to us, we might wonder if the words we say to God are actually heard. The truth is, ► GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY. God hears our prayers clearly and perfectly, every time. Let’s look in the Bible to find out what happened for a mother and son who desperately needed to communicate with God.**



2

**BIBLE
EXPLORATION**

Wilderness Journey

What You'll Do

Have kids sit in a circle.

Say: **Today we'll hear about a boy named Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. Let's sit back and listen to the CD as we find out what happened to Hagar and Ishmael. As you listen, think about what prayer requests you'd list for Abraham in this situation.**

Play "Hagar and Ishmael, Part 1" (track 24 on the CD), pausing the CD when prompted.

Ask:

- **What prayer requests did you think of as you listened to this track?**
- **Tell about a time you were worried like Abraham. What did you pray about?**
- **God assured Abraham that Hagar and Ishmael would be okay. What does that tell you about God's ability to answer prayers?**

Say: **Hagar and Ishmael went out into the wilderness with very little food and water. Let's turn our room into a sort of wilderness, too, and then we'll find out what happened to Hagar and Ishmael. Let's use items from around our room to build things that represent bushes and rocks in the wilderness.** Allow time.

Have children clean their hands, and give two salty crackers to each child and allow them to eat.

Say: **Now hide behind your "bushes" so that no one can see you, and quietly listen to what happened next for Hagar and Ishmael. As you listen, think about what the most urgent prayer is in this situation.**

After all the kids are hidden behind their bushes, play "Hagar and Ishmael, Part 2" (track 25 on the CD), pausing when prompted.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What do you think the most urgent prayer in this situation would be?**
- **Eating salty crackers can leave your mouth feeling very dry. Why do you think that might be similar to what Hagar and Ishmael experienced in the desert?**



Wilderness Journey Supplies

Bible
CD player
items from around the room
salty crackers
antibacterial gel (optional)

Teacher Pack

CD: "Hagar and Ishmael, Parts 1 and 2" (tracks 24 and 25)





Are You Listening, God? Supplies

Bible
CD player
paper
pens
1 cup of water per child
bushes from previous
activity

Teacher Pack

CD: "Hagar and Ishmael,
Part 3" (track 26)

- What do you think about the danger Hagar and Ishmael faced in the desert?
- Tell about a time you were very scared, like Hagar. What did you pray about?

Say: **Hagar and Ishmael were in a scary situation being in a blistering hot desert without any water. Hagar was afraid she and her son were going to die. We'll face scary times in life, too, but no matter where we are or what we're going through,**
▶ **GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY.**

Are You Listening, God?

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Allow kids to remain behind the bushes they created, and give them paper and pens. Say: **Hagar and Ishmael were all alone, rejected by their own family. Think about a time you felt lonely or rejected. Close your eyes and imagine you're the only one in the room right now. Picture that experience, and remember how you felt as you went through that time.** Allow time.

Ask:

- Describe loneliness and rejection.

Say: **Now think about times you've felt as if you really needed God to answer your prayers. Write about those times on your paper.**

Give kids a chance to write. Then say: **As we hear what happened to Hagar and Ishmael, listen for God's answers to the prayer requests you listed earlier.** Play "Hagar and Ishmael, Part 3" (track 26 on the CD).

Say: **God answered the cries of Hagar and Ishmael! God gave them the water they desperately needed and answered their prayers.** Ask kids to list some of the answers to prayer requests that they noticed.

Give each child a cup of water and allow kids to drink. Say: **Now think about times God has answered *your* prayers. Write about those answered prayers on the other side of your paper.** Allow time.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- God heard Ishmael's cries and then helped Ishmael and Hagar. What does that tell you about God?
- Describe what it was like to get a drink of water after having a salty snack.
- What makes that water similar to your feelings when God answers a prayer?
- What did you write about times you really needed God to answer your prayers?



- What are some of the answered prayers you wrote about on the other side of your paper?

Say: Sometimes we may feel alone in our circumstances, as if we're hiding behind a bush where no one, not even God, can see us. Hagar and Ishmael probably felt very alone and scared in the desert. But God heard Ishmael and Hagar and cared for them. ► **GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY**, too, and cares about everything we say to him. Let's take a look at our Key Verse and find out more about talking to God.



3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Open Doors

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: Our Key Verse today, Luke 11:9, tells us how much God wants us to talk to him. Listen as I read the verse: "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). Let's say it again together. Lead kids in repeating the verse.

Say: God often uses examples in the Bible of things we're familiar with to help us understand and remember what he's saying. In this verse, God uses the image of a door opening to represent his willingness to listen to our prayers. To help us remember that ► **GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY**, we're going to make doors of our own.

Distribute today's Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and have kids find the "Open Doors" section. Lead kids through these instructions to make their doors:

- **First, cut out the picture of the two doors.** Allow time.
- **Next, cut between the two doors.** Allow time.
- **Cut out the rectangle with the Key Verse printed on it.** Allow time.
- **Now place your two doors on top of the Key Verse piece.** Allow time.
- **Staple the pieces together along the dotted lines to form door hinges.** Allow time.
- **Then fold the doors back along the dotted lines so the doors open and close.** Allow time.

When kids open the doors, the Key Verse should show underneath. "The Word for the Week" will be visible on the back of the doors. When kids finish making their doors, have them form a circle. Pass out copies of the lyrics, and play "God Is Our Help" (Psalm 33:20) (track 27 on the CD). After they listen once, sing along with the kids.

Open Doors Supplies


- Bible Truth Sleuth
- CD player
- copies of the lyrics page (at the end of this lesson)
- several pairs of scissors
- stapler
- Teacher Pack**
- CD: "God Is Our Help" (Psalm 33:20) (track 27)

Open Doors Easy Prep

- Tear out the Lesson 13 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.





 We can depend on the Lord alone to save us.
 Only he is the one who will protect us.
 Like a shield that will not budge,
 He is watching over us.
 Every moment of the day,
 He keeps us safe.

(Repeat.)

I can depend on the Lord alone to save me.
 Only he is the one who will protect me.
 Like a shield I cannot see,
 He is watching over me.
 Every moment of the day,
 He keeps me safe.

“God Is Our Help” (Psalm 33:20) by Jay Stocker. © 2004 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- How could the words of this song help you to believe that God will always hear you when you pray?
- In what ways are God’s answers to prayers like someone opening a door when we knock?
- What can you do with this door you’ve made to help you remember that you can pray anytime and anywhere, and God will be listening?

Say: Whenever we knock on God’s door, he’s waiting there to answer. It didn’t matter where Hagar and Ishmael were or even if they used words in their prayers. God heard their cries and protected them. God does the same for us today. These doors are for you to take home as a reminder that ► **GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY**, anytime and anywhere. And when you open the doors, you’ll see Bible verses that you can read this week to hear back from God. Along with your doors, let’s make one more thing for you to take home and practice talking to God.





Prayer Journals

What You'll Do

Say: **God cares for us so much that ► GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY. God wants us to come to him with our needs, our joys, our questions, our fears—all of it! God loves it when we talk to him. When we communicate with God, we can get to know him better and stay close to him.**

Ask:

- **What do you think it means to communicate with God?**
- **What kinds of things do you like talking to God about most?**

Say: **We're going to focus on communicating with God this week. To help you do that, you'll each create a Prayer Journal.**

Have kids spread out and find a place to sit away from others. Give each child paper, scissors, a pen, and several markers. Show kids how to make praying hands and then, leaving one hand held like a praying hand, place it on a piece of paper to trace around it.

Say: **Repeat tracing your praying hand on each piece of paper and then cut out your traced hands.** Allow time. Circulate with the stapler and help kids staple their papers together for the Prayer Journals. Say: **Write on the first page of your Prayer Journal some things you'd like to talk to God about this week. They can be needs, prayers for friends and family—anything you'd like.** Allow time.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **As you were writing your prayers and thinking about what you want to talk to God about, he could hear your prayers even then! What do you think about that?**
- **Other than talking and writing, what are some ways you can think of that we can talk to God?**

Say: **We know now that ► GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY and that our prayers don't always have to be put into words. And we can pray anytime, anywhere, about anything. Just as God heard Ishmael and Hagar's cries in the desert, God hears us and cares for us. Keep adding to your Prayer Journal this week.**



Prayer Journals Supplies

pens
2 sheets of paper and
1 pair of scissors per
child
washable markers
stapler





Daily Challenges Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth
Prayer Journals from
previous activity

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Take home your Prayer Journal, and keep it by your bed. Every day when you wake up or before you go to bed, write in your journal as you follow through with your Daily Challenge. Practice talking to God and remember that ► GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Write in your journal a prayer to God each day.**
- **Write in your journal how God has answered one of your prayers.**
- **Write in your journal a prayer for a family member or friend.**

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Share a time, a place, or other ideas. Allow time.**

Say: **God heard Hagar and Ishmael's cries of desperation. We can talk to God about anything and ► GOD ALWAYS HEARS US WHEN WE PRAY. As we pray to follow through on our Daily Challenges this week, we can trust that God will hear us.**

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about talking to God. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families. Available at group.com/digital.

Take a couple of minutes to pray with your kids, and invite them to add to the prayer with what they wrote on the first page of their Prayer Journals. Close your prayer with: **in Jesus' name, amen.**



“Blah, Blah”

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God hears us.
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Talk to God.
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God hears us.
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Talk to God.
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God hears us.
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OK
TO COPY



**Lyrics** ■■■■**God Is Our Help (Psalm 33:20)**

**We can depend on the Lord alone to save us.
Only he is the one who will protect us.
Like a shield that will not budge,
He is watching over us.
Every moment of the day,
He keeps us safe.**

(Repeat.)

**I can depend on the Lord alone to save me.
Only he is the one who will protect me.
Like a shield I cannot see,
He is watching over me.
Every moment of the day,
He keeps me safe.**

“God Is Our Help” (Psalm 33:20) by Jay Stocker. © 2004 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

