

When Change Brings Pain (Genesis 21:8-21) **Seasons of Change sermon series** **By Pastor David Hillis, 09.17.17**

BIG IDEA: While some change doesn't make for better circumstances, it can always make us better people.

How Painful Change Can Make Us Better People (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; Psalm 46:1, 2, 10)

- In Romans 5:3-5, God is telling us to embrace painful changes that come into our lives because they help develop endurance and perseverance.
- When God uses change to stretch us to persevere, it is character building and instills hope in us to prepare us for the next challenge, the next difficult change.
- Escaping pain would feel better in the moment, but we would miss out on the long-term benefits that God sees and understands because of our limited perspective.
- Let us all strive to slow down, to be supportive and attentive to those around us in the midst of painful change, because they just might help make us better people in the process.

MY NEXT STEP: *Am I going through any changes that are difficult, painful? Who around me is? How is God asking me to respond starting today to these difficult changes to help make me a better person?*

PRAYERS FOR MY TIME WITH GOD: **Prisoners and their Families**

Pray for SISTER Connection, Alpha Prison ministries and that people in prison will hear the gospel and follow Christ; for fellowship of believers to multiply; for people to be protected from violence and forces of spiritual evil; that families of prisoners would be protected and provided for; and that released prisoners find strength and wisdom to live abundant lives.

1. Reread Genesis 21, asking God to help you fully consider what it says and how it might relate in some way to your life. Consider a word, phrase or sentence that is especially meaningful to you or that God is calling you to pay attention to, and how God would have you apply that idea or concept to your life today.
2. Review Genesis 21:1-5. Twenty-five years after God promised Abraham that he would make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:2), his son Isaac is born. What do you think it was like for Abraham to hold this child of promise? When have you seen God's provision manifest itself in real and tangible ways in your life?
3. Review Genesis 21:8-10. Do you have any memories from experiences of sibling rivalry? How do they affect you? If you've ever been jealous of a sibling or a friend, what prompted that jealousy, and how did it affect your relationship with God? Do you have any feelings of jealousy today that you need to resolve?
4. Review Genesis 21:15-19. Why is it so easy to miss God's provisions when we're in the wilderness? What promises did Hagar and Ishmael forget when they were in the desert? What does it take to find the answer to most of our problems (see John 6:1-13, 21:1-6)?
5. Read Genesis 22, where Abraham's faith was tested. Why do you think God approached Abraham with this kind of a challenge? Why do you think tests like this happen in our lives? Do you feel like you've ever been tested by God? What ways you were able to embrace that pain and grow from it, in order to become a better person?
6. Next week we will conclude this series on change by looking at what happens when you play a part in changing God's mind. Feel free to read ahead in Genesis 18:16-19 and notice how that happened in Abraham's life. Is there any way you can relate to his experience? Do you believe we can change God's mind? Share your discoveries with Pastor Dave in the comments of the "Hello" card online this week at myGrace.church!