



Ishmael – Unwanted Child?!

Outline Plan



Introduction

Feelings of rejection affect many young people in various degrees. For some of them, feeling unwanted will be a significant pastoral problem. Most need an insight into the fact that God loves and accepts them even if their own families do not appear to love them as they should. This outline is not intended to be a 'quick fix' solution for those struggling with deep rooted problems of rejection. Hopefully, with the power of the Holy Spirit, it can provide some help along the journey to inner healing.

Aim/s

- Was Ishmael important to God or was he just one of Abraham's mistakes?
- To introduce some Biblical thinking to the question of 'unplanned babies'
- Everyone is precious to God
- Self-acceptance – based on the fact that God wants us.

Resources - select

'Activity Ideas for Family Themes' on web site

Prince Caspian: CS Lewis – Caspian was rejected once his uncle had an heir

Addams Family Values DVD – clip where the children are trying to get rid of the baby

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lvjyiqYxKw> 3½ minutes

Bible references

Key verses

Isaiah 46:3-4

Isaiah 49:16a

Psalms 27:10 NLT

Ephesians 1:4-5 NLT

Jeremiah 29:11

Introduction: Move and Promise: Genesis 11:27-32; 12:1-9

The Promise Confirmed: Genesis 15: 4 -6

Main story: Birth of Ishmael: **Genesis 16:1-16**

Promise renewed: Genesis 17 –18:15

Birth of Isaac: **Genesis 21:1-21**

Ending: Abraham's funeral: Genesis 25:1-18

The wedding: 28:6-9

Programme

Starter/Games

See 'Activity Ideas for Family Themes' on the web site.

The Addams Family Values **film** shows the older two children trying to get rid of the new baby because they are jealous of him. It is 'black comedy'. A clip of it would be brilliant to use with some groups and disastrous with others. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lvjyiqYxKw>

Discussion option

Ask who has younger brothers and sisters.

- How did they feel about the arrival of a new baby in the family?
- Do they sometimes feel that their younger siblings get more love and attention?

Introducing Abraham

With groups who don't know about Abraham, give them a brief informal introduction to the Abraham's story – the move – God's promise – the long wait. There are some suggestions in the leader's guide.

With church groups you could use a quick question & answer style here. For example

- What do they know of the story of Abraham?
- Was Isaac the only son of Abraham?
- Why was Ishmael born?

Ishmael's arrival

Empathy role play: Ask them how each character would have felt about the situation they were facing. Sub-divide them if your group is large enough, so they think about one character each; then they can report back to everyone.

Or discuss:

- What do you think of the way that Abraham and Sarah treated Hagar?
- How do you think Abraham felt when Ishmael was born?
- What sort of relationship would Abraham and Ishmael have had for many years?
- How would Ishmael have felt about the arrival of Isaac?
- How did God deal with this complex family situation? Why did he allow Ishmael to be born? Did he see him as less important or valuable than Isaac?

Application

What about us? Select one of these according to the needs of your group.

- How do we treat others? Do we ever try to use people, perhaps without realising it? Are there people we look down on? Do we see them as being less than human?
- How can the arrival of a new baby affect older brothers and sisters? Any personal stories here?
- Do you feel that you've missed out due to some 'accident' of birth?
- Are there many 'stag fights' between the male members of your family?

With God there is no such thing as an accident or unwanted person. We are all his children whom he wants to reclaim. He made us and wants to re-adopt us into his family. Did you know that God has a tattoo figuratively speaking? Our names are written on the palm of his hand! ¹

Prayer space

Play an appropriate song about the depth of God's love as our Father.

Thank God for his caring love and pray it touches our innermost being.

Pray for anyone you know who has a serious problem relating to someone in their family.

Look at the key Bible verses.

Bible verses to help

I have cared for you since you were born & before - Isaiah 46:3-4

¹ I have written your name on the palm of my hand - Isaiah 49:16a

You are precious to me - Isaiah 43:4b

Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close. - Psalm 27:10 NLT