

November 11, 2012
From Failure to Direction

“Whenever you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: ‘This is the way. Walk in it.’”
—Isaiah 30:21

MONDAY STUDY

Introduction

Have you ever been lost? Have you ever taken a shortcut that did not work out so well? Have you ever wished you had stuck to the planned route? This session explores Abram’s journey as he pursues God’s plan for his life. Abram started well, but a mid-course change of direction took Abram out of God’s will and brought pain to him and his family. Eventually, God restored Abram and put him back on the right track. Have you lost direction in your life? Are you willing to find and follow God’s path?

1. Trust God

Read Genesis 15:4-6 and then try to answer the following questions.

- How do you think the word of the Lord came to Abram?
- How does the word of the Lord come to us?
- What was it about Abram’s circumstances that might have made it difficult for him to believe God on this point?
- Why was it important to Abram to have a child?
- Did Abram become righteous (right with God) by doing good things?
- How did Abram become righteous?
- Can we become righteous by our actions? Why or why not? How can we become righteous?
- This is a bit of a trick question. The Bible is very clear that we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). However, belief in God is an active decision, not simply an intellectual assent. Remember that according to James 2:19 the demons also believe. So righteousness comes through faith, but faith comes through active belief.
- Is it fair for God to give us credit for being righteous just because of our faith? (No, praise God! It isn’t fair. It is grace!)

Offspring Like the Stars: Read these promises of God to Abram and his seed. Summarize what they say about God’s promise.

- ✓ Gen. 22:17 **Abraham**
 - ✓ Gen 26:4 **Isaac**
 - ✓ Ex. 32:13 **God (by Moses)**
 - ✓ Dt. 1:10 **The Israelites**
 - ✓ Dt. 10:22 **The Israelites**
 - ✓ 1 Chron. 27:23 **David**
 - ✓ Heb. 11:12 **Followers of Jesus**
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- Are Abram’s offspring only the Jews? How does Galatians 3:29 reinterpret this? (Have a class member look this verse up. It promises that “if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.”)
 - What types of barriers keep people from seeing God’s vision for their lives?

- How can small steps of obedience, like following God outside, lead to a greater understanding of God's plan?
- Do you ever get frustrated when you are trying to teach your children something great and they are unwilling to listen? Do you think God ever gets frustrated with us?
- Is there any disobedience in your life that might be keeping you from seeing God's bigger vision?

TUESDAY STUDY

2. Leave it to God

Read Genesis 16:1-5 and then try to answer the following questions.

- At this point, God had not yet said that the child had to be born through Sarai. And polygamy was still accepted in this culture. So why was this still not a good idea? Do you think Abram and Sarai knew this was not a good idea?
- How do you think Abram and Sarai felt knowing that they were too old to have children without a miracle?
- Who came up with the plan for Abram to marry Hagar? Why do you think Sarai made that suggestion?
- What should Abram have said to Sarai in verse 2?
- Why did Hagar treat Sarai with contempt? What do you think that was like?
- Who was most upset about the outcome of the plan? Why is that significant? (Point out that it was Sarai who was most upset even though she developed the plan. When we choose to disobey God, it never works out like we think it will.)
- Do we have to wait on God for every decision? How do you know when it is time to act and when it is time to wait on God?
- When have you gotten ahead of God? How did that go?
- What do these passages teach us?
- If Abram and Sarai had followed the instructions given in these verses, what would they have done differently?
- Why do you think that people sometimes fail to seek guidance from others?
- Are other people, even godly people, always right? How do you know who to listen to?

WEDNESDAY STUDY

3. Refocus on God's Plan

Read Genesis 17:3-6,15-19 and then try to answer the following questions.

- Given the meaning of Abram's name and his childlessness, how do you think his name made him feel?
- God made some version of this promise to Abram on two other occasions. Why do you think God waited until Genesis 17 to change Abram's name?
- Why did God fulfill His promise even after Abram and Sarai tried to get ahead of God's plan? (God cannot break a promise)
- Why did Abraham laugh? Imagine a couple you know that is in their late 90's announcing that they were expecting a child. Does that make you laugh a little?
- What has God promised you? How can you be sure He will keep His promise?
- Why do you think God chose to change Sarai's name?
- Given her past actions, did Sarai deserve to be honored this way? Did Abram? Do any of us? Then how do you explain it?
- Did God bless other women in the Old Testament? (Yes, but His decision to bless them is not recorded) Why do you think Sarah was the one woman that God specifically said He would bless?

Facedown and Focused: How being facedown is the only appropriate posture before the holy God? What does being facedown communicate? How does it help someone focus on God? Read the Scriptures below and answer how that facedown posture helped the people in Scripture focus on God.

- **Ezra 10:1-4:**
- **Matthew 17:4-6:**
- **Matthew 26:39:**

THURSDAY – SATURDAY

Read through the following articles in preparation for Pastor's Jim's Preaching and Teaching.

1. Abraham's Travels
2. Isaac;
3. Ishmael;

SUNDAY – November 11, 2012 Be Ready to Really Grow in God's Word.