



## SCRIPTURE DEVOTION | GENESIS 16

Last week in our study of Genesis, we looked closely at the covenant God makes with Abram. God has revealed to greater depth the details of his original promise to Abram while also making a covenant with Abram to accomplish this very promise. This covenant made by God towards Abram and his descendants is upheld by God alone, pictured by Abram's deep slumber and God's progress through the covenantal process alone. This week we will observe Sarai & Abram's attempt to accomplish this promise themselves despite God's trustworthy words and actions.

### TEXT-BASED ONE ANOTHERING QUESTIONS

*This time for group members to practice confession, repentance, accountability, biblical encouragement, etc. with the help of the Holy Spirit through his word. Encourage group members to read the portion of scripture being discussed before group.*

- In Genesis 16, our story turns its attention to Sarai, Abram's wife. Sarai knows the promise of God to Abram to make his descendants as numerous as the sand and stars, and yet she has not born him any children. It is likely that Sarai, looking at her aging body, begins to question how this promise will be fulfilled and turns to her own wisdom rather than God. Sarai's desire for children begins to rule over her. These unsubmitted and unchecked desires mark her beliefs and, eventually, her actions.
  - Can you think of a time in your life when you trusted in your own wisdom and pursued something you desired by your own means rather than trusting in the work of the Lord? Share.
  - Is there anything you desire today that you have been tempted to achieve, acquire, pursue, etc., without considering, trusting in, or following God's lead? (*This could be tangible things like items, jobs, spouses, etc., or intangible things like control, approval, affirmation, etc.*)
- Sarai encourages Abram to marry her Egyptian servant Hagar so that he might have offspring and she might have the children she strongly desires. This wisdom, disobedient and sinful in numerous ways, is the voice Abram listens to; Genesis 16:2 saying this, "And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai."
  - Just a chapter before, we saw Abram stand firm in his faith in God's word, but here we see him trust in the voice of Sarai. It can be difficult sometimes to discern our voices and others' voices from the voice of the Lord.
    - Can you think of a time recently when you were tempted to listen to your voice, the voices of others close to you, or the voice of our culture rather than the word of the Lord? Share stories.
    - How do you think we can discern the voice of the Lord? What does scripture tell us?
- Conflict arises between Hagar and Sarai when Hagar becomes pregnant, and Sarai's jealousy overtakes her. Abram does not directly intervene in this conflict between his wives, and it spirals out of control. Hagar flees from Sarai's brutal treatment and into the wilderness. There, she is met by an angel of the Lord who speaks to her, assures her that her offspring will flourish, and sends her back to Abram & Sarai. Following this interaction with the angel, Hagar "called on the name of the Lord who spoke to her" and said, "You are a God of seeing." and "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."
  - Sarai and Abram, not trusting that the Lord sees and cares for them despite the promise having been made to them, have taken matters into their own hands. However, Hagar, the Egyptian servant, who likely had no concept of Abram's God given her culture, sees the hand of the Lord at work in her life, even in the wilderness.
    - Has there been a time when you HAVE NOT felt seen or cared for by God? Share.
      - Where/what/who did you run to at that time? How did God eventually reveal himself to you?
      - Are you in this season today? Spend time encouraging these folks in the gospel!
    - Has there been a time when you HAVE felt seen or cared for by God? Perhaps even similar to Hagar, in the wilderness of life? Share!
      - How did God show himself to you in that time? How did he strengthen you? What truths about him did he remind you of?

# MISSION

## Evangelism

We want to be intentional in our everyday lives to have gospel conversations with people that don't know Jesus. These people God has placed in our path are not projects, but friends. Friends we long to see have the hope and joy of Christ!

- Have each group member choose one person they are going to pray for and initiate conversations with about Jesus. Each week, follow up:
  - Were they able to share the gospel with them, encourage them, or pray with them this week?
  - How can the group pray for the group member & the person they are walking with?
  - What is one next step they can take with this person? Can they ask them to church? To come to community group? Read the Bible together? Etc.
- The weather is beginning to change, work together as a group to plan a block party where your group can meet and bless the neighborhood that you meet in each week.

## Missions

We want to be mindful and prayerful for the work the Lord is doing in the world. There are tons of ways you can encourage your group members to engage in God's work around the world. Below are some ideas for this week:

- Read a recent update from your group's missionary/missionary family and pray for them.
  - Consider putting together a care package for them! Supply a list of items people can bring. Have kids draw cards/notes. Etc!
- Have a potluck with food from a specific country, pray for that country, the churches there, etc. Check out [prayercast.com](http://prayercast.com) for country prayer info!

# PRAYER

- Check in on life (ex. relationship with Christ (prayer & word), their marriages/singleness, children, etc.) to discover prayer needs.
- Spend time in confession & prayer for those who have shared areas of disbelief, wrong beliefs, sin, etc. during discussion time.
- If you have more time or separate time for men & women choose 1-2 questions on the following page for accountability time or create your own.

## ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Knowing the members of your group, and having heard about their week, choose 1-2 questions for your time of confession, encouragement, & prayer. We have gathered these questions from various resources, so feel free to jump around this document or come up with your own questions to best serve your group.

- Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
- Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate thoughts about someone who is not your spouse this week?
- Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings this week, or coveted something that does not belong to you?
- Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships this past week?
- Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face-to-face?
- Have you given in to an addictive behavior this week? Explain.
- Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
- Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?
- Did you finish your reading this week and hear from the Lord? What are you going to do about it?
- Did you spend significant time with God through His Word, prayer, quiet time, devotions, and other spiritual disciplines? How consistent? Is He your driving force?
- What blocks your growth in Christ? What blocks growth, in your other relationships, from becoming more mature and effectual?
- Have you faithfully served the Lord, His people, and the lost?
- Did you go and participate in church activities and worship this week? How so? Why not?
- Have you made your family a priority? What noteworthy activity or deed did you do for your spouse and/or family?
- How have you struggled with sin? What are the sins that have weighed down your walk with God this week?
- What did you do to enhance your relationship with your spouse/friends? What can you do to make that relationship better?
- In what ways has God blessed you this week? How have you shared your blessings?
- What disappointments did you face? Did they consume your thoughts? What did you do about it? What can you learn?
- Have you committed any sexual sin? Did you look at someone lustfully? Have you been alone in a compromising situation? Have you been flirtatious? Have you struggled with pornography or "romance novels?" Have you exposed yourself to any sexually oriented material? Did you put yourself in a situation with anyone that could appear to be compromising, even though it may not have been?
- Have you shared your faith? In what ways? How can you improve? Have you had an opportunity to share with a non-Christian?
- How well are you handling your finances right now? Have your financial dealings been questionable?
- Have you been trustworthy? Have you lied? Stolen? Cheated? Been dishonest or manipulative? Have you elevated yourself over another for your own personal agenda? What about your language and attitude?
- Have you been prideful? Have you been guilty of gossip or anger? Slandered? Shown indifference? Been greedy? Not controlled your tongue?
- Have you demonstrated a servant's heart? How so? What have you done for someone else this week?
- Did you struggle with a disappointment this week? How did you handle it?
- Have you respected and treated your classmates, co-workers and peers graciously by showing them compassion and the love of God in your words and deeds? What can you do to enhance your relationships here?
- How is your level of character, according to the comparison of Gal. 5:22-23 versus Gal. 5:19-21?
- How did you practice joy this week? Have you had a thankful attitude toward God? Have you struggled with anger toward God? How so? What can you do about it?
- Have you taken care of the temple of the Holy Spirit with rest, sleep, exercise, healthy eating, etc? What about addictions, gluttony, or substance abuse?
- Have you been honest while answering these questions? If not, how so? If not, why?
- How can we support you as a group?