

MAY 8, 2022
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
THE GOD WHO SEES
GENESIS 16:1-16
SPRING QUARTER WEEK 2 OF 7

Getting to Know Each Other Better

1. What name would you give God if you had the chance to name Him?

These days it would be "The God who Redeems." There is a lot behind that answer for me. If you'd like to know more, reach out privately and I'll happily share.

How about you?

Renewed by Grace/Equipped as Disciples

Read Genesis 16:1-6

2. As you read 16:1-6, do you find yourself able to relate to her in any way? How so?

What I am hoping for here is that you all can identify some of the things happening to Hagar which are common to the human condition so that the men in your group (if there are any) can also relate, and then I'm hoping you can talk a bit about that.

What do you see happening to Hagar? Here are some of the things I see -

- She's a pawn caught up in the middle of a bad marriage. Abram doesn't have the guts to tell Sarai how she should treat Hagar and Sarai has hostility or suspicion toward Abram.
- She has been terribly mistreated for no reason.
- There is no justice for her right now.
- She suffers because of Abram and Sarai's lack of faith in the promises of God.
- I believe she is a young woman who did not want to sleep with a dude who is 85 years old. (What young woman would?) Her plans for her life are being shattered by people who have no regard for her. She is just a tool for Abram and Sarai.
- She has no rights of her own. She has no control over what her life is like now or over what it will be like in the future.
- Having to sleep with wrinkly old Abram and having to get pregnant by him has caused a lot of anger and bitterness to well up inside her, which she takes out on Sarai. Her circumstances, over which she has no control and which are really stinky, cause an emotional response which is also not healthy for her in the long run. I am not minimizing her or her responses or her emotions, but we can't live long with anger which causes us to sin or with bitterness which consumes. We have chapter and verse on being angry yet without sin and on getting rid of all bitterness. She'll have to work through this to be healthy.
- She knows she can no longer trust Sarai, and she probably despises Abram for not sticking up for her and for the whole thing of having to be his wife even when she doesn't want to be.
- What else do you see?

In what ways can we relate to her situation? I can relate to -

- Being mistreated for no apparent reason, or having the punishment not fit the crime.

- Being in a situation where there was no immediate justice available for me or someone I loved. There was nothing that could be done except to accept it and trust God that He had a plan, saw what was going on, and would take care of it.
- Being mistreated and having that mistreatment cause anger and resentment toward the source (happened to me in a former career when I was in the corporate world).
- Being so mistreated that I was ready to quit a job (again, happened in a former career when I was in the business world).
- Being marginalized and dehumanized because of someone else's lack of faith (has not happened at EFCC, just to be clear).
- How about you?

The point of this question is to enter into the account. As we are able to identify with Hagar we are able to feel what God wants us to feel. We should be feeling angry, hopeless, frustrated, hurt and scared along with Hagar. Feeling these things will help us experience the joy, delight and hope that Hagar experiences in the rest of the chapter.

Two questions you can also consider asking (perhaps in place of the questions I wrote above) are - "What emotions do you think Hagar is feeling, and why? Have you ever had any things happen to you which are remotely parallel to Hagar's situation?" I think my notes above also work for these questions.

I don't think you need to spend a lot of time on this question. I think you should spend just enough time to help the group enter into Hagar's emotional life as she takes off to go back to Egypt. Some level of emotional identification with Hagar is important in order to more fully get what this text offers us.

3. How significant do you think it is for Hagar that God finds her, lets her know she is seen, and lets her know He will redeem the difficult circumstances of her life? Why? How significant is it for you to know God sees you and can redeem whatever is going on in your life? Why?

Yes, there is some speculation required here, but I think we can let our baptized minds imagine what it must have been like for her when the angel of the LORD finds her near a spring in the desert. If we have been able to feel some of what she was feeling as she leaves Sarai in verse 6, then I think we can also take a good stab at how and what she is feeling when she is approached and has this conversation with the angel.

We do well to remember that she is a pregnant slave girl with no rights, no money, no resources and no relationships to lean on. Maybe she is having morning sickness by now. Maybe she is hungry a lot. Maybe she gets tired easily. She left Sarai without a plan, except probably to go back home to Egypt. But who knows if she can even make it there alive. And then God shows up and tells her He sees her and that He's going to redeem this mess that has become her life (and that through no fault of her own). How significant do you think this is for her? And why?

And then, how significant is it for you, and why? For me, what is particularly meaningful these days is knowing that He redeems. Oh man, it means a lot to know He sees, but it really means even more to know He redeems. How about for you?

4. How does knowing (1) He sees you and (2) He is in the business of redemption help you relinquish control to Him and His plans for you?

Ryan quoted Psalm 32:8 in his message, and I really like that verse. You might want to consider reading the verse as a group and having a discussion about it and how it relates to surrender. Here is what it says -

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you. (ESV)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. (NIV 2011)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you. (NIV 1984)

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you. (NLT)

Ryan highlighted that, if God guides us with His eye, then that means we are looking back at Him so that we can see and receive the guidance. I also like the fact that He instructs, teaches, counsels and advises us while keeping an eye on us. He knows what's coming, He knows where we are and He guides us according to the path that He thinks is best for us. We cannot see what is up ahead, while He can. We cannot know what is coming around the corner, while He can. He keeps His eye on us and His eye on what's headed our way and then lovingly says, "Change lanes," or, "Exit the freeway here," or any host of things. He loves us and wants what's best for us. He is omnipresent and omniscient. The best thing we can do is surrender to Him and trust His plans and His guidance. It's definitely harder at certain times than it is at others. I don't dispute that at all. I've experienced it.

But how does knowing He sees and He redeems help you trust? One way that helps me is that I know that His guidance is leading toward redemption, so trusting and following His ways means He's leading me to a better place than I am in now. How about for you?

5. How does knowing He sees and redeems help you in your parenting or grandparenting?

There is a lot here that I could write about. Two big ones for me are that (1) Because He sees I can know that I am valuable even when my kids don't treat me as such and (2) Because He redeems I can have hope that the ways things are now aren't necessarily the way they are going to be later on in life. How about for you?

Sent in Love

6. What is one way you will apply the text this week?