

Discussion on **Prayer**

Genesis 18:16-33

Abraham Intercedes

WELCOME *[welcome everyone to the meeting]*

OPEN IN PRAYER – Preparing our Hearts *[remind everyone to stay personally engaged with what God is saying, encourage everyone to share as God leads them]*

PURPOSE/VISION CASTING *[Our purpose is to remain in relationship with God and each other; to glorify God in all things, help each other think and live like Christ with the people around us – family.]*

OPEN YOUR GROUP TIME WITH ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

When you were a kid and wanted something from your parents how did you try to persuade them? What was the outcome? And/Or. Who is most patient in your family? And/Or. How much haggling over price do you do when you buy a big-ticket item? Do you always get what you want?

SHARE THE BACKGROUND TO THE PASSAGE *[Provide context by sharing what comes before the story.]*

This story happened following the Lord appearing to Abram and again confirming His covenant with him. God stated that His promise of Abram and Sarai bearing a son was so certain that from that time on they were given new names: Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham and Sarah had just been visited by three "men." At least two of the visitors were angels and the third may have been the Lord himself. Now as the visitors are about to go, the Lord chooses to reveal to Abraham his plans for the sinfully wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

TELL THE STORY, Read the Passage Aloud – Genesis 18:16-33 *[Have someone read the passage]*

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS

1. What impresses you about the conversation between God and Abraham? (Abraham's concern for Sodom, God's willingness to listen, God's patience, Abraham's persistence)
2. Which of Abraham's qualities would you most like to have? (his boldness, compassion, persistence, his personal relationship with God)?
3. What does God's openness to Abraham's requests tell you about God? (He is patient, merciful, willing to listen, gracious)
4. When you talk to God, what do you expect God to do? (hopefully listen, respond in some way, grant my requests, I'm not sure)
5. In order for salvation to come to you community, what are you willing to do? (pray regularly, share my faith with others, participate in the ministry of my church)
6. If you were asked to sum up in a word or short sentence one "take-away" from this passage, what would it be?

ASSIGN NEXT WEEK'S PASSAGE *[Our next passage will be Acts 12:1-19. Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

PRAYER REQUESTS

Acts 12:1-19

The Church Intercedes

WELCOME *[welcome everyone to the meeting]*

OPEN IN PRAYER – Preparing our Hearts *[remind everyone to stay personally engaged with what God is saying, encourage everyone to share as God leads them]*

OPEN YOUR GROUP TIME WITH ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Who was the most surprising person to ever show up at your door? And/Or. What is the most amazing thing you have ever seen God do? When was the last time you thought about pinching yourself to see if you were dreaming?

SHARE THE BACKGROUND TO THE PASSAGE *[Provide context by sharing what comes before the story.]*

Prior to Peter being arrested and put in prison we see him called to visit with the Gentiles. We learn that while Peter was meeting with Gentiles, preaching to them about God's grace and plan for their salvation, the Holy Spirit came upon many of them. Then Peter ordered for everyone to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

This starts one of the first churches at Antioch. However, persecution of Christians now resumes at the hands of the Roman representative King Herod Agrippa. Now we find the apostle Peter in jail because of his faith and preaching.

TELL THE STORY, Read the Passage Aloud – *[Have someone read the passage]*

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS

1. What do we learn about God in this passage? (He is always there to help, He does not forget us, He knows when we are praying for each other)
2. If the Christians were asking God to deliver Peter from jail, why were they so surprised when he showed up at the door? (They knew how tight security would be, didn't really think God would answer, they were afraid it was a trick, they reacted the same way I would have)
3. If you had been present at this prayer meeting, what would this miracle have done for you? (given me courage, boosted my prayer life, made me ashamed for doubting, drawn me closer to God)
4. If one of the people in this group was arrested because of their faith, what would that do to our group? (bring us closer, cause us to really pray, strengthen or test our faith, cause us to into hiding)
5. What in your life do you find most "imprisoning" now?
6. Who will you tell this week about this passage?

ASSIGN NEXT WEEK'S PASSAGE *[Our next discussion will be Acts 4:1-31. Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

PRAYER REQUESTS

Acts 4:1-31

Power of the Holy Spirit

WELCOME *[welcome everyone to your meeting]*

OPEN YOUR DISCUSSION TIME WITH ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

What threat brought you the most fear as a child? What bold move have you contemplated lately?

When was the last time you felt the power of the Holy Spirit?

SHARE THE BACKGROUND TO THE PASSAGE

[Provide context by sharing what comes before the story.]

The book of Acts opens with the ascension. After telling His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was taken up before their very eyes. The church was "born" 10 days after the ascension, when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. This empowered many to speak boldly for Jesus, their risen Lord. This is where our passage begins, with Peter and John.

TELL THE STORY, Read the Passage Aloud – *[Have someone read the passage]*

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS

1. Why did the religious leaders object to Peter and John's preaching? (they were mad, they were afraid, they were jealous)
2. How has knowing Jesus shaped your character?
3. What impresses you most about the believers' prayer? (their faith, their desire for boldness, their confidence in God's power)
4. From this passage, what about the Holy Spirit is most striking to you? (how personal He is, how inspiring the Spirit is, how powerful He is)
5. In what way do you most need the power of the Holy Spirit?
6. Comparing your spiritual life to a car's gas tank, what's your reading? Full, running low, on empty, half a tank?
7. How can this group pray for you this coming week?

ASSIGN NEXT WEEK'S PASSAGE *[Our next passage will be Philippians 4:4-20. Ask someone to tell the story next week.]*

PRAYER REQUESTS

Philippians 4:4-20

Exhortations – Rejoice, Pray, and Care For One Another

WELCOME *[Welcome everyone to your meeting]*

OPEN YOUR GROUP TIME IN PRAYER – Preparing our Hearts

OPEN YOUR DISCUSSION TIME WITH ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Where is your happy place? What is the best thing that happened to you this week? What do you look back on as the happiest days of your life?

SHARE THE BACKGROUND TO THE PASSAGE *[Provide context by sharing what comes before the story.]*

TELL THE STORY, Read the Passage Aloud – *[Have someone read the passage*

DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What should you tell God about and why?
3. What do you do to relive stress and worry in your life?
4. How does what you think about affect how you feel? How does it affect your relationship with God?
5. How do you see Jesus in this passage?
6. What one thing in Philippians chapter four do you especially want to apply in your life?
7. How can this group pray for you this coming week?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Group Guidelines

SAFE GROUP: We will do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open and honest with their struggles and victories.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Hear what's being said – don't be thinking about what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond – really listen and work to understand them.

PAUSE: After someone shares, give a pause to allow the group to feel the weight of what was just shared and to fully consider it before the next person shares.

SILENCE: Silence is used to wait for someone to share next without trying to fill the void with talk. Silence provides an opportunity for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

DON'T FIX: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement, speak truth, and point to Jesus. If people want your advice, they'll ask for it. If people think that as soon as they share a problem everyone is going to immediately try to fix them, often they simply won't share at all.

DON'T RESCUE: When someone is sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and results in their not going as deep as they might have gone. Resist the temptation to rescue people or even stop and pray for them in the moment. There will be time to pray with them after the group time.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions and non-verbal communication.

USE "I" STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them," "the church," "us," "we," etc.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: It's important that we all use this time to consider where we are on any given subject or issue and what God would have us do. How am I walking this out in my personal life? What changes does God want me to make?

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. We want to honor God and each other in the way we deal with issues.