

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends

“Abraham and the Stranger”

5/5/2019

Where We Are In The Bible

Genesis 18-19 arrives after several interesting and (if we're honest) confusing stories about Abraham and his wife Sarah. What shouldn't be lost, however, is the promise resting on this aged family. In Genesis 12 God calls Abraham to uproot his life and family and go to a place yet to be announced. The reason? "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing," says God.

Lean In

- Have you ever left one place or situation without knowing where you were going next? What were the feelings and experiences associated with this "in-between" state?
- In Genesis 18, the Lord shows up unannounced to Abraham's tent in the form of 3 weary travelers. List some of the ways Abraham goes "all out" to be hospitable to the travelers. Then, read Hebrews 13:2. Have you experienced God or heard God's voice through an encounter with someone else?
- Sarah laughs at hearing the Word of Promise from God. What was going through Sarah's mind at the time? Can you identify with her perspective?
- Read Genesis 18:16-33. Can you identify with Abraham's impulse to barter with God?
- What are some of the honest tensions you feel when it comes to God's divine justice or destruction? Why is this side of God hard to grasp?

The Big Idea

In these two stories, two messages are delivered: one of promise and one of destruction. Both ignited a faith crisis. In the book *God is Stranger* Kandiah says, "These three tensions – of a God who calls us to things yet then seems to make it harder to achieve them, a God who pursues judgement yet wants us to plead for mercy, and a God whom we get to know even as we recognize our lack of understanding – must impact the way we respond to the lordship of God in our lives."

Where To?

- Take time to think through and discuss the tensions listed above. Do you find that in many circumstances you want God to act justly, but then when he seems to act you wish you hadn't asked it?
- What does faith look like in both tensions?
- Are you open to God surprising you? If yes, how? If no, why?

Prayer Focus

Oh Lord, in the mystery of life and death, hope and destruction, you are sometimes hard to find. But help us to not chase distractions to remain comfortable. Instead, give us the strength and courage to ask, seek, and knock in order to find you in the unannounced, uninvited, and unrecognized spaces of our lives. Amen.

