

Genesis / Where's the Faith? / Chapter 20:1-18



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: How do you feel when you make mistakes?

We all make mistakes every day. Making mistakes is part of being human. Sometimes we make mistakes without thinking about them. Other times we do wrong things on purpose and hope we won't get caught. Today we're going to learn more about how our sins affect others around us and more about God's goodness and grace in those moments that are at work to grow us in our faith.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What insight, lesson, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**

- 2. What is your first reaction when faced with fear and struggles? What areas in your life do you struggle to trust God with the most and typically try to take things into your own hands?**

As we learned on Sunday, we all have unique flaws, temptations, and susceptibilities to sin and when we get pressed, we default to these sins. It's like the question that we asked, "what oozes out of you when you get squeezed?". We see that in this story with Abraham and Kent Hughes stated it well with the quote below:

There are certain old sins to which each of us are uniquely susceptible—"sin which clings so closely" (Hebrews 12:1). We each have our unique susceptibilities. Sins that may not appeal to others maintain a deadly lure for us and promote a tragic recidivism. Abraham's clinging sin when pressured was to trust himself rather than God. Generally he trusted God. Abraham believed the divine promise, and it was credited to him as righteousness (15:6). But sometimes when pushed, he decided to give God a little help with a "little" lie.

Inarticulate musings like, “Lord, I trust you, but I just want to make sure that things work out right” accompany such sins.¹

3. Is there anything wrong with trusting in ourselves? Why or why not?

Give the group time and the opportunity think through this question and hear their reasons for their responses. While trusting in ourselves may not seem like a bad decision at first and we are constantly being told by our culture today that you should trust yourself, God’s word tells us something different.

We see in this story in scripture today that Abraham did not trust God when he was afraid and only trusted in himself. By doing so, he ended up making a terrible decision by lying about Sarah being his wife to Abimelech. His sin ended up affecting his relationship with others, but God ended up stepping in. The point from Sunday on this topic was that “Self-Reliance is just me not trusting God” Kent Hughes stated this principle well with the quote below:

But such self-trust (which is really distrust of God) can have no place in a believer’s life if he or she desires maximum use by God. As Oswald Chambers wrote:

God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.²

“He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.”³

4. If God is sovereign, what are our roles and responsibilities as a follower of Christ?

As we talked about trusting in ourselves in the previous question, what usually comes from that is we sometimes think God needs a little help to make things turn out right. Scripture teaches the opposite, that God is sovereign over everything in creation. He is control and nothing will undo God’s plan.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 286.

² R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 286.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 290.

While God is sovereign and our sin will not affect His plans, God still is at work in our lives and wants to use us in his plans in this world. We see that in specific parts of scripture like the ones before:

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NIV)

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Matthew 28:17–20 (NIV)

17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

In this story we saw that while God sovereignly worked his plan through, Abraham was not able to be used as a witness. Kent Hughes stated it well with the quote below:

Both their lives are ominous warnings to those in the train of faith, the church. It is entirely possible for the righteous through their sins to nullify their witness to the world permanently (as did Lot) or temporarily (as did Abraham).⁴

5. How does our faithlessness affect our relationship with God and others?

We see in this story that Abraham’s sin did not change God’s love of Abraham and we talked about this idea on Sunday. We also have an amazing quote from Kent Hughes on this idea.

*Jesus loves me when I’m good,
When I do the things I should.
Jesus loves me when I’m bad,
Though it makes him very sad.*

It is so common to think that God will love us more if we perform some great work, some external achievement. But the Bible (and here the story of Abraham and Abimelech) focuses on making a great heart.⁵

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 289.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 290.

This sin from Abraham did affect his relationship with his wife and with Abraham. Abraham broke the trust of his wife and this king Abimelech.

6. How does our faithlessness affect God's plans?

As we learned on Sunday, our faithlessness does not affect God's plans. God still accomplishes His plan despite our sin and faithlessness. God is sovereign.

So God informed the king that it was his omniscience (his all-knowingness) and his omnipotence (his all-powerfulness) that had kept Abimelech from violating Sarah, and further that the king must return Sarah—"Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live."⁶

God's ability to use even our sins for his own purposes shows that he doesn't love us simply for the great things we can do for him.⁷

7. How does God respond to our faithlessness?

God was so gracious to Abraham in this story and he is also so gracious so our faithlessness as well. God responded in this situation by not letting Abraham's sin go any further and prevented any further sinning. God does that at certain times in our lives as well but he also will let the consequences take action as well. I'm both of these situations though God is at work to grow us in our faith and we see that in this verse about making into a masterpiece.

This is why God's plan so often seems to be different from our own script for our lives. The stress that comes when you are doing your best to serve God—the interruptions that plague your prayers—the family times that are ruined by illness—the letter to a missionary that gets lost—in these, you wanted to do something for God. But even more, he is doing something in your heart.⁸

God will also use our mistakes and our repenting of sin to be used to influence others walks with Christ as well. Kent Hughes states this idea we'll with the quote below:

But in that way he gives us an opportunity to repent publicly, to speak plainly about the gospel that is the only hope for sinners like us. Jesus loves us when we are bad, as well

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 287.

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 290.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 290.

as when we are good, and our public sins give us ample opportunity to testify to that amazing fact.⁹

- 8. After hearing this passage, tools for today, and questions, what is one next step you need to take today?**

Conclusion

The story of Abraham and Abimelech showcases the grace and goodness of God to his sinful children as God works to develop great hearts.¹⁰

However, the main point of the entire episode brings us back to the grace of God and His commitment to Abraham and Sarah. With Sarah a part of the king's harem, there is a danger that the promised heir would be illegitimate, fathered by Abimelech and not Abraham. Yet Yahweh intervenes, preventing a sexual union between the king and Abraham's wife, thus making it plain the patriarch is Isaac's father. Despite Abraham's deceptive attempt at self-preservation, Yahweh remains watchful over him, making His promise to have the patriarch bless the nations come true by healing Abimelech's household on account of Abraham's intercession.

PRAYER

Pray for the discussions during the group, the next steps, and for God to continue to work in your group's life. Pray for the group to work through the tools for today that apply to them and for the prayer requests that are lifted up from the group.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 290.

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 290.



FURTHER STUDY



Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/abraham-blessed>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/god-comes-abimelech>

Articles –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/will-god-condemn-the-innocent/>

Sermon-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/themes-from-genesis/joseph-gods-sovereignty>