

## **July 23 – Leader’s Guide - Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18a “Jehovah Magen”**

### **Read Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18a**

1. (vs. 1) “After these things”. At the beginning of the sermon Tim shared the circumstances that had led Abram to a place of fear. What in your life at present is a source of fear?

*If helpful, here are the circumstances that led Abram to that place of fear:*

*God had come to Abram in the city of Ur – what is now modern day Iraq – inviting him to leave land - family – father - and go to a place he’d never seen – with the promise of a future – an heir – a land – the beginnings of a great nation - he made the journey with his nephew Lot and they settled together in Canaan – but as their families grew the area in which they’d settled was not enough to sustain them – the family was being fractured by infighting over resources – wisely they chose to migrate to places that could sustain them – Lot was given first choice - and chose to settle near the city of Sodom – it is then that regional politics take center stage – Sodom refuses to pay taxes to the ruling tribal leaders – and in response those leaders crack down on the insubordination – they attack Sodom capturing all its riches along with Lot and his family – Now Abram hears this news - flies to his nephew’s aid - ambushes the conglomerate of tribes and is victorious - not only does he rescue Lot – he captures all their spoils of war.*

*To say the least Abram has now made enemies for himself – not only the tribes he’s attacked – but the King of Sodom whose riches he now possesses – He’s understandably anxious – fearful – for his life – family – future – reprisal must come – but how – and when? – he had the element of surprise the first time – now he will be outnumbered – at their mercy – “after these things” – fear begins to settle in...*

*\*\*\*As this is a personal reflection question as a leader you have the ability to set the tone. There will be a broad range that could be given from the sources of fear present in the happenings globally and locally, to the concerns of one’s personal life. As you seek to build connection and support of one another as a group I would encourage you as a leader to set a tone of vulnerability and openness as you prepare to share what might be a source of fear in your own life.*

2. What do we often want God to do for us in that place of fear? What does God do for Abram and what is his response?

*We often desire God to press into our fear in power. To change the person, the situation, the circumstances that cause our fear. Instead God comes to Abram and reveals Himself – his character – his faithfulness to His promises. I am Jehovah Magen, your reward shall be very great – meaning your future is secure in me – for the reward is ultimately an heir – a future – a great nation. Abram’s response is one of doubt, which he honestly articulates before God.*

3. (vs. 2-3) Abram responds to God by articulating his anguished doubt. How do we normally respond to our feelings of anger, doubt, and confusion with God? What does Abram invite us to?

*The following is an unedited section from the sermon that will help to direct your discussion of this question:*

*The bible is full of such pushback – full of such honest wrestling with God – and yet the modern person seems to meet their doubt – their spiritual struggles – their anger frustration confusion with God by either tamping those things down – pretending they’re not there - or walking away...*

*I was formed in a Christian faith tradition that didn’t create an environment where you could honestly wrestle with doubt – anger – frustration - confusion with God – part of that was theological – you were saved by faith – so having a faith that was unalloyed by such things was linked to your sense of confidence in your salvation – bad theology – for we are not saved by the subjective qualities of our faith but by the object of our faith – Jesus – but both the environment and the theology made tamping those things down seem the only viable option.*

*But you can’t tamp it down forever – all of that has got to find some expression – there came a time where I wasn’t able to hold it in anymore – like a toxin all those unprocessed negative emotions were causing internal damage – it was the psalms that invited me into a far more biblical and healthy pattern.*

*As the psalmists processed their emotional landscape before God – I began to process in prayer my own emotional landscape– the fear – doubt – anger – confusion – anger not just at God but with others – the desire for vengeance justice in the face of wrong - and as I processed those in prayer God began to speak into them – not in a vision like with Abram – but in the same vein - drawing my attention to his character – reminding me of*

*relevant scriptural passages – reaffirming his love of me in spite of the ugliness of my emotional landscape – it was and continues to be a very healing practice in my own life of faith – if this is not already a part of your life of faith – I would encourage you to pick it up - as Abram here invites us to that same honest wrestling.*

4. How does God respond to Abram’s honest wrestling? Can we expect the same?

*By giving him a further revelation of himself. I believe that we can expect the same though the means of God’s revelation may be different. The Spirit may point us to an aspect of God’s character, may remind us of relevant biblical passages, point us to a truth of what He has done for us.*

*If you have a personal experience of this happening in your own life – do share it – it may trigger others to share something in that same vein.*

In response to Abram’s final expression of anguished fear and doubt God cuts a covenant with him where He takes all the consequences for either God’s or Abram’s or Abram’s descendants’ failure to live in accordance with it.

5. How is this story the best lens for looking at the work of Jesus on the cross?

*I think this passage invites us to have this story as our lens for the cross. Far too often our primary lens for the cross is to see it as an example we judicial justice - crimes require penalties, our sin deserves penalty, at the cross we see Jesus taking the penalty so that we may be freed from it ourselves. There is truth there, the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) – and at the cross Jesus takes our death so that we might have life. The trajectory from Genesis 15 to the cross however invites us to behold the glorious faithfulness of God. He will meet our covenant unfaithfulness with his faithfulness, he will meet our rejection with his love, he will meet our sin with mercy and grace*

6. **Read Mark 15:33-39.** How does Jesus ultimately fulfill the truth of God as “Jehovah Magen”? How can beholding Jesus as Jehovah Magen assist us in addressing our fears?

*So what do we do with our fears? We all have them. We behold Jesus, faithful to the end, who at the cross deals with our greatest fears 1) fear of*

*death 2) fear of the power of darkness 3) fear of separation from God, and displays them defeated by his resurrection. When we see Jesus victorious over our greatest fears, all other fears are put into their proper place.*

*In his resurrection he declares unequivocally that our future is secure in Him, for his resurrection is the first fruits of new creation. This is the promise that he will come again to make everything new. We don't know the outcome of the situation that has us wrapped up in fear but we can be confident in the outcome of the grand story of creation. All things will be made new, everything wrong will be undone, peace, justice, shalom, full flourishing in every aspect of life is the sure and certain future of the cosmos. Why? because Jesus has risen from the dead.*

*Go back to the first question that brought the fears in the group to the surface. How can what you have talked about out of this text be able to assist you in navigating your fears?*