

July 30 – Leader’s Guide

Genesis 16:1-16 “El Roi: The God Who Sees”

Read Genesis 16.

1. What is your first impression of this story?

This story is full of cultural nuances that make it easy for us to jump to conclusions. Allow your group to express some of these first impressions.

2. Mini-sermon 1 was about Abraham’s lack of faith, and the connections the author is making between this story and Genesis 3. What do the two stories have in common?

Eve and Sarah both “took and gave” to their husbands, who accepted from their wives. Both husbands listened to their wives instead of God. Both have humans trusting in their own wisdom and strength rather than God’s.

3. Mini-sermon 2 was about Sarah’s identity resting in the cultural pressure on women to bear children. Do you sympathise with Sarah in this story? Why or why not? What kinds of pressure does our culture put on us in terms of identity?

The cultural pressures to have children were intense, and Sarah was obviously feeling the weight of that. Explore with the group what identities we are pressured to fulfill in our culture today.

4. Mini-sermon 3 was about how hurt people hurt people. Name the different ways that people hurt each other in this story. How could that cycle have been broken? How does the cross interrupt the cycle of ‘hurt people hurting people’?

Abraham doesn’t ease Sarah’s fears around having children, or help her have faith – rather, he enables her in her fear. Hagar ‘belittles’ Sarah and rubs in her pregnancy. Abraham again doesn’t encourage or help his wife in her pain, but allows her to mistreat Hagar. Allow the group to play out different scenarios for this story. What if Abraham hadn’t listened to Sarah? What if Hagar hadn’t rubbed it in? Etc. The glory of the cross is that God takes the weight of all our pain – both done to us, and that we have done – and atones for it, allowing us to release it.

5. Mini-sermon 4 was about the misuse of power, and how Sarah mistreats an Egyptian when she is in power, just as the Egyptians will mistreat the Israelites when they are in power. What does the Bible have to say about power and weakness?

It is in our weakness that God's strength and power can be seen (see 2 Cor 12:9-12). Christ gave up his power on the cross so that we might become strong in him; a pattern for us as well.

6. Mini-sermon 6 is about how despite the fact that everyone in the story has gone their own way and hurt each other, God steps into the mess and reveals himself as the God who cares for each of us in our situations, and has seen our ways and will heal us. (See Isaiah 57:18) Are there situations in your life where this is an encouraging thought for you? Share with the group as you feel comfortable.

Often situations with family are complicated and painful, with no one person being completely innocent or guilty. This passage can be a healing way to understand those situations, knowing that God loves us and is willing to meet us exactly where we are with healing and hope. You may want to think of a situation in your own life (past or present) that this may relate to, to start the ball rolling.

For further discussion: mini-sermon 5 was on faith versus works, based on Galatians 4:21-31. This passage is worth a whole discussion in its own right!