

MESSAGE

PRAYING IN THE MIDST OF PROMISES AND PROBLEMS

FAITH LIFE | GENESIS 18:16-33 | OCTOBER 25/26, 2014 | PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"Then Abraham approached the LORD and said: 'Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?'" (Genesis 18:23)

Traveling in the Midst of Promises and Problems

- The guiding promises of God
- The problems of the surrounding land
- The faith-stretching journey of Abraham and Sarah

Five Elements of Prayer for the Journey

1. Prayer as crying out to God (Genesis 18:20-21)
2. Prayer as listening to God's plans (Genesis 18:17-19)
3. Prayer as pleading for others before God (Genesis 18:22-26)
4. Prayer as negotiating with God (Genesis 18:27-32)
5. Prayer as relinquishing control to God (Genesis 18:33)

Three Specific Tools

- Prayer _____
- Prayer _____
- Prayer _____

STUDY GUIDE

1. How would you define 'prayer'? Do you find it easy or hard to pray? Why?
2. As we continue our "Faith Life" series on the life of Abraham this week, we will look at Genesis 18:16-33. Ask God to speak to you before you read this chapter of Genesis aloud.
3. Earlier in Genesis 18, we find God meeting with Abraham and Sarah in the form of three travelers en route to Sodom and Gomorrah. Beginning in 18:16, two of the travelers continue on as God lingers to speak with Abraham. In verses 17-19, God reflects aloud to Himself about whether He should speak to Abraham about what is in store for Sodom and Gomorrah or not. What does God decide and why does He choose this?
4. In verses 20 and 21, we find that an 'outcry' that has arisen against Sodom and Gomorrah to God. This outcry is likely the voices of the wronged rising up to God. What were the wrongs of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 13:13; 18:20-21; 19:1-14; Isaiah 1:10-17; 3:8-9; Jeremiah 23:13-14; Ezekiel 16:49-50)? What do you think it means that God hears this outcry?
5. Abraham begins a bold conversation with God in verses 22-25 that almost seems like haggling or bargaining. Take note of the questions Abraham asks God in these verses. What is Abraham asking of God and how does that relate to God's character?
6. When have you entered into a time of prayer that felt like a sort of haggling of pleas with God? What happened?
7. Through verses 25-32, it is interesting to note that Abraham is not merely pleading for Lot's protection, but for entire cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. What does this teach us about the way we approach intercessory prayer?
8. What is one way you could tangibly respond to what God is speaking to you about your own life of faith through this week's study? If you are on your own, make a plan to put it into action. If you are with a group, take some time to discuss this with one another.

[Next week we will look at God's fulfillment of His promises with the birth of Isaac and its impact upon Ishmael in Genesis 21:1-21. Read that passage ahead of time to prepare for the study.]