



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

DECEMBER 2, 2018

Discussion Guide

How God Speaks

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- CAN YOU RECALL A TIME IN WHICH YOU MISSED SOMETHING YOU WANTED BECAUSE IT CAME IN A WAY YOU WERE NOT EXPECTING? WHAT WAS THIS LIKE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- HEARING GOD'S VOICE BEGINS WITH KNOWING HOW GOD SPEAKS, WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HIS VOICE COMES TO US. WHEN WE KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT, WE KNOW WHAT TO LOOK/LISTEN FOR. HOWEVER, SIMPLY ADOPTING PROPER EXPECTATIONS IS NOT THE FIRST STEP. HAVING PROPER EXPECTATIONS BEGINS WITH SURFACING OUR PRESENT EXPECTATIONS AND THEN OBSERVING THEM TO SEE IF THEY MUST BE REPLACED WITH REALISTIC/TRUE EXPECTATIONS. WE SURFACE OUR PRESENT EXPECTATIONS BY OBSERVING AREAS WHERE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED DISAPPOINTMENT,

BECAUSE OUR DISAPPOINTMENT POINTS TO AN UNMET EXPECTATION.

- CONSIDER YOUR LIFE AND THE TIMES WHERE YOU ENCOUNTERED GOD'S VOICE OR LONGED TO ENCOUNTER GOD'S VOICE AND EXPERIENCED A LEVEL OF DISAPPOINTMENT.
- ASK WHAT IT WAS THAT YOU WERE EXPECTING IN THIS SITUATION OR WHAT COULD HAVE OCCURRED TO ALLEVIATE YOUR DISAPPOINTMENT. THESE ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS. SEE IF YOU CAN WORD THESE AS SINGLE SENTENCES OR PHRASES.
- AS A GROUP, DISCUSS YOUR VARIOUS EXPECTATIONS REGARDING GOD'S VOICE.
- READ GENESIS 12-19 ALOUD. THIS IS A LONG PORTION OF SCRIPTURE. THEREFORE, WE RECOMMEND USING A PRE-RECORDED VERSION OF SCRIPTURE. YOU CAN FIND AN EXCELLENT FREE, NIV VERSION ON BIBLEGATEWAY.COM.
- CONSIDER THE STORY OF ABRAHAM. IN WHAT WAYS, DID GOD SPEAK TO ABRAHAM? SEEK TO DISCOVER AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.
- AS A GROUP, COMPARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS REGARDING GOD'S VOICE WITH HOW GOD SPOKE TO ABRAHAM. ARE THEY SIMILAR OR DISSIMILAR? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, MIGHT THE STORY OF ABRAHAM REVEAL ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS REGARDING GOD'S VOICE? WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO ADJUST THESE EXPECTATIONS?
- CONSIDER CLOSING IN PRAYER, ASKING FOR GRACE TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

God's Will

THE ISSUE OF GOD'S WILL CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD APART FROM GOD'S SOVEREIGN NATURE. TO BE SOVEREIGN IS TO BE IMBUED WITH POWER AND AUTHORITY, AND GOD HAS ALL POWER AND ALL AUTHORITY (1 CHRONICLES 29.10-12; MATTHEW 6.13). THEREFORE, GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS COMPLETE MAKING HIM KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IS EXPRESSED IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS WILL FOR HIS CREATION, BOTH ITS HISTORY AND ITS PROGRESSION (EPHESIANS 1.11). WHAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR HIS CREATION WILL COME TO PASS, BECAUSE AS ONE WHO POSSESSES COMPLETE SOVEREIGNTY, NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR HIM TO ACCOMPLISH (JEREMIAH 32.17-23).

WHILE THE ISSUE OF GOD'S WILL AND ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT IS CLEAR IN SCRIPTURE, WHAT BECOMES LESS CLEAR IS HOW GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL WORKS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HUMAN SOVEREIGN WILL EXPRESSED IN THE FORM OF AUTONOMY AND FREEDOM. CERTAINLY, DUE TO OUR FALLEN NATURE, OUR WILL IS AT MANY POINTS CONTRARY TO THAT OF GOD'S OWN. HUMANITY'S WILL NOT ONLY CONTRADICTS GOD'S WILL BUT IN MANY RESPECTS STANDS IN HOSTILE OPPOSITION TO GOD'S WILL. HOWEVER, THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, THE APPEARANCE IS THAT GOD ALLOWS HUMANITY, ON BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE LEVEL, TO RESIST OR EVEN REFUSE HIS WILL. THESE INSTANCES FORM SOMETHING OF A PARADOX WHICH HAS NO SOLUTION. IF HUMANITY IS ALLOWED TO RESIST OR DENY GOD'S WILL THEN GOD IS NOT FULLY SOVEREIGN. HOWEVER, IF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY LEAVES NO ROOM FOR THE HUMAN RESPONSE, THEN HUMAN SOVEREIGNTY (FREEDOM) DOES NOT EXIST. THIS PARADOX HAS LED TO A NUMBER OF ANSWERS WHICH TYPICALLY EMPHASIZE EITHER GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OR HUMAN AUTONOMY. IN MANY RESPECTS, THE CALVINIST-ARMENIAN DISCUSSION, ALTHOUGH ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN THIS PARADOX, HAS BEEN REDUCED TO A DEBATE OVER THE TENSION BETWEEN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN AUTONOMY.

IN MANY RESPECTS, THE NATURE OF GOD'S WILL AS IT CONFRONTS THE WILL OF HUMANITY, REMAINS A TENSION ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH. HOWEVER, SOME RESOLUTION MIGHT BE FOUND IN SCRIPTURE IF ONE LOOKS BEYOND THE VERSES WHICH EMPHASIZE HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY TO PASSAGES WHICH DETAIL THE OUTWORKING OF THE COLLISION OF THE TWO. ONE SUCH EXAMPLE IS THE STORY OF JOSEPH. IN THIS STORY, JOSEPH'S BROTHERS SEEK TO HARM JOSEPH IN AN EFFORT TO DERAIL GOD'S PLAN TO HAVE JOSEPH RULE OVER THEM (GENESIS 37). AS THE STORY WORKS ITS WAY OUT, THE BROTHERS ARE FREE TO RESIST

GOD'S WILL, AND YET GOD WORKS AROUND THEM, USING THEIR ACTS OF DISOBEDIENCE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL (GENESIS 45.5, 7-8; 50.19-20). SIMILARLY, WITH THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS, THE RULING AUTHORITIES SOUGHT TO RESIST GOD'S REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT, AND YET GOD TOOK THEIR ACTS OF RESISTANCE AND WORKED THEM INTO A MOVEMENT WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT HIS REDEMPTIVE WILL (ACTS 2.23; 4.27-28). IN THESE AND OTHER SUCH PASSAGES, GOD'S WILL IS NOT THWARTED EVEN AS PEOPLE ARE GIVEN UNLIMITED FREEDOM. RATHER, GOD IS SO SOVEREIGN THAT HE IS ABLE TO TAKE THE FREE ACTIONS OF PEOPLE AND USE THEM TO BRING ABOUT THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS WILL, EVEN WHEN THESE ACTIONS ARE FREELY COMMITTED IN AN EFFORT TO THWART GOD'S WILL (ROMANS 8.28-31).

IN LIGHT OF THESE AND OTHER PASSAGES, IT IS PROBABLY BETTER TO SPEAK OF HUMANITY AS HAVING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO USE FREEDOM TO ACT IN KEEPING WITH GOD'S REVEALED WILL, THOSE ACTIONS WHICH HE HAS STATED HE DESIRES THEM TO ACCOMPLISH. HOWEVER, HUMAN FREEDOM IN NO WAY CAN THWART THE LARGER WILL OF GOD FOR THE PROGRESSION OF HIS CREATION. HUMANITY MIGHT RESIST OR REJECT GOD'S REVEALED WILL INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, BUT GOD WILL RECEIVE THESE ACTIONS AND USE THEM TO BRING HIS WILL TO ULTIMATE COMPLETION.

THE TEXT

GENESIS 12-15: HEARING GOD ACROSS THE YEARS

THE STORY OF GOD'S CALL AND ABRAHAM'S RESPONSE PROVIDES NOT ONLY A WONDERFUL TESTAMENT TO WHAT IT IS TO EXERCISE FAITH, BUT ALSO WHAT IT IS TO HEAR AND RESPOND TO GOD'S VOICE; THAT IS, THIS STORY FUNCTIONS TO HELP SET PROPER EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING HOW GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE. GOD'S CALL CAME TO ABRAHAM LONG BEFORE HE ACTED UPON IT, A REALITY MADE PLAIN IN THE USE OF THE PAST TENSE WHEN REFERRING TO GOD'S CALL (GENESIS 12.1). MOST LIKELY, GOD'S CALL CAME TO ABRAHAM WHEN HE STILL LIVED IN UR OF THE CHALDEANS (ACTS 7.2-3). GOD'S CALL INVITED ABRAHAM (THEN ABRAM) TO LEAVE ALL WHICH GAVE HIM SECURITY AND IDENTITY IN ORDER TO JOURNEY TO A LAND WHICH WAS YET TO BE REVEALED. WHILE THIS CALL SPECIFICALLY INVOLVED A PHYSICAL JOURNEY, THE PHYSICAL JOURNEY WAS NOT THE MAIN POINT. THE MAIN POINT INVOLVED THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF ABRAHAM BECOMING A NATION WHICH GOD WOULD USE TO BLESS ALL OTHER NATIONS (GENESIS 12.2-3). HOW GOD SPOKE THIS CALL TO ABRAHAM IS NEVER MENTIONED, ALTHOUGH HE USES A VISION IN GENESIS 15. THEREFORE, A VISION MIGHT BE INVOLVED HERE.

ABRAHAM COMES TO A POINT WHERE HE OBEYS GOD'S CALL, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT HE HEARD FROM GOD AGAIN UNTIL HE OBEYED THE INITIAL CALL. NEITHER DID

ABRAHAM HEAR FROM GOD ON HIS JOURNEY UNTIL HE ARRIVED IN CANAAN, AND AT THIS POINT, GOD SIMPLY NOTED THAT ABRAHAM'S OFFSPRING WOULD INHERIT THE LAND OF CANAAN (GENESIS 12.6-7). AS YEARS HAD LIKELY PASSED SINCE THE INITIAL CALLING, ABRAHAM HAD GONE YEARS WITHOUT HEARING GOD. WHEN GOD SPOKE AGAIN, IT INVOLVED NO FURTHER INVITATIONS, ONLY INFORMATION ELABORATING ON THE INITIAL CALL.

ABRAHAM CONTINUED SOUTH AND FOUND HIS WAY TO EGYPT TO AVOID A FAMINE (GENESIS 12.9-13.1). WHEN HE RETURNED TO THE LAND OF CANAAN, HE MOVED ABOUT FOR SOME TIME UNTIL HE AND HIS NEPHEW LOT SEPARATE (GENESIS 13.8-9). IT IS LIKELY THAT YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE ABRAHAM LAST HEARD GOD SPEAK. HOWEVER, WHEN LOT LEAVES, GOD SPEAKS ONCE MORE. THIS TIME, GOD REVEALS THAT THE LAND OF CANAAN IS FOR ABRAHAM AND HIS OFFSPRING, AND THE INSTRUCTION OF GOD IS TO REMAIN IN THE LAND FOR IT IS GOD'S GIFT. IN THIS ENCOUNTER, ABRAHAM HEARS FROM GOD IN A TIME OF NEED (QUESTIONING/DOUBT). WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY REINFORCES WHAT HE HAS ALREADY SAID, A REMINDER OF A FORMER PROMISE, AND IS AN ELABORATION UPON THAT INITIAL PROMISES, AN ELABORATION WHICH PROVIDES ABRAHAM WITH HIS NEXT STEP (GENESIS 13.14-18).

YEARS PASS. ABRAHAM IS FORCED TO RESCUE LOT, BUT IN ALL OTHER RESPECTS, LIFE CONTINUES ON (GENESIS 14). AFTER SOME TIME, GOD SPEAKS ONCE AGAIN. IN THIS ENCOUNTER, GOD ADDRESSES ABRAHAM'S FEAR AND DOUBT AND ALLOWS ABRAHAM TO QUESTION HIM. IN RESPONSE, GOD REAFFIRMS HIS PROMISE AND PLAN TO MAKE ABRAHAM A GREAT NATION, AND HE REVEALS THAT THE NEXT STEP IN THIS PLAN WILL BE FOR ABRAHAM TO HAVE A SON. IN ADDITION, HE REVEALS THE FUTURE EXPERIENCES OF ABRAHAM'S ANCESTORS, BUT NOTES THAT ABRAHAM WILL SIMPLY FINISH HIS LIFE AND DIE AT A GOOD OLD AGE (GENESIS 15.15). WHILE NEW INFORMATION AND STEPS ARE REVEALED IN THIS ENCOUNTER, NO NEW TRAJECTORY IS SEEN. GOD SIMPLY PROVIDES THE NEXT STEP FOR ABRAHAM AND COMMUNICATES THE LIMIT OF HIS ROLE IN THE LARGER PLAN GOD HAS, WHICH IMPLIES THAT GOD'S CALLING ON ABRAHAM IS LESS ABOUT ABRAHAM THAN IT IS ABOUT SOMETHING LARGER GOD WANTS TO ACCOMPLISH.

YEARS PASS, AND ABRAHAM TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS IN ORDER TO BEAR A SON (GENESIS 16). FINALLY, GOD SPEAKS. WHEN HE SPEAKS, GOD CALLS ABRAHAM TO WALK WITH HIM IN FAITHFULNESS (GENESIS 17). HE THEN RENAMES HIM AND GIVES HIM THE MARK OF CIRCUMCISION, REAFFIRMING HIS PLAN TO MAKE ABRAHAM'S FAMILY INTO A GREAT NATION. IN THIS ENCOUNTER, NO NEW INFORMATION IS COMMUNICATED, ONLY THE

NEXT STEP IN THE TRAJECTORY WHICH GOD HAS ALREADY REVEALED AND A REMINDER FOR ABRAHAM TO KEEP MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

A SHORT TIME LATER, GOD APPEARS PHYSICALLY TO ABRAHAM IN THE FORM OF 3 VISITORS (GENESIS 18). THESE VISITORS REAFFIRM GOD'S PLAN FOR ABRAHAM TO HAVE A SON BY SARAH. AFTER THIS, GOD AND ABRAHAM DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH. GOD QUESTIONS WHETHER HE SHOULD REVEAL HIS PLANS TO ABRAHAM, BUT CHOOSES TO DO SO (GENESIS 18.17). WHILE THE DIALOGUE PROVIDES SOME INSIGHT INTO THE RELATIONAL NATURE OF HOW ABRAHAM AND GOD COMMUNICATED, IT IS ALSO THE NEXT STEP ON ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY OF BECOMING A BLESSING. WITH HIS REVEALING OF THE FATE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH, GOD INVITES ABRAHAM INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A BLESSING TO THESE PEOPLE, A BLESSING WHICH RESULTS IN GOD SPARING LOT AND AGREEING TO SPARE THE CITIES SHOULD 10 RIGHTEOUS MEN BE FOUND (GENESIS 18.32).

AS ONE LOOKS ACROSS THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM AND CONSIDERS HOW GOD COMMUNICATED WITH HIM, SEVERAL THEMES BECOME EVIDENT.

1. GOD HAD A WILL FOR ABRAHAM, BUT HE ONLY REVEALED THIS WILL ONE STEP AT A TIME. SOMETIMES LONG PERIODS OF SILENCE WOULD OCCUR BETWEEN ABRAHAM'S ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD. IN THESE TIMES, ABRAHAM HAD FREEDOM IN HOW HE LIVED WITHIN THE TRAJECTORY OF GOD'S PLAN AS REVEALED TO THAT POINT.
2. GOD SPOKE DIRECTLY TO ABRAHAM, AND THEIR ENCOUNTERS BEAR THE MARKINGS OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FRIENDS. EVEN THOUGH LONG PERIODS OF SILENCE OCCURRED, WHEN GOD SPOKE, THERE REMAINED A LEVEL OF INTIMACY. ONE MIGHT SAY, THE LEVEL OF INTIMACY INCREASED WITH EACH ENCOUNTER. HOWEVER, THE NATURE OF THESE CONVERSATIONS REVEAL THAT GOD'S FRIENDSHIP WITH ABRAHAM IS NOT SIMPLY ABOUT ABRAHAM. GOD HAS A LARGER PLAN IN WHICH ABRAHAM PLAYS A PART; THAT IS, GOD WAS IN AN INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP WITH ABRAHAM BUT THIS FRIENDSHIP WAS NOT ABOUT ABRAHAM.
3. WHEN GOD SPOKE, HE EITHER REAFFIRMED HIS INITIAL CALLING ON ABRAHAM OR REVEALED THE NEXT STEP IN MOVING ALONG THE TRAJECTORY OF THAT CALLING. GOD NEVER CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT WHERE HE WAS TAKING ABRAHAM; THAT IS, WHEN GOD SPOKE HE DID NOT TALK ABOUT NEW THINGS. HE KEPT TALKING ABOUT THE SAME THING.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

IF GOD SPEAKS, WHAT IS IT LIKE TO HEAR HIS VOICE? WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD'S VOICE TO BE LIKE? IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT? I FIND THAT SETTING MY EXPECTATIONS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF ANY RELATIONSHIP. IF I KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT, I KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR. HOWEVER, IF MY EXPECTATIONS ARE WRONGLY PLACED, THE VERY THING I WANT COULD BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, BUT I WOULD NEVER SEE IT, BECAUSE IT WASN'T WHAT I WAS EXPECTING. SO, WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT WITH RESPECT TO GOD'S VOICE?

I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE EVER EXPLICITLY TOLD ME WHAT TO EXPECT, BUT I PICKED UP SOME EXPECTATIONS ALONG THE WAY, THREE BIG ONES TO BE EXACT: (1) WHEN GOD SPEAKS HIS WILL, HE WILL TELL ME ALL I NEED TO KNOW; THAT IS, GOD WILL TELL ME EVERYTHING; (2) IN OUR RELATIONSHIP, GOD AND I WILL HAVE AN ONGOING CONVERSATION ABOUT THE MOST MINUTE OF DETAILS BECAUSE HE IS FOCUSED ON ME; AND (3) GOD WILL PERIODICALLY REVEAL NEW AND WONDERFUL THINGS HE HAS IN STORE FOR ME.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THESE CAME FROM, BUT THEY CAME FROM SOMEWHERE. I THINK AT LEAST A COUPLE OF THESE CAME FROM IMPLICIT MESSAGES I PICKED UP IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT TALKING WITH GOD FROM OTHER BELIEVERS, MOSTLY BECAUSE I KNOW A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO EXPECT THE SAME THINGS OF GOD. I HAVE SPENT THE MAJORITY OF MY LIFE WAITING FOR GOD TO SPEAK IN WAYS WHICH MEET THESE EXPECTATIONS. . . I AM STILL WAITING. GOD HAS, AS OF YET, NOT LIVED UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS. DOES THIS MEAN GOD DOESN'T SPEAK TO ME? IT COULD BE, OR IT COULD BE THAT MY EXPECTATIONS ARE WRONG. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE GOD IS SPEAKING BUT I AM MISSING IT BECAUSE I AM NOT LOOKING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

WHEN I CONSIDER THE STORY OF ABRAHAM, I REALIZE THAT THE WAY GOD SPOKE TO ABRAHAM CHALLENGES MOST OF HOW I EXPECT HIM TO SPEAK TO ME. WHEN GOD SPOKE TO ABRAHAM, HE SPOKE ABOUT WHERE HE WAS TAKING ABRAHAM, AND THEN HE GAVE HIM ONE STEP AT A TIME. SOMETIMES, HE WAITED YEARS BEFORE HE GAVE ANOTHER STEP. SIMPLY PUT, GOD DIDN'T TELL ABRAHAM EVERYTHING. SECOND, WHEN GOD SPOKE WITH ABRAHAM, THEY TALKED, LIKE FRIENDS, BUT THEY DIDN'T TALK ALL THE TIME. YEARS WOULD GO BY AND THEY WOULDN'T TALK AT ALL. AND, WHEN THEY TALKED, THEY TALKED ABOUT ABRAHAM'S STUFF, BUT IT IS PRETTY APPARENT THAT GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ABRAHAM WAS ABOUT MORE THAN ABRAHAM. GOD CARED FOR ABRAHAM BUT IT WASN'T ABOUT ABRAHAM. FINALLY, WHEN GOD AND ABRAHAM SPOKE, THEY SPOKE ABOUT THE SAME THING, MAYBE IN NEW WAYS, BUT IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME THING. THERE WERE NO NEW EXCITING REVELATIONS OR DIRECTIONS FOR ABRAHAM. THERE WAS JUST THE SAME MESSAGE.

AS I LOOK ACROSS SCRIPTURE, I SEE SOME OF THESE SAME THEMES IN THE WAY OTHERS SPOKE WITH GOD. GOD WOULD SPEAK TO REVEAL HIS PLAN, BUT THEN GIVE ONE STEP AT A TIME. HE WOULD SPEAK IN INTIMATE WAYS, BUT THE INTIMACY WASN'T ABOUT THE PERSON; THAT IS, GOD WASN'T TALKING TO THEM SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WAS CRAZY

ABOUT THEM, ALTHOUGH I AM SURE THIS IS TRUE. GOD WAS TALKING BECAUSE HE WAS ABOUT SOMETHING MORE THAN THE PERSON. WHEN GOD SPOKE, HE KEPT SAYING THE SAME THINGS. TALK ABOUT A ONE TRACK MIND!

SO, I HAVE TO ASK, IF THIS IS HOW GOD SPOKE TO THEM, SHOULD I EXPECT FOR GOD TO SPEAK ANY DIFFERENTLY TO ME?

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT HEARING GOD TO BE LIKE? HOW DOES GOD SPEAK? THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ANSWER BECAUSE IT WILL HELP US BEGIN TO NOTICE WHEN GOD IS AND IS NOT SPEAKING TO US. ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH WHAT WE CAN EXPECT IS DISCOVERING WHAT IT IS WE ALREADY EXPECT. WE MIGHT SAY WE DO NOT HAVE EXPECTATIONS, BUT THIS WOULD NOT BE TRUE. WE CANNOT FUNCTION WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS. EXPECTATIONS FORM THE GRID BY WHICH WE INTERPRET AND INTERACT WITH OUR WORLD. NOT ALL OF OUR EXPECTATIONS ARE STATED, BUT THEY ARE THERE NEVERTHELESS. PERHAPS ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO SURFACE OUR EXPECTATIONS IS TO NOTICE OUR DISAPPOINTMENTS. WHEN WE ENCOUNTER DISAPPOINTMENT, WE HAVE STUMBLER UPON AN UNMET EXPECTATION. IN THESE MOMENTS, WE CAN THEN ASK, WHAT WAS I EXPECTING, OR WHAT WOULD COULD HAVE OCCURRED THAT WOULD NOT HAVE LEFT ME DISAPPOINTED? ONCE WE SURFACE THESE EXPECTATIONS, WE CAN THEN ASK WHETHER THEY ARE REALISTIC AND TRUE. IF THEY ARE NOT, WE CAN THEN REPLACE THEM. IF WE DO NOT TAKE THIS STEP, WE MAY MENTALLY ADOPT REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ALL THE WHILE FUNCTIONING ON OUR UNSTATED UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

THIS WEEK, CONSIDER THINKING BACK ACROSS YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH GOD'S VOICE, OR YOUR DESIRE TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S VOICE. AT WHAT POINTS DID YOU ENCOUNTER DISAPPOINTMENT? NEXT, ASK WHAT IT WAS YOU WERE EXPECTING OR WHAT COULD HAVE OCCURRED THAT WOULD HAVE NOT LEFT YOU DISAPPOINTED. HERE IS YOUR EXPECTATION. SEE IF YOU CAN PUT INTO A SINGLE SENTENCE OR PHRASE. NEXT, READ THE STORY OF ABRAHAM IN GENESIS 12-19 AND SEE IF YOUR EXPECTATIONS MATCH THE WAY GOD SPOKE TO ABRAHAM. WHILE WE DO NOT SEE EVERYTHING ABOUT THE WAY GOD SPEAKS IN THESE CHAPTERS, WE DO SEE HOW GOD CHOSE TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE HE CALLED HIS FRIEND ACROSS THE ENTIRE LIFE OF THIS PERSON. IF YOU DO NOT FIND GOD SPEAKING TO ABRAHAM IN THE WAY YOU ARE EXPECTING HIM TO SPEAK, THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE YOUR EXPECTATION IS UNREALISTIC. BASED ON ABRAHAM'S STORY, CONSIDER WHAT MIGHT BE A REALISTIC EXPECTATION AND WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOR THIS EXPECTATION TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE OLD. YOU MIGHT JOURNAL WHAT THIS EXPERIENCE IS LIKE OR DISCUSS IT WITH A SOUL FRIEND.



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