

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Oct 13, 2019

I Have Questions: Is Anything Too Difficult for the Lord?

Pastor Temple (9:15, 10:30 Selah), Pastor Johnson (8, 10:30 Traditional)

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

- Anything to share about personal events since you last met or about applying last week's message on Building For The Future: An Overwhelming Offering?
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

Opener Question: If you had the opportunity for a personal meeting with God and to ask any question you wanted, what would you ask Him?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture, Genesis 18:1-14. Know that it is ok to skip some questions below in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. ³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say." ⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread." ⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. ⁹ "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. ¹⁰ Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- In the previous chapters of Genesis, Abraham had already received a covenant promise of God multiple times to bless his family and to make him into a great nation (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-7;

17:1-22). At this time Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 and they had been waiting 25 years for the first promise to be fulfilled through Sarah (12:4 & 17:17). Abraham had already had his son Ishmael through Sarah's servant Hagar. Why would the repeated promise of Sarah's anticipated pregnancy bring laughter first to Abraham (17:17) and second to Sarah (18:12)?

- What feelings or thoughts do you believe were behind their laughter?
- What do you feel is a reasonable timeframe of expectations when it comes to God's promises?
- In light of verses 1-2 and 13-14, who do you think the three visitors were – angels, human prophets, or God the trinity and why?
- What had Abraham and Sarah done well and right in this holy visitation in 18:1-8?
- Why do you think Sarah was not with Abraham and the visitors in verse 9?
- Like Abraham in chapter 17, Sarah too expressed her doubts about this long awaited promised baby in her old age even with the specific time frame of one more year being added. How is the question "Is anything too hard for the Lord" a helpful and gentle corrective response to her?
- Why do Christians often struggle with taking their conceptual knowledge of God and applying it to their human experience?
- Aside from lack of faith in God's power, what other factors can work against us in trying to fully live into God's will for us?

Other Related Readings (10 min)

- Would a volunteer please read out loud Ephesians 3:20-21.
- It is one thing to acknowledge that God is "able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine" and another to believe that His power "is at work in us." Taken together, how do these two ideas stretch your faith?
- What are some examples of how our expectations of what is possible have been raised because of faith in God?
- Verse 21 adds another dimension to where and how the power of God is at work, through the church. How have you seen the church giving "glory" to God in powerful ways?
- How does approaching problems with faith in the power of God differ from a more analytical approach that is fixated on probabilities?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the additional readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- How is our self-pity or apathy limiting what God can do with us as individuals?
- As a family?
- As a church family?
- What new possibilities is God calling forth from us that goes beyond what we thought may have been possible?
- When in your life has hearing "one more year" seemed too much to bear, to wait for or to believe in?
- How has having to "wait on the Lord", produced growth in your life?
- What past opportunities that you let pass are worth taking another look at now?

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- Since God can do more than we ask or imagine, and nothing is too difficult for Him, are any of the non-Christians around us unreachable for Christ? How does this affect our openness to faithsharing?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer.