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Conversing with God

Abraham

Genesis 18:16-33

If we are honest, many of us pray with passion when faced with a crisis—exams, big career decisions, suffering or tragedy. In such times of prayer we may discover God in a new way and find almost tangible comfort. But sometimes God may seem silent perhaps distressingly so.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Misunderstanding frequently damages relationships. How can face-to-face conversations help reconcile those whose relationships are fractures?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Think of a time when you or someone you know well struggled to understand God. What place did prayer have in helping you or them understand God better?

In this story Abraham finds God telling him about a crisis that will soon overtake the city in which his nephew lives. A remarkable conversation then follows that enlarges Abraham's understanding of God. *Read Genesis 18:16-33.*

1. From the evidence in the passage, describe the relationship that existed between Abraham and God.

How did the sort of relationship they had affect the way God behaved toward Abraham?

2. How we pray and what we pray for usually reflects, in some way, our deepest desires. In this story, what do you think Abraham was most concerned about?

3. In verses 16-17 God appears to initiate the conversation with Abraham, and in verse 33 he ends it. In what ways have you experienced God prompting you to pray or letting you know that you have prayed enough about something?

4. What motivates you to pray for other people, especially those who do not follow Christ?

5. Abraham refers several times to the fact that God appears to want to simultaneously destroy the righteous and the wicked (vv.23-24, 28-32). Why do you think he keeps questioning God about this?

6. An intercessor is someone who prays for those deserving of God’s judgment. Looking at the example of Abraham, what are some of the qualities we might expect an intercessor to have?

7. God is not angry with Abraham for asking questions even when he appears to question God’s justice. How does this fact reassure us when we have to pray in difficult or confusing circumstances?

8. God still went on to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (you can read the rest of the story in chapter 19). What thoughts and reactions might Abraham have experienced after his conversation with God had ended?

9. This passage highlights a further aspect of prayer that we easily forget God may speak to us in prayer. How have you experienced God guiding and prompting you in prayer or changing you through prayer?

10. Looking back over the passage, summarize what changed as a result of Abraham’s encounter with God. Why did these changes occur?

Ask God to show you how he might want to deepen your knowledge of him as you reflect on this and other passages.

Now or Later

Set aside a brief time to listen to God by meditating on a passage of Scripture. (You might decide to do this every day for a week, perhaps looking at a series of passages.) Keep a record of what God shows you.