

Bible Essentials

Scripture Passage: Genesis 16:1-16

As a group, share something about your past week. For example, share prayer requests and answers to prayer. Share the best and worst moments of your week (highs and lows). Write prayer requests here. Open with prayer for these requests and for God to open your hearts to this week's study.

Have you ever been bullied by someone? How did you respond to it? Or have you ever been the bully? What were the underlying reasons for your actions?

Read today's passage. Discuss your initial impressions of the passage. Write any major points here.

Here is some context for Genesis 16:1-16.

In last week's lesson in Genesis 15, we learned that God re-confirmed his covenant with Abram to give Abram a son, to make him into a great nation, and to give him a land. Abram questioned how this can be since he has no children. He lamented that he's going to have to give his entire estate to one of his servants instead. In a pretty dramatic scene with sacrificed animals laid out and a smoking firepot with a blazing torch passing between them, God made a covenant with Abram that he will have descendants. And even after all that, Abram still feels like he needs to take things into his own hands, as we see in today's passage.

What are your thoughts about the context? Discuss the context as a group. Write some key points here.

Read the passage again. Use a different Bible version if you have one available. Have someone summarize the passage in their own words, and use this space to record that summary.

Look closely at the passage and answer the following questions as a group. Write notes in the space provided.

What does the passage say about God?

What does the passage say about people?

What does the passage say about God's plan?

What else strikes you about this passage?

Understanding how a passage fits into the overarching story of the Bible is important.

This passage shows us the distinct contrast between those who are God's chosen people and those who are not. For those who are not part of God's covenant people, God still cares for them, sees them, and has a plan for them, but that plan is not quite the same as the people under his covenant. For those who are his chosen people, he has a better plan for them, even if that plan requires patience to come to fulfillment.

This contrast continues under the new covenant seen in the New Testament after the death and resurrection of Christ. Under the new covenant, the people who follow Christ may have troubles and afflictions on this earth, but they have a heavenly eternal reward that is worth any persecution on earth. Those who do not follow Christ are still under God's rule—he still sees them and cares for them, and he still has a plan for them. He waits patiently for them to turn to him (2 Peter 3:8-9). But if they do not, God's plan does not include eternal rewards. Instead, it includes hostility, destruction, and an eternity separated from God. Which side do you want to be on? Under the new covenant, it's your choice to make.

What are your thoughts on how this passage fits into the overarching story of the Bible? Discuss as a group. What questions do you have individually or as a group? Discuss potential answers.

As a group, use the following questions to apply today's Scripture passage to your life.
How does this passage affect how you view God?

How does this passage affect how you view yourself?

How does this passage affect how you will live your life?

Close in prayer, asking God to help you apply what you learned today.