



Genesis 20

Some thoughts and questions to help us make the most of this passage. You could use this for pre-sermon study, during the lesson, or afterwards.

Who

- Who do you see as the dominant character in this chapter?
 - What are we meant to learn about that character?
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Conversations

Try to put yourself into the shoes of those having the conversations - God, Abimelek, Abraham and Sarah.

- Recall a conversation with someone who terrified you, but for a good purpose - as God does with Abimelek. How did it feel - during and afterwards?
 - Where else in scripture did people have conversations like this? Ones that were terrifying and helpful?
 - What are God's motives and hopes for the conversations he is having in this chapter?
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Fear

- What fears does Abraham have?
 - What fears does Abimelek have?
 - What is the link between fear and manipulation?
 - Negative behaviours prompted by fear vary from person to person. Are you aware of your own tendencies? What are the most common ways in which you are tempted to 'control' your destiny when dominated by fear? How might you surrender those fears to God in a healthier way?
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Generosity and Grace

- In what ways is God 'generous' in this situation?
- What do we learn about grace from Abimelek?



“A thousand silver shekels” (a shekel = 12 grams/0.4 ounces). Fifty shekels was the maximum ever asked for in bride money (Deut 22:29); the typical old Babylonian labourer received a wage of about half a shekel a month.”

Pagans

In this chapter the 'pagan' Abimelek is portrayed as more 'righteous' than the 'chosen' Abraham.

- What does this tell us about the way God views 'unbelievers'?
 - How might this affect the way we judge 'pagans'?
 - Do you find yourself holding 'pagans' to a higher standard than yourself?
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Prayer

Abimelek is told that Abraham will pray for him (v7).

- What does this tell you about God's faith in Abraham?

Abraham's prayer is powerful and effective (v17).

- Where else in scripture do we see powerful and effective intercession like this?



Intercession: "Act of intervening or mediating between differing parties, particularly the act of praying to God on behalf of another person. In the OT the Hebrew verb paga is used of such pleading or interceding (Gen. 23:8; Isa. 53:12; 59:16; Jer. 7:16; 15:11; 27:18; 36:25). More general terms such as palal, "pray," or chalah, "appease," are also sometimes translated "intercede" (1 Sam. 7:5; 1 Kings 13:6). In the NT the Greek term is entungkano and its derivatives (Rom. 8:26-27,34; 1 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 7:25)."

Butler, J. William Thompson and Trent C. Butler, Trent C., Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

- What does this tell you about your own intercessory ability? How might this thought change the way you pray for other people?

Concluding thoughts

- Are you aware of the areas where you are tempted to try manipulating God, your spouse, your family, people you work with?
- What are your fear-triggers? Could you take them to God?
- What could help you to bounce back to God once you have admitted your mistakes?
- What evidence of the generosity and grace of God can you see in your life - despite your sins?

Genesis 20 reveals the 'ordinariness' of our faith-hero Abraham. He is a towering figure of faith, but as fallible as any one of us. Despite his (repeated) sin failures he kept coming back to God. Perhaps that is one of the major lessons we can take from his relationship with God.

We all have our times of weakness and failure, but we can, if we pay attention to God's loving discipline, find our way back to a meaningful, visionary and intimate relationship with Him.

God bless, Malcolm