

Fast and Pray Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Describe a time you were scared as a child.
2. Do you have or want to have any pets? Explain.

Read the following passage: Genesis 18:16-33.

When Abraham learns that God is going to destroy Sodom because of the extreme wickedness of its citizens, he is concerned about his nephew, Lot, who is living there as a foreigner. Abraham knows something of God's holiness, righteousness, and justice, and these attributes are clearly in view as Abraham, with some trepidation, petitions God to spare the righteous. (Abraham thinks that there must surely be some righteous remnant in Sodom, perhaps connected to his nephew Lot, and he petitions the Lord on this basis.) When Abraham's conversation with the Lord concludes, it is far from clear that he has prevailed. But Genesis 19:29 shows us that God was moved by Abraham's intercession, and He graciously spares Lot. Abraham's example, centuries before the revelation God gave through Moses and ultimately through Christ, teaches us a number of powerful principles of effective intercession.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Read Genesis 18:17. What does this suggest about God's desire to involve us in His purposes? How is this relevant to the universally experienced desire for significance? Do you have a strong desire to do something significant with your life? Explain.
2. What are some ways that God involves us in His purposes? Read Ezekiel 22:29-30. What does this imply about the potential importance of our response (or lack of response) to God?
3. This passage clearly indicates that God is concerned about what happens in the world. Why do you think it is so easy for us to lose sight of this reality? What should we do when we begin to feel disillusioned or like God is distant and unconcerned?
4. Abraham, as we observed above, is clearly concerned about Lot. Our genuine concern for others helps fuel our prayer for them. What should we do if we find ourselves experiencing a lack of concern for other people? How can we direct our concern for others into healthy and effective intercession rather than just "an expression of worry to God"?
5. One of the great themes of the Bible is the inability of sinful human beings to stand in the presence of the Lord. (See, for example, Isaiah 6:1-5 and Luke 5:8.) Explain how Jesus enables sinful human beings to stand in God's presence. How is this relevant

to prayer and intercession?

6. Abraham demonstrates great perseverance as he intercedes for Lot (and a hoped for righteous remnant that he imagines is living in Sodom). Read Luke 18:1-8. Why do you think we so often have to persevere in prayer? How do we know when we should persist in prayer and when we should change what we're asking for?
7. What is one way this passage challenges you to pray for others?
8. Do you regularly pray for other people? Do you have a list of three non-Christian friends that you pray for on a daily basis? Have you yet, or will you this week, pray and fast for one other person?

Pray