

Small Group Guide

Genesis 16: God Who Sees Me

Overview

This session explores Genesis 16 and the story of Hagar, a woman who experienced being used, mistreated, and cast aside. Through her story, God reveals three powerful names for himself: El Roi (the God who sees), the God who hears, and the Living One. Together, these names remind us that no matter what circumstances or relational conflict we face, God meets us right where we are and calls us forward.

Opening Question

Take a few minutes to get the conversation started before diving into the text.

- Has there ever been a moment in your life when you felt completely unseen or unheard by the people around you? Without going into too much detail, how did that experience shape the way you viewed God at the time?

Key Takeaways

Before discussing the questions, review these central truths from the sermon as a group.

1. God is the God who hears. He pays close attention to your cries, especially in seasons of affliction.
2. God is El Roi, the God who sees. He knows where you have been, what you are going through, and where you are going.
3. God is the Living One. He is the well that never runs dry, and because he lives, you will survive whatever you are facing.
4. Attempting to accomplish God's purposes through human strength always creates complications. Trusting his timing and plan is the better path.
5. Even when God's people fail and cause harm, God does not abandon those who are hurt in the process. He pursues them.

Discussion Questions

Work through these questions together as a group. You do not need to cover every question. Let the conversation breathe and go where the Spirit leads.

Understanding the Text

1. In Genesis 16, Sarai says that God has prevented her from bearing children, and then she takes matters into her own hands. How does her reasoning reflect a distorted view of God's character and timing? Have you ever found yourself drawing similar conclusions about God when a promise seemed delayed?
2. The sermon pointed out that Sarai and Abram sought to assist God rather than seeking God's assistance. What is the difference between those two postures, and how can you tell which one you are operating from in your own life?
3. Hagar's attitude changed after she became pregnant. She began to look on Sarai with contempt, seeing herself as more favored by God. How does pride quietly enter our hearts when things are going well for us, and what does Philippians 2:3-4 say about the posture we should maintain toward others instead?

Going Deeper

4. The sermon described the angel of the Lord asking Hagar, "Where have you come from and where are you going?" If God asked you that same question today, how would you answer it? Where are you coming from emotionally or spiritually, and where do you sense God wanting to take you?
5. God told Hagar to return and submit, not to remain in a place of bitterness or flight. The sermon clarified that this was about changing her heart before returning, not returning to abuse. What does humble return look like in your own context? Is there a relationship, a community, or a calling you have walked away from that God might be inviting you back to?
6. The name El Roi means the God who sees me. How does it change the way you approach your pain when you truly believe that God sees every detail of what you are going through? Does knowing he sees you bring you comfort, or does it sometimes feel insufficient? Why?
7. The well is named Beer-Lahai-Roi, meaning the well of the living one who sees me. The sermon connected this to Jesus as the living water who never runs dry. In what areas of your life are you currently trying to draw from wells that cannot sustain you, whether that is approval, control, success, or something else?

Applying the Sermon

8. The sermon used the image of a fawn running toward the hunter for protection rather than away from him. The point was that our complete helplessness appeals to the infinite strength of God. What would it look like practically for you to stop running from God and run toward him this week?
9. The sermon warned that churches and ministries can cause harm when they attempt to accomplish spiritual goals through fleshly methods or worldly wisdom. Have you ever experienced or witnessed church hurt? How did it affect your relationship with God, and what does Hagar's story say to those who have fled because of it?
10. The fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22 was presented as the standard for how believers are to treat one another, even in conflict. Looking at that list, which quality do you find most difficult to maintain when you are in the middle of relational tension? What would it look like to ask God for more of that specific quality this week?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of these to commit to before your group meets again.

Bring your affliction to God first. This week, identify one specific hurt or struggle you have been sharing with everyone except God. Set aside intentional time to bring that specific thing before him in prayer. Name it out loud before him and trust that he already hears and sees.

Examine where you are running. Take an honest look at whether there is something or someone you have been fleeing. Ask God in prayer what returning might look like, and what heart change would need to come first before that return is possible.

Come to the well before you run dry. Rather than waiting until you have exhausted your own resources and wisdom, practice coming to God at the beginning of a challenge this week. Identify one situation where you would normally try to fix things yourself first, and instead bring it to God before you act.

Extend the fruit of the Spirit. Think of one person in your life with whom there is tension or distance. Choose one quality from Galatians 5:22 and ask God to help you express that quality toward that person in a tangible way this week.

Closing Reflection

Read this portion of the sermon aloud together as a group, then close in prayer.

"When our race is nearly run and the hounds of life are closing in, our complete helplessness appeals to the infinite strength of Almighty God. When Hagar was afflicted with helplessness, she ran into the arms of El Roi, the God who sees. Instead of running away, I want to encourage you to run to God."

Closing Prayer

Ask someone in the group to close in prayer, inviting God to be El Roi over every person present. Pray that each member would have the courage to stop running and the faith to trust the Living One who sees them exactly where they are.

For Further Reflection This Week

Consider spending time this week in the following passages that connect to the themes of this session.

- Genesis 21:14-21, where God hears Ishmael's cries in the wilderness and provides for Hagar a second time
- Psalm 56:8, where the psalmist describes God keeping count of every tear
- John 4:1-26, the account of Jesus meeting a woman at a well and offering living water
- Zechariah 4:6, the reminder that God's purposes are accomplished not by human might or power but by his Spirit