**“The Pains of Man-Made Plans”**

**Genesis 16**

* **My Idea Isn’t Always a Good Idea. Read Genesis 16:1-6.** In this story, Sarai makes a wrong decision based upon what she thought was best. She made a poor decision based upon the shame she felt from not being able to have children. Have you ever made a poor decision out of a place of shame, hurt, fear, or something else not of the Lord? Are there any decisions that you are making right now that are not rooted in being led by the Lord? **Read Proverbs 16:9**
* Sarai specifically says that it is “*the LORD”* who has prevented her from being able to have children. Have you ever battled dealing with bitterness due to something painful that God allowed in your life? Are you fighting to not have a bitter heart right now? What would you say to someone who is hurt by the pain that God is allowing?
* **Avoiding Challenges Isn’t the Solution. Read Genesis 16:5-6**. Abram is being assertive in many areas of his life but has a problem with being passive with issues pertaining to his wife. We all struggle with areas of weaknesses. Are there any areas in your life in which there are clear signs/patterns of struggle, but you find it difficult to address? In what ways do you see Abram’s struggles in your own heart and life?
* Pastor Jon mentioned that we can often jump into the role of “doctor” rather than “patient” when processing the issues in Abram’s life. It can be easy to see it in others faster than ourselves. What are some of the dangers of being quick to address others before ourselves? Are there any ways in which you have been quick to see flaws in others before your own? If so, why, and what can you do to better work on yourself?
* **God Can Bring Good Out of Bad Situations. Read Genesis 16:7-16.** Hagar is in the wilderness and feeling much shame. God asks her a question that she already knows. This shows the importance of “talking about pain” as a pathway to freedom from shame. How can we cultivate an environment in which we are free to share our pain and shame within our community group? Have you ever been in an environment in which you did not feel free to share your struggles in honesty?
* God takes Hagar’s pain and brings a blessing out of it. Her offspring will be beyond number. How has God taken some of the pain in your life and brought good out of it? In what ways is He currently doing that now in the midst of the challenges that you are going through?

**Accountability:**

* Who can you check on this week and be a safe place for?
* In what ways have you been humbly examining your heart this week?
* What is one difficult/challenging area of your heart or life that you been neglecting?