

## Net•Work Notes

Week 6, Day 1: The Calling—Responding to God

“He went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8).

### Living by Faith

It is common to think of the life of faith as a journey, because we believe traveling through life with God is an adventure. Religion is not about having all the correct information on God. We will not be given a multiple-choice test to see if we have the right answers about God. Life itself is the test! What is important in the life of faith is knowing the Person we are putting our faith and trust in.

Oswald Chambers puts it this way: “Living a life of faith means never knowing where you are being led. But it does mean loving and knowing the One who is leading. It is literally a life of *faith*, not of understanding and reason—a life of knowing Him who calls us to go. Faith is rooted in the knowledge of a Person, and one of the biggest traps we fall into is the belief that if we have faith, God will surely lead us to success in the world.” Remember that God promised to bless Abraham, but that may not look like what the world calls success. Instead, blessing involves being transformed to live more confidently and boldly for God and for others.

Abraham discovered... “a life of faith is not a life of one glorious mountaintop experience after another, like soaring on eagles’ wings, but is a life of day-in and day-out consistency; a life of walking without fainting (see Isaiah 40:31).”

Like Abraham, we can live trusting that God leads us and will reveal himself to us. We can listen for his call as we spend time with his Word. We hear God’s word through Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. **Read**

**Hebrews 1:1-3.** What would you like to know about God?

What do you think most people around you tend to put their faith in for a good future? Which of these do you find the most powerful?

What in your understanding of God helps you to put your trust and faith in him? What questions or thoughts about God keep you from having more faith in him?

What have you learned about God in the last few weeks that has helped you know him better?

## Net•Work Notes

Week 6, Day 2: The Calling—Welcoming God's Presence

"...he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, <sup>3</sup>and said, "My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by (Genesis 18:2-4)

### The God Who Visits Us

**Read Genesis chapter 18.** This is one of the most striking chapters in the Bible. In the first half of the chapter, Abraham plays host (unknowingly!!!) to God and two angels. In the second half, Abraham enters into an extended conversation with God.

I believe this chapter shows us a couple things about listening to God. First, it tells us that God may choose to talk to us in some very unexpected ways. But notice that Abraham was ready to meet the unexpected. He made room for an encounter with God in his life. Do you make room in your life for God to talk with you? The ordinary way God speaks to us is through the stories and words of the Bible. But maybe you don't expect God to speak to you when you read the Bible. Maybe it just seems too *human* a way for God to work. Abraham thought at first that he was welcoming three men. It was only after he welcomed them to his table that he discovered he was in God's presence! In the same way people who sit down at their table with God's word have discovered that God does speak through the Bible.

### Asking God Tough Questions

Second, notice that Abraham is not afraid to ask God the hard questions of life. God wants Abraham to know what God is like and understand his purposes (cf. Genesis 22:19). When we read the Bible, we also need to bring our hard questions to God. God wants

us to ask our honest questions, because he has "chosen" us to know him and his ways.

Where do you normally turn to listen to God? How much time do you spend each week in this activity? What is something new you could try?

What is a question you are asking of God or about God's ways?

## Net•Work Notes

### Week 6, Day 3: The Calling—Talking with God

"...the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless....No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham;...I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you." (Genesis 17:2-7)

## Walking with God

**Re-Read Psalm 1.** Remember that on the first page of our Net•Work Notes we observed that the Psalmist compared life to choosing a particular path and walking it. Abraham was called by God to "walk before me". God promised to be Abraham's God and to bless him. We have seen that walking with God involves us in "meditating" on God's Word. How are you doing so far in spending time with your Net•Work Notes and Bible readings which go with them?

## A Way to Meditate on God's Word

Reading and pondering God's Word is not simple or easy. This "path" can seem pretty strange or rough at times. But, just like Abraham discovered, continuing to walk with God leads to a strengthening of faith and a few surprises as well. In order to help you get more from your Bible reading we want to share a way to approach the Bible. This, of course, is not the only way to read the Bible, but it does give some helpful "steps" you can take while walking with God.

**R.E.A.D. the Bible** (a reminder to read the whole passage first!)

1. Record: (write down!) what you "see" happening. Simply record the "who, what, where's" of the passage.
2. Examine/Essence: Observe closely what is happening in the reading. Give your first

impression of the "center" or "heart" of the story or passage.

3. Ask and Attempt: Ask questions. Attempt some answers!
4. Decide: What does this passage or story tell you about God and walking with him? Decide what you will do to bring this into your life and begin doing it!

Try recording some of your observations about Psalm 1 in the space below.

What do you think the basic message of this psalm is?  
What can you do to bring this message into your life?

What do you think it would mean for someone to "prosper" in a life with God? How do you think this is the same or different from what we call "success"?

## Net•Work Notes

### Week 6, Day 4: The Calling—Risky Trust

Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." (Genesis 21:6)

#### Laughter and Struggle

Abraham and Sarah stepped out into a life of faith. They discovered that a life before God was not an attempt to prove their purity nor was it a personal achievement. Instead they learned that the Living God is a God who calls human beings into a relationship and walks with them. They discovered that God is able to do surprising things ("Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" Genesis 18:14). They found that God could protect them and provide for them. But life was not necessarily easy: they endured famine and war; they waited for God's promises to be fulfilled. But they put their trust in God.

#### Trusting in Confusion

**Read Genesis 22:1-19:** This is one of the most challenging stories in the Bible. From our perspective, we cannot understand how God could ask for the sacrifice of Isaac. And notice that the story only offers one brief line to explain (if we can call it an explanation!): "God tested Abraham." It may be difficult to decide what was the exact nature of this "test." Maybe it is more important to notice how Abraham "walks" with God through this test. First, he steps out to fulfill God's call once again. Again it is a step into the unknown. If Isaac was God's promised one, how could Abraham sacrifice him? Abraham did not see and answer but went forward. Oswald Chambers says, "But if we will stay true to God, God will take us through an ordeal that will serve to bring us into a better knowledge of Himself. The great lesson to be learned from Abraham's faith in God is that he was prepared to do anything for God."

Second, notice that Abraham ultimately learns that it is God who provides the sacrifice; God in love gives as a gift what he requires.

What tests have you had to face in your life? Which ones do you think may have been from God?

In what areas of your life do you think you are having to go forward trusting God without being able to "see" what it all means or will add up to?

Spend some time talking to God. Share with God an area of your life that you would like him to guide you in.

## Net•Work Notes

Week 6, Day 5: The Calling—In the Midst of Problems

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!” (Genesis 28:16)

### Pits and Ladders

**Read (or R.E.A.D.!) Genesis 27:1 to 28:9.** This is a section of Jacob’s story. For now we will skip over the story of Abraham’s son, Isaac, and pass to his son, Jacob. One of the titles for God in the Old Testament is “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” God not only called Abraham and Sarah to be in fellowship with him, but God called their children as well. God desires to be in fellowship with us.

Does this mean that things always go smoothly for God’s chosen people? No way!!! To read the stories of Genesis is to see that God works with people just like you and me: people who are scared, who show favoritism, who lie and cheat in order to get ahead, who are jealous, who run and hide from their problems, and who scheme to be successful. So the lives of God’s chosen people are filled with peaks and valleys. Or maybe it would be better to say “ladders and pits.” Eventually God’s chosen person, Joseph (he of the technicolor dreamcoat!), finds himself in pit after pit. He might have imagined that God did not love him or care for him. Instead, holding on to the dreams God gave him, Joseph learned that even though human schemes intended him harm, God’s plans were for good for Joseph and God’s people (you can read the whole story in Genesis 37-50 with the key verse being Genesis 50:19-20). Joseph discovered, as had his father Jacob before him, that God can build ladders to earth in the unlikeliest of places, even when you are running scared. Take

some time now on the back of this sheet to write down some of the “pit” experiences of your life. Also write down the ways God has been putting down “ladders” in the midst of your experiences.

Write down some of the “ladders” and “pits” that you have experienced recently. How have you interacted with God in the midst of these?

What dreams do you believe God has given you? In what ways are you “living toward” those dreams?

Name a time when you believe God has placed a “ladder” into your life to help or guide you. Talk to God and thank him for this experience.