

FINDING YOUR PROMISE

group leader's guide

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The daily readings of *Finding Your Promise: From Barren to Bounty—the Life of Abraham* have been combined by weeks to form a twelve-week group leader’s guide. If your group is meeting for only six weeks, combine two weeks for each group session. There will be ample material to use during your meeting time. The questions in this guide work well in combination with the application elements at the close of each reading.

To get started, each group member should have a copy of *Finding Your Promise*. It is helpful if they read the current week’s selections before the meeting. Individual group sessions are divided into two parts. “Digging In” contains icebreaker questions, non-threatening openings that invite people into relationship, story, and memories. “Digging Deeper” takes a more in-depth look at elements in the book’s chapters, related Scriptures, and application.

Note: At the beginning of each session, you might want to remind people that silence is uncomfortable but good and allows people time to process. Also, to honor confidentiality and to create a safe environment, adapt the motto, “What we say here, stays here.”

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO ASK AT EACH SESSION

1. What stood out for you in these readings?
2. What Scriptures spoke to you? In what ways?
3. Where did you sense God tugging at your heart?
4. What emotional responses did you experience?
5. What will be different today? Tomorrow?

CLOSING

Close by reading a selected Benediction aloud, either as a group, or in pairs to one another, so it is intimate for each person.

For more group ideas and resources, please visit www.JaneRubietta.com. If your group is interested in a video conference call with the author, during or toward the end of your study together, please contact her at info@JaneRubietta.com.

WEEK 1

March 1–7

DIGGING IN

1. God called Abram rather abruptly to leave and go. Discuss the craziest move you've ever experienced—whether it's moving to a different home or job. What was that like, how was the adjustment, what did people have to say about it?
2. How long have you lived in your current home? What would be the hardest things to leave behind if (or when) you move?
3. What feelings have you had to work through, given any recent transitions? Even if it wasn't you who moved, but someone you love who moved, what feelings surfaced for you?
4. When have you experienced homesickness? Sometimes homesickness is about a longing far deeper and broader than the four walls of your house or the people in your family. What is it, for you? How did you deal with it?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What do you think about God calling Abram? How does this challenge your faith? For instance, what if you've never heard God calling you? Or you've heard and never responded? Do you think God calls some people and not others? Makes promises to some and not to others?
2. When did you first say yes to God? What was that like? How did you hear God inviting you into relationship? Or are you still pondering that?
3. When have you heard, whether tangibly or intuitively, a particular calling from God on your life? What happened, and how did you respond?
4. Abram's experience moves from personal to national to international and has ramifications and implications for the world, including us today. Where do you see this in Genesis 12:1–4, and how does it compare to what you know about Genesis 1–11?
5. Consider what *blessing* means. How have you used this word in the past, and what does it mean to you? When have you thought, "This is an un-blessing?" In what ways has God converted difficulties into blessing for you?
6. Ur was located nearly two hundred miles southeast of modern-day Baghdad, and was a prosperous and cultured city on the banks of the Euphrates River. Abram moved from there to

Harran and then hit the road with only what he could carry in a caravan. The move cost him and Sarai a great deal. They left prosperity and ended up with very little. It's an inverse move compared to our ideals today. How do you see this sort of movement in your own life or the life of your church? The global church? The early church, in Jesus' day? What teachings of Jesus does this bring to mind?

7. What is your biggest challenge, as you consider God's words to Abram and now to you—to leave and go?

WEEK 2

March 8–14

DIGGING IN

1. Remember the days before map apps on your phone, before Garmin and On-Star and all the gadgets used to find your way? When have you been entirely lost? How did you handle that? Whether you were in the Scouts or the military or neither, getting lost leaves people uneasy. What is your primary reaction when you don't know where you are?

2. God called Abram and didn't give him a route. He just said, "Go to the land I will show you." How do you say yes to God, when God doesn't lay out the map in your heart?

3. Trust is one of the biggest battles in this walk by faith. How do you trust the God you cannot see? How do you recognize God's leading? How do you confirm that leading is from God and not your own wishful thinking, desires, or common sense?

4. What do you do when you know it's time to move forward and you don't have a specific sense of God's leading? How do you move forward and still live in the now, without worrying about the not yet?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The chronicles of Abram and Sarai delineate an entirely new start after generations of decadence and depravity. In fact, since Eden, it's been a slippery slope into debauchery for humanity. But God didn't quit and called to Abram to leave and go, to follow. Following is essentially obedience, something we may or may not be particularly good at. In what ways is it easier to follow God today than it might have been for Abram? And in what ways is it harder?

2. God's commands and promises don't always seem like common sense. Greatness involved leaving everything, the opposite of great in our world. But the order is significant: God commanded and Abram obeyed. Only then did the blessing follow, the great name. How have you seen blessing tied with obedience in your life? When has fruitbearing seemed impossible, given the sense of barrenness in your life? What paradox do you see between your life today and God's calling?

3. In your reading of the book of Genesis, where do you see God's promise to "bless those who bless" Abram and Sarai and their descendants fulfilled?

4. God told Abram, and now through the ages tells us, to bless. To bless, whether another deserves the blessing or not. When have you deserved cursing from another because of your hurtful actions, and yet received blessing? How did you respond? And when have you blessed though another cursed you?

5. This passage makes clear that God is the one who will curse—not us. Cursing isn't just saying curse words; it shows up in all sorts of derogatory means: gossip, belittling, reputation smearing, bitterness. Which of those are issues for you? What implication does God's cursing, rather than our cursing, carry for us regarding forgiveness? In what ways is unforgiveness like cursing another? How do you release unforgiveness and bless instead? What does this mean for confronting another's sinful actions toward you?

6. Abram answered God's call at age seventy-five. It's never too late for you or for those you love. With that truth, what might you step out in faith toward? What's your great goal in life? Or have you quit dreaming? How might you reorient in terms of moving toward a goal?

WEEK 3

March 15–21

DIGGING IN

1. Hashtags, labels, assumptions—these are often externally imposed, or events-related. What hashtags might you have for yourself, considering your past? Not just glory ones, but not-so-spectacular ones? What labels have others given you? Which ones are hard for you to relinquish?
2. What hashtags might Abram have used? Consider his life: He left Ur (#nutstoleavecivilization). His brother died, then Abram adopted Lot.
3. Sarai isn't mentioned except the detail that she is barren. What are some of your #barren incidents or facts? And when do facts get to rule the day, and how do you counteract that with God's faithfulness?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What are God's two commands to Abram in Genesis 12:1–2? How do they relate to one another? And what is God's responsibility, in light of God's commands to Abram?
2. Rolling out blessings has implications for the world. How have you seen this? In your own life? Through you, or through others? What practical ways have blessings translated forward?
3. A self-obsessed or family-obsessed life is pretty easy in the United States. Is this the same in other countries in your experience? Where do you see this in your own life? How do you fight against an egocentric life and decentralize your focus? Why is that critical to God's commands in verses 1–2?
4. To leave and go means leaving your past and going to a place where you have no past, no stories, no community that really knows you. And the cost of living deeply in community in the next place is enormous. In what ways? Where have you struggled with abandonment issues because of people not knowing you? How do you handle those feelings?
5. Leaving and going represent a new paradigm, a new way of looking at your life and choices in the past and for the future. Where has your hashtag read #settled or #blameothers or #justthewayIam?
6. What parts of yesterday haunt your steps today, and how does that impact you? What do you want to leave behind when you go to bed at night? How do you leave it behind?
7. Following God is an inside job. Sometimes people get that backwards, and have outward show but not inward grow. Where do you see that? When? In you? In church? How does this relate to Genesis 12:1–5?

WEEK 4

March 22–28

DIGGING IN

1. What standards do you have for green, growth, order, and beauty in regards to a lawn? Ever want to put up a “keep off the grass” sign? Abram and Sarai looked around at the parched surroundings and left for greener pastures. What’s your version of the famine? When do you see the “keep off the grass” approach spiritually? In the church community?

2. Abram ended up in the Promised Land and found himself surrounded by Canaanites—not what he expected in this great gift from God. What do you do when the gift doesn’t match your expectation? When God’s gift doesn’t match what you expect from him? What do you do with a God who doesn’t act like you expect?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. God called Abram, who packed up and left. He could have settled, thinking “This is OK; I like it fine in Harran. I know people here. I’m tired of traveling.” It is certainly easier in the short-run to settle. What regrets do you have when you consider where you might have moved forward but decided not to?

2. Abram heard from God in Genesis 12:7, and then he left to look for greener pastures. Obedience is God’s first command of Abram, and Jesus said many years later, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments” (John 14:15). When do you find this easy? Hard? When has God asked you to believe, in spite of all evidence to the contrary? When has God’s command not made sense? When have you chosen something else rather than waiting for God?

3. When does fear seem to have the final word? What are some of your famine-lands, the deserts you’ve found yourself in? Where do you see God’s faithfulness along the way?

4. Read Psalm 31:1–16. How did David handle the wilderness?

5. We rarely hear from Sarai directly and learn very little about her (except for her barrenness and beauty). Egypt was a huge detour for her. She ran the emotional gamut—abandonment, betrayal, fear. Yet Sarai is a woman praised by Scripture. Read 1 Peter 3:6 then Hebrews 11:1–3 and 6. How does faith battle fear for you? How do you hold onto God in uncharted territory?

WEEK 5

March 29—April 4

DIGGING IN

1. Sarai was a victim of another person's fear when Abram took them to Egypt and then palmed her off as his sister. Where have you seen an example of someone victimized by another's fear? How did that person handle it? What do you make of Pharaoh's blessing of Abram because of Sarai? What inferences do you make about Sarai's actions there?

2. Have there been times when your fear led you to abandon someone? What did you learn?

3. Abram became a wealthy man in Egypt, both because of his business sense and also Pharaoh's parting gifts. But he and his family picked up some negative things. Consider what you know about Hagar and Lot. How might Egypt have influenced the journey to the promise God made?

4. Don't you love the way God rescued Sarai? The entire household smitten with disease—it's quite dramatic. When have you experienced God's rescue? What happened? And when have you felt abandoned not just by someone else (like Abram abandoned Sarai), but also by God?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Consider God's interest in Abram and Sarai. Does it ever feel as though God doesn't actually have the same interest in you as that person doing phenomenally well in business, personal life, or ministry? How do you deal with that? On what Scriptures do you base your response?

2. What are some significant U-turns in your life or your family's?

3. What impact does failure have on your faith? How about on God's faithfulness?

4. Consider failure versus favor. How do you define *favor*? What is good about failure? How likely are you to return to God and call on him in the midst of or following failure?

5. Abram headed straight to the altar. This is the ideal response to the shame of Egypt. How does God's word to him at the altar impact his relationship with Lot? How did Abram live into his part of the bargain in the way he dealt with Lot? How would you feel, as Abram, knowing Lot's ultimate character? In what ways are you like Lot?

6. Abram's loyalty to Lot is amazing. But even more so is Abram's faithfulness. He could have had the land, the riches, everything if he wanted. But he trusted God to fulfill the promise. When are you waiting on God? When have you seized the land and the spoils, figuring it must be God's plan for you? Was it? How do you know? Is profit always a blessing from God?

WEEK 6

April 5–11

DIGGING IN

1. Consider your heart's desires throughout your journey. How have they been answered or morphed over the years? What if your current great heart's desire is never met? How would it impact your faith? How do you keep perspective between earthly longings and God's promise and presence?

2. Dreams can turn to disappointment, dust in the desert. What happens for you, then? How do you desert God, your faith, your relationships? How do you hold fast?

3. Forever after Abram's encounter with God in Genesis 15, the stars would become a reminder of God's promise, God's faithfulness, and however far off the promise, Abram could hold on. What sights or reminders keep you focused on God's faithfulness, even if the promises seem to take forever?

4. Abram wanted a child; Sarai was still barren. So they decided to have the servant be the heir. Not exactly offspring, right? But Abram was ready to give up, even after such a colossal victory over those kings, winning back Lot, and then refusing to collect trophies. When have you settled on a less-desirable outcome? What was it?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. God opens Genesis 15 with the words, "Fear not." Look at the previous chapter to consider: What was Abram fearing? What fear was God getting at? Where are you frightened, and what comfort do you glean from God's words to Abram? How do you apply them to your life? How has your fear hurt you? Others? Your relationship with God?

2. In what ways did God prove to be Abram's shield? Reward? And how about in your own life? Consider the various uses of a shield. How have you seen God's creative provision in your life?

3. Don't you love Abram's honesty in Genesis 15:2: "What will you give me since I continue to be childless?" It's hard to be honest with ourselves let alone with God when something as dear as our heart's desire is being withheld (as far as we can perceive, at any rate).

4. Sarai significantly victimized Hagar. Perhaps this is your story as well. When do you find yourself in the desert, run off because of something that wasn't your fault? And how do you handle the abandonment issues, the shame, the anger, the blame?

WEEK 7

April 12–18

DIGGING IN

1. Did you ever run away from home? (Or did you *want* to run away?) What was happening that you wanted to run away? And then what happened? Who found you, how long did it take, and what did your parents do to you? How did it feel to run away (at least initially)? Triumphant? Terrifying? Both?

2. Sometimes it isn't safe to stay at home—you need to run away. Perhaps that's your story as it was Hagar's. What safety precautions did you find to keep yourself safe? How much of those have carried over into your adult life? How effective are they at this point, or rather, how do they hinder you? In what ways do you feel they keep you safe?

3. What do you think about the angel, telling Hagar to return and submit to her unkind mistress? How is submission a statement of worth? Worth in whose eyes?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. In Genesis 16, we see Sarai taking matters into her own hands, convincing Abram to sleep with Hagar and thus make the promise come true by their own hands and in their own timing, rather than God's. Why didn't Abram stand up to Sarai? And what ramifications do you see for their initiative?

2. Hagar is the first person in the Scriptures to actually meet an angel. The angel asked two excellent questions in Genesis 16:8: "Where have you come from, and where are you going?" Spend some time with those questions. Pray through them, because the answers are not as easy as they might seem. What about your life? Where have you come from? Where are you going? How does where you came from impact where you're going? In what ways does it help? Worry you? Hagar, for instance, ran from her present pain back to her past, heading to Egypt. Can you run away from pain, really? Where is your Egypt, the place you would run to?

3. Compare the angel's words to Hagar in Genesis 16:9, with Philippians 2:1–11 and Luke 22:27. What's challenging for you? And what would you tell a friend in Hagar's situation?

4. Abram was eighty-six at Ishmael's birth, still waiting on that promise. When have you waited for what seems like forever for God to deliver on some promise or another? How do you hold on and keep hoping? When have you quit, tired of waiting, or disenchanted with God's terrible timing or seeming disinterest?

5. This section of Genesis details three new names: Ishmael (meaning “God hears”), Abraham (from “exalted father” to “father of many nations”), and Sarah (meaning the same as Sarai, “princess”). But “in biblical times, the changing of one’s name was significant and used to symbolize the binding of a covenant. In this case, God promised to put an end to her barrenness and give her a child (Isaac)” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah>). What names have you given yourself, derogatory or otherwise? Or what have others called you? Reread the Traveling Mercy section of April 16 for the names God has for you. Which one most speaks to you now?

WEEK 8

April 19–25

DIGGING IN

1. What kind of a neighbor are you? When has a neighbor really come through for you? What challenges you about the “Love your neighbor as yourself” commandment?

2. When did someone make a promise to you and then renege on it? How did you feel about it? God makes many promises to us. What are some of your favorite promises in the Scriptures? What do you do when they don't *seem* to come true or God doesn't seem to come through? What promises and dreams have you given up on? Or been tempted to laugh off, like Sarah, because it's beyond making sense and it's foolish to keep hoping and waiting?

3. We aren't privy to much of Lot's story and certainly not his private life. But it does seem a bit murky, him heading to Sodom to live and then his refusal to leave. He doesn't appear to be exactly an evangelist visiting the corner bar. But temptation rears its head for all of us, and if we can tune in soon enough, we can turn it off. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and discuss in light of Lot's story.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Anyone with a Lot in their family knows there's a fine line between the need to intercede and the very real possibility of impeding. What have you experienced?

2. Would you be Lot or Abraham? Many of us have a Lot season in our lives. What is yours? Do you have an Abraham to thank for accompanying you? How could you reach out to that person(s), this week?

3. How do you come to peace with Abraham's assertion about God, “Will not the judge of the whole earth do what is right” (Gen. 18:25)? God did ultimately save Lot and his family (though they didn't end well), but what about the destruction of the wicked towns?

4. Lot is mentioned by Peter as righteous. How do you put this comment into context with what you know about Lot? Consider 1 John 2:12–17 and its implicit and explicit demands in the context of Lot's story.

WEEK 9

April 26—May 2

DIGGING IN

1. There is a time for retrospect. There must be. But there is also a time to flee. Lot's wife seemed to confuse the two. How do you flee *and* grieve? And don't you wonder what might have changed in her family life if she'd lived to accompany her husband and grieving daughters? Maybe the trajectory would have changed if she'd obeyed.

2. What things do you have a hard time releasing? How are you working to overcome those? What regrets do you have? Sometimes we can't release the difficult times or be freed from the memories of people who hurt us in our past. What holds do these hard times have on you? What strides do you take to be free?

3. Sarah instigated some of the drama in her own life (remember Ishmael?), but a great deal of it was others-imposed. Look again at her storyline. What is others-imposed? How about in your own life? What do you do about it?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. We've all been Lot's wife, longing for the past. When was that for you, and what happened? When did it hamper you, what were your pile-of-salt moments or months? How did you walk forward in a healthy way, with heart and soul accompanying you, even while grieving well? How did you direct others' gaze toward God?

2. Talk about Lot, underestimating God's good plans for him and his family. When have you done this, and when have you trusted that God wanted more than small things for you? It's more than a social disaster to hole up in a mountain cave; it's a spiritual one as well. Why is it hard to believe that God's plans for us are for good, forever, and there's nothing small about them?

3. Reread Genesis 19:30–38. Follow the family line through to Ruth (Ruth 1; 4:13–22). Compare with your own story or someone you know. How does this bring comfort and a release from regret and shame? How does this give you hope?

4. Many stories in Scripture remind us of the vital importance of standing in the gap, as Abraham did for Lot. He interceded. Read Psalm 106:23–30; Isaiah 53:12; 59:16; Romans 8:26–27; and Hebrews 7:25. Who has interceded for you? When have you experienced the Holy Spirit groaning

in or through you? Even if no one on earth prays for us, the Holy Spirit and Jesus are on task all the time.

5. Consider Sarah's betrayal the second time by her husband, the one who is supposed to love and protect and cherish her, until death do they part. What feelings does this raise in you? And how do you release betrayal and move into forgiveness, into freedom? Hanging on only hinders God's work in us and our movement toward the promise God offers, the promise of being blessed and being a blessing.

6. The episode with King Abimelek ended with Sarah's full vindication. Why is this important? And what takeaway is there for you, in your own life, as you consider the king's words, "You will stand vindicated before all who are with you" (Gen. 20:16)?

WEEK 10

May 3–9

DIGGING IN

1. Sarah goes on record as the barren one, the unfulfilled one, the defective one. Even the forgotten one, the abandoned one. When have you felt like Sarah? When are you ready to say, “OK, that’s it. No more. I’m *done*” and walk away? Walk away from whom? Or what? Did you walk away or stay? What happened?

2. Sarah also tried to figure out ways to fulfill the promise herself. When are you tempted to do this for yourself? And do you notice when you are more susceptible to giving up, turning, walking away? Calling it quits on a relationship or a promise? Our exhaustion, anger, and loneliness all figure into our emotional and spiritual resilience.

3. What role has laughter played in your life? Your family’s life? Where have you found good humor that brightened your soul? A favorite movie or book?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Genesis 21:1 says, “The LORD visited Sarah just as he had said he would and did for Sarah what he had promised.” Grace becomes a visit—a beautiful description of what God does. When God visits, lives change. Obviously, this is the case for Sarah and Abraham. What about in your story? When have you experienced God’s visit, God’s graciousness, and then life changed? Relationships changed? In what ways, and how did you respond?

2. Sarah laughed in disbelief when the angel said she would have a child (Gen. 18:12–15); at Isaac’s birth, the laughter converted to joy and came full circle when Sarah said, “Everyone who hears about this will laugh with me” (Gen. 21:6). It’s a beautiful conversion—to move from laughing in disbelief to laughing with joy to spreading laughter because of God’s goodness. How is this true for you?

3. Genesis 21:5 states again the age of Abraham, which underscores the significant miracle of this conception and birth. We know, of course, that miraculous conceptions don’t always occur, and many couples are left without children in spite of hope, medical attempts, and prayer. How do you comfort someone in this situation?

4. Who do you know who has held on to a promise for a long, long time and never walked away? When did they receive the promise, or did they?

5. One of the reasons babies were so welcomed in those days, among many others, was because of the high infant mortality rate. Mothers nursed their babies for two to three years before weaning them, and if the children lived that long, a grand weaning party was held. In some cultures they didn't even name the babies until they survived the childhood diseases and hunger so rampant. Sometimes babies were five years old before they were named. How is Isaac's naming significant based on this information?

6. The party doesn't end all that well, at least not for Ishmael. Or for Abraham, either, for that matter. What do you make of the jesting of Ishmael and his ousting from the family tents?

WEEK 11

May 10–16

DIGGING IN

1. Who do you know who has the Midas touch? Or maybe we would call it the Abraham touch, because God blessed Abraham in just about every single way possible and in many ways that we couldn't begin to imagine. How do you handle God's amazing blessings in other people's lives, when God doesn't act the same way in yours?

2. Abimelek said, "God is with you in everything you do" (Gen. 21:22). Is this statement specific for Abraham or something that has implications for you? How or why?

3. In spite of Abraham's status of God-with-him, he still had to overcome his reputation with Abimelek, who remembered the trickery surrounding Sarah-the-sister versus Sarah-the-wife. Abraham's humanity can encourage us because he was full of contradiction: fear and faith. And still God kept hold of him and honored the promise to bless him and make a great nation from him. Where do you still try to overcome your reputation for less-than-honorable actions? Or is it an internal wrestling?

4. What is the biggest sacrifice you've ever been called upon to make? What were the circumstances, and how did you handle it? What impact did this have on your faith?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. King Abimelek's commands to Abraham were humbling: "Swear to me . . . that you will not deceive me, my children or my descendants. Show me, and the land where you are staying, the same loyalty that I have shown you" (Gen. 21:23). The phrase for staying in this instance in the original language means "sojourning" and carries the idea of passing through. Abraham is by no means setting up permanent lodging here. Many of us today live only temporarily in one area then transition on. How do you show loyalty in the place where God has you, even if only temporarily?

2. Beersheba became the place of the oath and also the sight of the well, a reminder to any who passed by of the call to integrity. But also a reminder of the promise of water in the desert for the Negev was an arid country. Planting a tree there was an act of settling, but also a statement of faith: There is provision here. Where are your Beershebas, and how do you return there to be reminded?

3. Hebrew tradition holds that the two servants to accompany Abraham and Isaac were Eliezer and Ishmael. What do you make of this? It seems a bit of a conflict of interests.

4. The offering of Isaac is a very difficult passage in Scripture and a real stumbling block to many. Why would God ask Abraham to kill his own son? The long-awaited promise and the one on whom the promise's continuation hinges and God says, "Kill him." How do you reconcile the promise and the command? Consider Hebrews 11:17–19. Abraham told the servants to wait while "we" go and worship and "we" will return. The Hebrew is clear that it is "we" who will come back.

5. We do not understand so much about God's work in this world. How do you hold fast, even though there are no easy answers to the deep questions about God?

WEEK 12

May 17–31

DIGGING IN

1. Where have you experienced barrenness in your life and where is there bounty? When have you been ready to jump ship and head off on your own? What are some of the unresolvable tensions you face as you study God's interactions with Abraham and Sarah?

2. Abraham's belongings at no time consisted of his material wealth. His only land ownership, for a man promised the entire country, ended up being a burial plot. Yet Abraham believed, followed, and trusted God, and he died a man called God's friend. What challenges you about Abraham's homelessness? Or was he homeless?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. In Genesis 22:2, God told Abraham to break with his future. To break with his hopes for the future, his ideas about how the future would look, how the promise would be fulfilled in his life. When is God asking you to break with your past? How about your future? What do you do? How do you die to tomorrow and yesterday and live well toward today?

2. Abraham died old and full of years. How do you do both? What choices do you make daily in order to live full of years? What will it require to live in today fully?

3. Compare Genesis 15:6; Nehemiah 9:8; and James 2:21–23. What do you learn about Abraham here? What challenges or convicts you?

4. What about your life is worth the label "Friend of God?" Where do you feel embarrassed about that because you know how unworthy you really are? When you consider Abraham's long life, his full-of-years life, and his friend of God status, what do you want to do differently? What character traits can you list about Abraham? Which do you want to emulate and how will you do that?

5. Check out these other uses of the word *friend*: 2 Chronicles 20:7; Proverbs 18:24; 27:6; and Isaiah 41:8. What sticks with you? What about in John 15:13–14? What constitutes a friend in Jesus' dictionary? Where is this a challenge and what are you afraid of?

6. When God called Abraham, Abraham answered, "Here I am." Ready, waiting, absolutely obedient to God's call. Isaiah said the same thing. Both of them answered without conditions. What do you say?