

Dear Discussion Group Leader/Assistant,

We'd like to thank you for offering your additional time and energy to ensure the success of the discussion groups at Manitoulin Youth Conference. The intent of this guide is to provide helpful topics and structure for each discussion group so that God is glorified, and the attendees are edified.

## **Monday – Preface/Abraham, Sarah, and Natural Family**

### **Session 1 – Preface, The Generations of Shem, Haran, Terah, Nahor**

**Workbook Pages: 1-12**

**Relevant Passages: Exodus 6:3; Genesis 11; Acts 7:1-4**

#### ***Preface***

- Discuss the principles and exhortation behind the name El Shaddai
- The significance behind Abraham and Sarah appearing as a couple in both the Genesis account as well as in the New Testament

#### ***Abraham, Sarah, and Natural Family***

- Consider the events in Babel and their impact on the postdiluvian society (especially on Abram and Sarai's ancestors and immediate family). There are frightening similarities between this account and society in 2018 we need to be wary of, and we can use God's word to find comfort and encouragement to overcome.
- From birth to death, every facet of Haran's life was affiliated with worldly influences. How do we recognize these patterns in our own lives or in the lives of loved ones, and how can we respond to the challenge to climb the right mountain that leads to blessing and life?
- Terah lived up to the meaning of his name "to tarry, delay". How do we avoid the pitfalls of delaying in obedience to God in our lives? How do we help our loved ones sever ties with the old way of life and cross over into the promises God has in store for us?
- Spiritual slumber is an all too common issue within the household of faith. Nahor personified this in his refusal to join Abram and Sarai on their journey. How do we recognize the symptoms of falling asleep in our own walk? How do we encourage those struggling with this?

### **Session 2 – Lot**

**Workbook Pages: 13-26**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 12:1-9; Genesis 13:1-14:16; Genesis 18:22-19:38**

- The decisions we make don't occur in a vacuum that only affect us. How did Abram's decision to lead his wife and Lot into Egypt harm Lot's spiritual walk? How can we be more mindful of our brothers and sisters in Christ when we think nobody else is watching?
- The pattern of falling into sin is on display in Lot's life. How do we identify it and overcome it not only in our own lives, but in the lives of our family in Christ and loved ones?
- Abram and Sarai are never recorded going into Sodom, yet Abram went to war to save his nephew. What is the message for us about how we are to work with those that are lost? What

are positive steps we can take as individuals and as a community to seek and save those who are lost from the Body of Christ?

- Much later in their pilgrimage, Abraham intercedes on Lot's behalf when speaking with the Name Bearing Angel in Genesis 18. What is intercession, why is it important, and how do we engage in this on a practical level?
- Abraham and Lot dealt with materialism in their lives, at one point even striving with each other. How do we address this in a godly way, and how can we learn to be satisfied in godly things rather than worldly things?

## **Tuesday – *The Impact of Divine Interactions (Yahweh and His Angels)***

### **Session 1 – *Why Study the Angels, Genesis 17 & Genesis 18***

**Workbook Pages: 42-51**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 17, Genesis 18**

**NOTE – There should be a heading for “Genesis 17” above question 3 on p. 43. This was accidentally omitted in the final edit.**

- Abraham and Sarah were blessed with divine visitations on multiple occurrences throughout their lives. What were these preparing them for? How can we utilize the experiences God brings into our lives for our betterment and preparation for ecclesial work and work in the Kingdom?
- Michael told Abraham “a father of nations have I made thee”, showing Abraham that God viewed Abraham's promise as a surety. Our hope can sometimes be clouded with doubt due to the weakness of the flesh – how do we go about encouraging each other of God's assurance of His good intentions for His people, and developing that mindset in our own lives?
- When presented with visitors, Abraham's spirit of hospitality invigorated everyone he came across. How do we allow God's word to motivate us to do good towards all that need it? Why is it so important that our response to God's call to us be as enthusiastic as our desire to understand His Word?
- Sarah was in a different frame of mind than her husband Abraham. Where Abraham was believing, Sarah doubted. The beauty of ecclesial life is that we are always learning and growing. How can we help others along that may not be in the same spiritual place as us, and receive that same help from others?
- El Shaddai is the title of God that means both the Nourisher and the Destroyer. One of the significant lessons Sarah learned was that if God was so powerful that He could destroy Sodom and Gomorrah instantly, he was also so powerful that He could open her womb and provide a son. How do we experience both facets of El Shaddai in our lives, and how can we learn and grow as believers from it?

### **Session 2 – *A Father, A Son, A Sacrifice, and an Angel***

**Workbook Pages: 51-57**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 22**

## Abraham & Sarah Discussion Group Guide 2018

- Parables serve a twofold purpose in Scripture – to conceal from those without (Proverbs 25:2), and to reveal to those within (Amos 3:7). What are the benefits of discerning the figurative (and equally truthful) meaning of the literal accounts throughout the Bible?
- Despite her absence from the account, Sarah was still very much a significant figure to consider in Genesis 22. Practically, how would she have felt (consider Luke 2:34-35)? Typically, who did she represent? Why is it so important in bible study to not only read what's written, but to understand why certain things are NOT written?
- With Abraham typifying God Almighty, it can be implied that Abraham's actions and emotions allow us a look into the mind of God Himself when He offered His only Son. What should our practical response be to that?
- Throughout the years, the Angel of God commanded Abraham to take up a knife to cut off various parts of his life. What things (physical, spiritual, emotional) do we need to cut off in our own lives, and what could this prepare us for in the future?
- The spirit of everyone involved was one of willingness to serve and obey even the most difficult of God's commandments. How does this compare to our own lives? What is our response to even the simplest of God's commandments in comparison to this? How can we improve and help each other? 9

### **Wednesday – *Conversation Honest Among the Gentiles***

#### **Session 1 – *Interactions with Pharaoh, Those Confederate with Abram and Sarai***

**Workbook Pages: 27-34**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 12; Genesis 14:13-24**

- The beginning of Abraham and Sarah's residence in the Promised Land was wrought with challenges – Canaanites in the Land and famine! Consider their spiritual meanings and how they might apply to Christadelphians today. How do we build up the trust in God to look beyond the present and focus on "the joy set before us"?
- All too often we are tempted to make spiritual compromises out of fear. Abram did this when he opted to lie by omission to Pharaoh. What pressures are in our lives that cause us to make spiritual compromises, and how can we encourage each other to avoid them?
- Pharaoh (a Gentile) rebuked Abram (a follower of God) in a moral controversy. Do we come across situations like this today, and how do we learn from it to be better disciples?
- At the end of this account, Abram and Sarai retraced their steps back to where they first encamped, between Bethel (house of God) and Ai (ruin). What practical steps can we take to retrace our steps back to solid footing to make wise spiritual decisions?
- Despite the above negative example, Abram and Sarai had a positive relationship with both those confederate with Abram and the trained servants. How can we foster positive relationships with those outside the household of faith, and work with them by example to show spiritual principles?

#### **Session 2 – *Abimelech***

**Workbook Pages: 34-41**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 20; Genesis 21:22-34**

- Nearly 25 years after their incident with Pharaoh, they seem to make the same mistake again here with Abimelech. Yet their emotional state was thrown off balance by the physical (and emotional) aftermath of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. What ruts do we tend to fall into when faced with difficult trials, and what can we do to encourage ourselves and each other to avoid repeating old mistakes?
- There are parallels between the encampment at Bethel and Ai of Genesis 12-13 and the dwelling between Kadesh and Shur. Both represent a distinction between God's way and man's way. How does Abraham and Sarah's decision to go closer to Kadesh, yet still fall prey to their internal struggles, reflect the crossroads we come across every day?
- In Genesis 20 and the referenced Psalm, both Abraham and Sarah are said to be prophets of God. What are the different roles of a prophet that both brothers and sisters can channel, and how can we encourage each other in that task?
- Despite being a Gentile, Abimelech not only rebuked Abraham and Sarah but appeared to strive to be morally upright. Abraham, despite being in the wrong, was commanded to pray for Abimelech and his household because of his relationship with God. How do we rise to the occasion to demonstrate that the Truth we uphold is right, even after our shortcomings?
- Abraham and Abimelech grew after their first meeting in Genesis 20 and are shown to have made a covenant in Genesis 21. How did Abraham learn to address things correctly, and what principles can we learn from this in dealing with those outside the household of faith?

***Thursday – Servants in the House***

***Session 1 – The Egyptian Handmaid, Ishmael the Son of the Bondwoman, Hagar and Ishmael: An Allegory***

**Workbook Pages: 58-67**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 16, Genesis 21, Galatians 4:21-31**

- Abram and Sarai both struggled with her barrenness, which resulted in them applying a worldly solution to their ultimately spiritual problem (using Hagar as a surrogate). What problems did this lead to in their marriage? How can we encounter the temptation of applying worldly solutions to spiritual problems in our own lives? What do they look like, and how do we avoid their pitfalls?
- Hagar figuratively represents an unfaithful servant in God's house (the ecclesia). What would Hagar look like in the ecclesia today? Would she have traits that we can identify with? How would we help them, and more importantly, how would we recognize these characteristics in ourselves?
- Ishmael, though a son of Abraham who went through the rite of circumcision, was never truly circumcised in heart. What kind of mindset is required to ensure our baptism is truly one that washed our hearts and minds of an evil conscience?
- The allegory of Sarah and Hagar demonstrates Sarah as being symbolic of the covenant of grace through Christ, and Hagar as symbolic of the bondage of the Law. How would this

have been challenging for Jews to hear? What aspects of the Law of Moses are we meant to leave behind to become children of Sarah? Are there parts that we continue to uphold or is it all done away?

### **Session 2 – *Eliezer of Damascus***

**Workbook Pages: 68-75**

**Relevant Passages: Genesis 15:1-6; Genesis 24**

- The biblical record tends to emphasize godly principles using contrast. What are some notable comparisons and contrasts that Eliezer has with Hagar and Ishmael?
- Eliezer would likely have been one of the 318 trained servants that went up with Abram to rescue Lot. What are some key principles of spiritual warfare we can apply to our own walk, and how did Eliezer exemplify them in his appearances in the record?
- As a steward of the house, Eliezer was charged with responsibilities to ensure it ran smoothly when the master wasn't around. What are some ecclesial services we can perform to be faithful stewards of God's house?
- Eliezer is shown to be a man of prayer in Genesis 24. What things did he pray about, how often did he pray? What can we learn from this example?

## **Friday – The Son of Promise**

**Session 1 – *The Joy of the Mother, the Love of the Father, Finding a Bride for Isaac***

**Relevant Passages – Genesis 21:1-8; Genesis 22:2; Isaiah 51:1-3; Genesis 24**

- What are the spiritual traits that Abraham and Sarah had that we should emulate if we wish to be considered with Christ to be the heir of the promises in the Kingdom?
- Godly love is one of the overriding principles of Scripture. How did Abraham and Sarah exemplify it, and how can we?
- In searching for the bride of Christ, it became clear to Abraham's servant that she had to share the characteristics of both Abraham and Sarah. How are we part of the process of calling out the bride today? What should we look for and be wary of as we enact this parable?

**Session 2 – Lessons to take home from the week**

- Feel free to use the first 15 minutes to tie up any loose ends from first discussion group, as well as bring up points you got over the break.
- For the remaining time, have your group come up with practical lessons to bring home with them. There are different ways to go about this, but what's important is to make sure solid spiritual principles and exhortations are the focus of this last discussion group.