

Day One: Genesis 16

- Explain Sarai, Abram and Hagar's relationship dynamics (1-4). Why would Hagar grow to hate Sarai? What did Sarai and Abram argue about (5-6)? How would you sum up the way they treated Hagar? Where do you see this sort of dynamic at play in the world today, and what is God calling the church to do about it?
- What did Hagar do (6)? Who found her (7)? Summarize her conversation with the angel (8-12). How did she respond to this encounter (13)? Her life took a very much unwanted turn, and the angel's words weren't exactly uplifting. So why do you think Hagar responded as she did? Even in your deepest disappointment and confusion, may you recognize that God sees you and is with you. How does this passage conclude (14-16)?
- Read the chapter again, imagining yourself as Hagar: a runaway slave impregnated by her rapist. And yet, thanks to the angel, she knew God saw her. Speak to the Lord about how this impacts you.

Day Two: Numbers 22:21-41

- Set the scene of this text (21). How did God feel (22)? Describe Balaam's first encounter with the "angel of the Lord" (22-23). What is your impression of this passage thus far? What happened next (24-25)? What do you think is going on in Balaam's heart? What kept him from noticing what was happening in the spiritual realm? Contrast this with Joseph's actions in Matthew 1:18-25.
- Summarize Balaam's third angelic encounter (26-35). A talking donkey in the Bible – what do you make of this? Re-read verse 31. Pray God would open your own eyes to the supernatural; may it give you the insight you need for when life gets hard.
- Describe Balaam's encounter with Balak (36-41). In chapter 23, Balaam is faithful to his word in 22:38. Consider all that's required in order to "speak only what God puts in your mouth." What are you lacking? Pray God would give it to you.

Day Three: Joshua 5:13—6:27

- When near Jericho, what happened to Joshua (5:13-15)? Re-read his exchange with the "commander" in verses 13-14. We tend to anxiously look out for who's for us and who's against us. How can you instead look out for what the Lord is doing?
- Describe Jericho's gates, and God's plans for Joshua (6:1-5). What orders did Joshua then give (6-7)? Summarize the way Joshua carried out God's plan (8-21). Did he misstep in any way, or does any part trouble you? Speak to the Lord. Re-read verse 10. What do you think it was like for the army to adhere to this command for six days straight? What's it like for you when you can't make sense of something God is telling you to do?
- What did Joshua say to the spies (22-23)? What happened next (24-25)? What curse did Joshua declare (26)? How does this story conclude (27)? In Christ, it's not good fortune that proves the Lord is with you. What *does* prove it, and what does this mean for you?

Day Four: Psalm 73

- What is the psalmist certain about (1)? How is he different from the "pure in heart" (2-3)? Summarize his observations of "the arrogant" (3-12). Why do you think he is so fixated on these people? What's a godlier way to respond to this misfortune?

- What does the psalmist believe he's done in vain (13-14)? Why does he reveal these thoughts to the Lord only (15)? Describe the evolution of his feelings (16-17, 21-22). When you respond poorly to a trial, perhaps via despair or envy, enter God's sanctuary and allow him to show you a better way. Do you think this was anything like Joseph's process in Matthew 1:18-25? Explain.
- Summarize the psalmist's new perspective on the wicked (18-20, 27). What good things of God does he then recall (23-26, 28)? Which of these verses speaks most to your heart? Why? Commit it to memory so you can recite it whenever life gets rough.

Day Five: Lamentations 3:19-33

- What does the author remember (19)? Consider the poetic language here, and how it applies to you. When has a hardship involved wandering? Or what about gall – the contents of the gallbladder and another word for bile – when has life tasted bitter?
- How do the author's feelings progress (20-21)? When downcast and in need of hope, what do *you* call to mind? Describe the overpowering nature of God's love (22-24). Meditate on verse 24. Whatever you're waiting for these days, pray for a grateful heart.
- Look at the picture the author paints of the suffering God-fearers experience; what is the story arc (25-33)? If you take issue with a verse, or if any offer supreme comfort, speak to the Lord about it. Finally, consider Joseph in Matthew 1:18-25. His fiancé was pregnant, and not by him. In his initial shock, what sort of lament do you think *he'd* write? Would he draw inspiration from this passage? What about you; how does it inspire you?