

**Facilitator:**

1. Open with prayer.
2. Welcome any newcomers.
3. Try to keep your discussion to an hour at the most.

**Facilitator:** Encourage your members to **BRING THEIR BIBLES** and use them during Connect Group.

**CONNECT Group study questions for June 17, 2018**

**Title: Abraham**—Various

**Read Genesis 16:1-4**

1. In this passage we see Abram exercising his own will instead of trusting in the promises of God. What elements of disobedience do we see in this decision?

*Facilitator: Guide your group in recognizing a few key points about the decision that Abram made. 1. He was impatient with God's timing. 2. He failed to submit to the will of God and desired his own way. 3. He lacked faith in the promises that had been made regarding his future. 4. He committed a sinful act in his defiance.*

2. Abram's failure led to lasting consequences on our world. While our sins may not have such a widespread effect, they do in fact have an impact on our lives and those around us. How does the story of Abram help us in considering the consequences of our actions? Privately consider decisions of disobedience you have made that are currently affecting your life. Is there something you might be willing to share with the group?

*Facilitator: Give the group a few moments to consider the second part of this question. Encourage them to pray over anything God has revealed to them. Allow anyone who may want to share to do so, but don't pressure or drag out this time. The goal is private personal reflection and application.*

**Read Genesis 22:1-2**

3. At this point in the story of Abraham, he does indeed have a son by Sarah. Isaac represented the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, the promise that was in question during Abraham's earlier disobedience. So, it would naturally come as a shock when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. What clues do we have to the change of Abraham's heart at this point in the story? How does surrender and faith play a role in obedience to the will of God?

*Facilitator: Discuss with your group the benefits of remembering God's faithfulness in the past when confronted with difficult decisions in the present. Encourage them to look up Scripture concerning God's faithfulness and about surrendering to his will.*

4. What God asked of Abraham was not an easy task, but God greatly used his obedience. Submitting to the will of God and acting in obedience also have lasting effects on our lives and the lives of those around us. How does the story of Abraham and Isaac help us in considering the benefits of surrendering our will to God? Privately consider decisions of obedience you have made that are currently benefiting your life. Is there something you might be willing to share with the group?

*Facilitator: As with the previous question (#2) give the group a few minutes to reflect on the second part of this question. Allow them to share. Look for opportunities to tie in this answer with the purpose of question #3.*

5. The New Testament is convinced that the story of Abraham is the story of the gospel, and yet most of the texts about Abraham in the Old Testament focus on his sin, his doubt, and his disobedience. How do we reconcile that? How is Abraham's story just like your story?

*Facilitator: The Old Testament stories are not given to us as moral examples. They were given to us to teach us about Jesus. Abraham is not the hero of his own story. God is the hero of Abraham's story. The story of Abraham is a story about a man who sins terribly, doubts exceedingly, and disobeys frequently, and yet God loves him anyway. And God blesses Abraham, not because of Abraham's goodness (he didn't have much), so that through Abraham, God might bless the whole world (Rom 4:13-16). Our story is the same. God didn't save us and bless us because we were good. God saved and blessed us despite our sin, so that through us the whole world might hear the good news of God's love.*

*"[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." 2 Tim 1:9*