

Small Group Guide

El Roi: The God Who Sees Me

Overview

This sermon explores one of the most comforting names of God found in Scripture: El Roi, meaning "The God Who Sees Me." Through the story of Hagar, a marginalized slave woman fleeing into the desert, we discover that God sees every detail of our lives, meets us in our darkest moments, and transforms the meaning of our suffering through His attentive presence and promise.

Key Takeaways

- 1. God calls us to full surrender, not compartmentalization.** Abram was not simply asked to add God to his existing life. He was called to leave everything behind and trust God with closed eyes. Genuine faith requires releasing our old ways of thinking and living.
 - 2. Fear and self-sufficiency are the enemies of faith.** Sarah and Abram's decision to use Hagar as a surrogate was rooted in fear, impatience, and a failure to trust God's promise. When we try to help God out on our own timeline, we often create more problems than we solve.
 - 3. God sees and meets the people nobody expects Him to reach.** Hagar was a slave, a foreigner, and far from perfect. Yet God sought her out in the desert, spoke directly to her, validated her suffering, and gave her a promise. This reflects the heart of God toward the marginalized, the broken, and the forgotten.
 - 4. Submission to God and affliction are not incompatible with divine care.** God acknowledged Hagar's suffering and then directed her back into a difficult situation. His presence and promise transformed the meaning of her hardship without immediately removing it. Trusting God sometimes means staying under difficulty until His purposes are complete.
 - 5. God sees you in your lowest moments.** Whether it is Hagar at a desert spring, Nathanael under a fig tree, or a Samaritan woman at a well, God consistently shows up in the places and moments where people feel most unseen. He has not turned His face from you.
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Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the name El Roi, "The God Who Sees Me," what is your initial emotional response? Does it bring comfort, skepticism, or something else? Why?
2. Pastor Clay mentioned being a natural skeptic and having moments where he screamed at God asking, "Do you even see me?" Have you ever had a moment like that? What was going on in your life at the time?
3. God told Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father's household and go to a land He would show him (Genesis 12:1). John Calvin described this as God commanding Abram to go forward with closed eyes. What areas of your life are hardest to surrender to God with "closed eyes," meaning with no clear picture of where He is leading?
3. Ten years passed between God's promise to Abram and the events of Genesis 16. How do you personally handle seasons of waiting when a promise from God seems delayed? What tends to happen to your faith during those seasons?
4. Sarah's response to barrenness was to take control and find her own solution. Abram's response was passive silence when he should have led. What do these two failure patterns reveal about how fear shows up differently in people? Which pattern do you tend toward?
5. When God found Hagar in the desert, He told her to go back and submit to Sarah, even though He had heard of her mistreatment. The pastor described this as God transforming the meaning of her affliction through His attentive presence and promise rather than removing the affliction entirely. How does this challenge the way you typically pray about hard situations?
6. Hagar gives God a name. She called Him El Roi, the God who sees me. What do you think it meant to her in that moment to be seen by God? What would it mean to you right now in your current circumstances?
8. Pastor Clay traced a pattern throughout Scripture of God meeting people at wells, trees, and places of false worship to demonstrate His authority over false gods. What does this pattern tell you about God's character and His mission to redeem what has been corrupted?
9. The story of Hagar is echoed in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 and in Nathanael's encounter with Jesus in John 1. In each case, Jesus demonstrates that He sees the person fully, including their pain, their sin, and their history. How does knowing that Jesus sees you fully, not just the parts you present to Him, affect how you approach Him?
10. Pastor Clay said, "Every human is basically Hagar. Apart from God, not knowing God, we are in a desert place. And God comes and meets us and finds us in our desert place." Do you agree with this? How does Hagar's story reflect your own story of coming to faith or returning to God?
11. Pastor Clay mentioned building altars, or memorials, to remember what God has done. He said there are times when he recounts past moments of God's faithfulness to strengthen his faith in the present. What are two or three specific moments in your life

where God clearly came through for you? How often do you return to those memories when facing new challenges?

12. The sermon referenced Proverbs 3:5-6, which speaks of trusting God with your whole heart rather than leaning on your own understanding. What is one area of your life right now where you are leaning more on your own understanding than trusting God?
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Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One or More:

- **Build a memorial.** Write down three to five specific times God came through for you. Keep this list somewhere visible and return to it when doubt or fear creeps in.
 - **Identify your desert.** Spend time in honest prayer this week naming the area of your life where you feel most unseen or forgotten. Bring it to God directly, as Hagar did, and ask Him to reveal Himself as El Roi in that specific situation.
 - **Examine your response to waiting.** Reflect on a promise you believe God has given you that has not yet come to pass. Ask yourself honestly: Am I trusting God's process, or am I trying to help Him out? Confess any areas where you have moved in self-sufficiency and recommit to faith.
 - **Pray for someone in their desert.** Think of one person in your life who may be in a dark or difficult season and feels unseen. Reach out to them this week, not necessarily with answers, but simply to let them know they are seen and not forgotten.
 - **Surrender something specific.** Identify one area of your life you have been compartmentalizing, keeping God out of or at a distance from. Take a deliberate step this week to invite God fully into that area.
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Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together over these three areas:

1. **For those waiting on a promise** - that faith would rise and God would strengthen them to trust His timing.
 2. **For those in a desert season** - that they would have a genuine encounter with El Roi and know they are seen, known, and not forgotten.
 3. **For full surrender** - that each group member would move toward a deeper place of trusting God with every area of life, not just the comfortable ones.
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Scriptures

- Genesis 12:1-7
- Genesis 16:1-13
- Genesis 18 (the Lord's visit and Sarah's laughter)
- Matthew 10:29-31
- 2 Chronicles 16:9
- Psalm 121:3-8
- John 1 (Nathanael under the fig tree)
- Genesis 1:1 (Elohim creating the heavens and the earth)
- Genesis 1-11 (use of the word "blessed" five times)
- Genesis 11 (Tower of Babel)
- Exodus 20:3 (the first commandment, no other gods)
- Joshua (setting up an Ebenezer at Shechem)
- Matthew 16:13-18 (Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, gates of hell)
- John 4:1-26 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well)
- Proverbs 3:5-6 (trust in the Lord, lean not on your own understanding)
- James 1:2-4 (consider it pure joy when you face trials)
- Matthew 28:18-20 (all authority in heaven and earth, the Great Commission)
- 2 Corinthians 5:7 (walk by faith, not by sight)