

BELIEVE BIG AND MULTIPLY
GENESIS 18:16-33



CONNECT

Have you ever tried to negotiate for a better deal?

WORD

Genesis 18:22-32 (ESV) - ²² So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. ²³ Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" ²⁶ And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." ²⁹ Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." ³⁰ Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." ³¹ He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." ³² Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

WHAT**What does the Bible say?**

Here we have a very interesting passage of scripture. Abraham has just had a visit from three very interesting personages. One of them seems to be God himself because he speaks for God in the first person. They have come to the area for two very specific reasons. First of all they have come to once again promise Abraham and Sarah that their child is on the way. This is the good news. That was the fun part of their mission. Their visit also has another more ominous purpose. They are there to do something about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities are some of the wickedest that have ever existed. They are not only immoral, but they are also abusive and exploitive of the people around them. In fact, Abraham knows from personal experience how awful the people of these cities are. They are the very people that kidnapped his nephew Lot and then made war on Abraham and his people. Abraham had a vested interest in seeing the city punished, but he also had a nephew who, despite his experiences, was still living in the city.

When Abraham learns of God's plans for the city we have an exchange between Abraham and God that may seem strange when you read it for the first time. Abraham tries to negotiate for the cities to be saved from God's wrath. He begins by asking God to spare the city if fifty righteous men can be found and he continues to negotiate until it is down to just ten. It seems that at this point Abraham realizes that there really isn't anyone worth saving in these cities and he gives up the negotiations, but the real

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question is, why did he make the effort in the first place? Why didn't he just let them die?

Abraham has just been given a promise that a blessing is going to be bestowed on him. Abraham is very aware of the fact that he has not earned this blessing and that he doesn't deserve it. He knows that God has chosen to do this freely out of grace. Abraham is profoundly grateful that he can never repay that debt to God or do anything to deserve the blessing, but his gratitude is such that he feels anguish at seeing others being punished for their unrighteousness when he knows that he deserves the same fate and grace is the only reason he is being spared and blessed.

His attitude of gratitude to God causes him to intercede with urgency on behalf of the people around him. He desperately wishes that they would lay aside their wicked behavior and come into a righteous relationship with God. He is aware of the grace in his life and he mourns for the fact that his fellow human beings will not have access to the grace that has benefited him. He believed that God could do big things. Even something as big as saving a place as wicked as Sodom and Gomorrah.

SO WHAT

What is the relevance to my life?

- What really stood out to you in today's message and lesson? What would you like to discuss further with the group?
- Several times in the passage today, Abraham seems to try to excuse himself for questioning God and trying to negotiate with him. He seems to know that he is taking a risk in what he is doing. Do you ever feel that you are taking a risk in asking God for the things that you are asking him for? Do you ever feel like you are pushing the edges of what you can ask for? If not, why not?

- Abraham almost seems to be reminding God that it would be wrong to punish the righteous with the unrighteous. He didn't seem to do this because he thought God needed to be reminded, but rather from a place of confidence and faith in who God is. How has knowing who God is and what he does changed the way that you pray?
- We are here because Abraham believed big and followed God. Who will point to you and say, "Because he or she followed, I am here"? Who will point to you and say "Because they trusted God and prioritized him in their life, I believed as well"?

NOW WHAT

How do I apply the word to my life?



How does this lesson change the way you think about believing God? Why did God choose this moment to bring this lesson to you?



What has God laid on your heart with this lesson? How does understanding Abraham's intercession for these cities change the way you feel about the people around you?



What does God want you to do differently this week as a result of this lesson? What specific plan will you put in place to believe big so that Jesus might multiply the influence of the Kingdom of God through your act of faith?

How can we help you and hold you accountable? How can we pray for you? What can we do to show our love for you this week? Who do you know that needs to hear this lesson?