

## **Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides**

### **March 12th**

#### **Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)**

1. What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

#### **Bible Study Questions**

1. Read Genesis 16
  - What emotions do you imagine Hagar dealing with at the beginning of verse 7?
  - What message does God give her? (remember, the description of Ishmael is not meant to be negative but to state that he would not be a slave...he would be his own man).
  - What name does Hagar give God? Why is this important?
  - What does this story teach you about God?
2. Abuse is a reoccurring theme in the Bible. Look up these verses: Psalm 9:9,12, Psalms 11:5, Proverbs 3:31, Proverbs 31:8-9, Jeremiah 22:16, Mark 12:38-40
  - What do these verses teach you about God's view of abuse?
  - Why is abuse so important to God? Why should we care about it?
3. Studies say that anywhere between 1 in 4 or 1 in 3 women are victims of abuse and about 1 in 6 men. Does this number surprise you?
4. The church should be a healing heaven for those who experience abuse. How have churches often either failed in this area or minimized the experiences of those who have been abused?
5. Pastor Michael talked about appropriate safety protocols. What do you think would be good policies to have a church to help protect people from abuse?
6. Walking someone through abuse requires affirming their dignity. How does abuse dehumanize someone? What are some practical

ways to encourage someone who is dealing with abuse? What are responses that we should avoid?

## March 12<sup>th</sup>: The Slave Girl Genesis 16

Genesis 16 tells the painful story of Abram and Sarai abusing a slave girl in order to produce a child. Before we rush to judgments, we need to remember that in the ancient world, the worst of tragedies for a woman was to be childless. Abram is following a common custom in that world. We also need to remember that God has promised Abram a child, but hasn't said that it would come through Sarai. In his mind, it makes logical sense that God may provide that heir through another woman.

### I. Hagar the slave girl

- **The helpless victim of dehumanizing abuse:** Hagar is an Egyptian slave, likely being possessed by Abram during his time in Egypt. As a result, she would have been taken from her family. Sarai and Abram view her nothing more than as a tool to produce a child and coerce her into a sexual relationship with Abram. After this, she is mistreated and flees into the wilderness as a result.
- **Discovers that God pays attention to both her and her pain:** When God appears to her, he tells her that he knows her misery (Genesis 16:11). In return, she names God "El Roi", meaning that he is the God who sees (16:13). Knowing that God is watching her gives her the dignity and the strength to return.

### II. Response to Abuse

- **God is always against abuse:** The Bible often talks about God being against the oppressed (Psalm 9:9,12, Psalms 11:5, Proverbs 3:31, Proverbs 24:2, Jeremiah 22:16, Mark 12:38=40).
- **Abuse is an assault on the value that God places on humans:** Genesis 1:27 teaches that God made humans in the image of God. This means that they are given a special value and are to be treated with dignity.
- **The church needs to be a healing haven for the abused**
  - **Establish a safe environment:** Safety involves creating precautions to prevent possible abuse environments from occurring. Example is no elder praying with someone of the opposite sex in an isolated closed room.
  - **Look for ways to affirm the dignity of all people:** When talking with a victim of abuse, we should seek to encourage them and to establish their value as being made in the image of God.

- **Guard a culture of trust:** Protect confidentiality and respect the privacy of the person sharing. Also commit to no minimize their experience and listen with patience.

### Conclusion

God has a heart for victims. When abuse happens in the church, we tend to rush to defend the institution and the victim because lost in the process. We need to be careful to guard that. Jesus came on a mission to bring healing and wholeness. When the church gets this right, the Holy Spirit is able to flow through the church to be agents of healing.