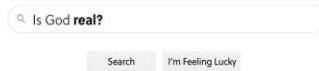


Googling God



## SERMON STUDY GUIDE

### “Googling God”

For the sermon preached on  
2/2/2020

“Does God Hate Me?”

Genesis 16:1-16

### How to use the Groups Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method. In summary, this method stresses “**Observation**” (what the reader can see from the text), “**Interpretation**” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “**Application**” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group. It’s recommended that you rephrase the questions to match your voice and have an understanding of the interpretive questions as you prepare to lead and facilitate.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the Group Life Team

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**[Note to Group Leaders:** Similar to previous messages and study guides in this series, this one will also be a little different from our normal Inductive Bible Study method. The sermon Pastor Bryan gave us had a few texts that he preached through to give us a well-crafted answer perspective to the challenging question, “Does God hate me?” This study will focus on the story of Hagar and the “Big Idea” given.]

As some of us have said, “January was a long year and I’m glad it’s February.” Indeed the days can feel full and time often moves differently when you’re feeling the stress and busyness of life. So, it’s good that you have come today, to create some margin in your life, so we can be in community, have an opportunity to grow spiritually together, and get renewed in our mission.

For many, the “Googling God” series has created space to wrestle with some tough and lingering questions. And today we wrestle with the question that some have posed, “Does God hate me?”

Now it’s important not to get stuck in the literalism of the question. There are many Christ-followers who know God does not hate them. But most will honestly admit, that at one point or another, they too have wondered if they have disappointed God beyond an appropriate point and whether it has injured their relationship. This is a normal thing to grapple with, as that’s how many of our relationships work.

Today we want to understand that God’s love is indeed unconditional. We want to receive that God does not hate you or anyone. And that God sees us right now and wants us to receive and share His love.

Let’s look at the story of Hagar, a pregnant slave that was treated poorly and put in an impossible situation by Abram and Sarai. She fled feeling completely alone and abandoned ... but it was in the wilderness that God met her.

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**1** Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; **2** so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. **3** So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. **4** He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. **5** Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”

**6** “Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

**7** The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. **8** And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

<sup>9</sup>Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” <sup>10</sup>The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”

<sup>11</sup>The angel of the Lord also said to her:

“You are now pregnant  
and you will give birth to a son.  
You shall name him Ishmael,  
for the Lord has heard of your misery.

<sup>12</sup>He will be a wild donkey of a man;  
his hand will be against everyone  
and everyone’s hand against him,  
and he will live in hostility  
toward all his brothers.”

<sup>13</sup>She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” <sup>14</sup>That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup>So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. <sup>16</sup>Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Genesis 16:1-16

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Some of are familiar with this story while others are just seeing it for the first time. As you look at the text in your Bible or on your device, what features or details do you see jumping out at you? And describe some of the thoughts you feel when reading this story.

Describe a time where you have been put in an unfair situation and as a result felt a similar type of rejection or isolation. How can you identify with Hagar and what might have been different for you? (Try to tell the abridged version of the story so we can hear from a few).

We see Abram and Sarai acting out of desperation as they try to live out a promise of children and blessing, one they believed God gave them – but this was not the means that God had intended. This is a tougher question, have you ever personally experienced or witnessed a situation where acts of desperation worsened an already difficult situation?

The good news is even in such a moment, whether we are like Hagar or Abram, or Sarai, or Naomi or Peter -- God is with us. To paraphrase the point Pastor Bryan made - God can see you right where you are – whether you’re hiding in the back row, hiding behind your success (or your pain) or hiding behind your carefully crafted social media page – God can see you and God loves you. Let’s take a moment or two and just sit in the silence of that truth.

And after a minute of reflecting together, what do you sense the Lord speaking into your heart? Perhaps you were reminded of an experience, or perhaps you feel empowered to respond in faith to a personal situation or perhaps someone has come to mind that you suspect feels forgotten or even hated by God - What can you share?

There are likely a number of people in our lives that feel hated by God. What are the many and personal ways we can share the love of God with them? (Try your best to avoid the clichéd answers and let's dig deep on this one).

The love of God can heal, save, free and bless you in countless ways. Let's finish our time together by thanking God for this unconditional love and to lift up the names of those who have come to mind during our time - that they too may experience the love of God through our Savior Jesus!

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- a. Please note that not all these questions might be able to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your group the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your group.
  - b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
  - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
  - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
  - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.