

**Pray**

How do you think about God?  
It might be the most important thing about you.

Ten false ideas about God that will mess up your life:

- Some people think of God like a policeman...
- Santa Claus...
- Doctor/Therapist...
- Some people are really pantheists... Star Wars God. God is in everything.
- Good luck in my pocket god... (athletes)
- Judge at the end god...
- Some people have a god who looks just like them... lives inside of them, thinks like them, affirms their wishes.
- God who helps other people...
- The Jerk God, Stay out of his way god (don't mess with me)... and they are angry.
- Some people who think they are Christians are practically deists.

Now, I want you to think about this, and if you've been here since the first of the year, think back on Genesis.

- God created the whole world, universe...
- Since, He's been dealing with the problem of sin and working out His sovereign plan.
- He's made a promise to Abraham, and now (in chapter 18) He visits Abraham to sit and have lunch, talk about the wife, and share his thoughts about a troublesome city... with Abraham.
- What is going on? He is Abraham's friend.
- To say the least, this is not what one would expect from the God who runs the universe.
- Or, that it is odd that God who would stop over for lunch would be the same one who made everything.
- In human experience, this mix of supreme power with intimacy is rare. And, maybe we are the ones who are messed up.
- With God, the real God, this is who He is.

**There is no god like our God. He is both personal and powerful.**

And, I could stop here. That is the message. But, I won't.  
Let us look at the text together. It falls into two parts... a visit, and then a conversation over lunch.

**I. When the Lord visits... Gen. 18:1-8**

The events we have read about probably happen soon after the events of chapter 17.  
But, why all the detail. It really is something to see all of Abraham's rushing about, preparations for the guests.  
One of two things is happening here, each of which leads to a slightly different lesson. Both of which are important.

It could be that Abraham does not know who is visiting. Vs. 3 he is speaking politely.

If so, we have a lesson in hospitality and kindness.

**Heb. 13:2**

**Matt. 25:34-40**

It is more likely that Abraham recognized the Lord. After all, he has just had a visit in chapter 17.

If so, we have an example of how to respond when the Lord visits.

And, the Lord does visit people today.

He does not always show up as a person to eat with you.

Though He has before... particularly as Jesus Christ.

Then, His people did not follow Abraham's example of hospitality. They did not welcome Him.

Though a few did. **Luke 19:1-10**

Another example of how to respond when the Lord visits.

Maybe one of the most sobering passages in the Bible. **Rev. 3:20**

How do you respond when the Lord shows up?

It might be in person.

It might be in a dream.

It might be as you are praying or reading the Bible.

It might be on Sunday morning or at a concert or a conference.

God does visit His people... how will you respond when He does? Do you want Him to visit you?

Abraham certainly did.

They had become friends.

## II. When the Lord speaks...

This is, by any measure, a remarkable conversation. God is talking with Abraham, His friend, about Abe's wife, Sarah. The conversation has two results: laughter and a lesson. **Gen. 18:9-15**

Now, I want you to notice something in the text between vss. 9 and 10.

There is a shift in the one who is speaking.

vs. 5, "They said..."

vs. 9, "Then they said to him..."

But, now in vs. 10 we read "He said..." and, in fact, for the rest of the chapter it is always, "The Lord said..."

If Abraham did not know who was visiting him, he surely does now.

In vs. 10, the Lord repeats His promise to Abraham... **Gen. 17:15-19**

God is reminding Abraham... and God does this with us in His Word.

God is reassuring Abraham... and God does this with us, in many different ways.

And, Sarah laughs. (vs. 12)

In chapter 17 "Abraham fell on His face and laughed." = worship

He laughed because he was surprised and amazed at what God was going to do. Understandable.

We saw that God does not do things the way we think He will.

So, God told Abraham to name the child Isaac = laughter... So that Abraham would remember the lesson.

God does things God's way... and amazes us.

Now, however, it is Sarah who laughs... there is no worship in it. Hers is the laughter of disbelief. That is understandable too.

She's old... really old, too old to have kids. And Abraham is old too.

And, after she has laughed the laughter of incredulity (disbelief) she does not want to admit it. She's like us.

But, in God now has a lesson for Sarah... **vs. 13-14**

It is one that she remembers because of the name "Isaac." **Gen. 21:1-7**

God has made her believe. That is what laughter now means for Sarah.

But, I want you to appreciate the gentleness with which God deals with Sarah.

Because He often deals with us in similar ways.

She is struggling.

Her plans did not go well.

She is not a perfect person.

She did not believe what the Lord said.

And, yet, God speaks kindly to her.

And He is teaching her an important lesson... maybe the most important lesson.

And, She is going to learn it. God is going to prove Himself to her.

This is who God is, what He is like.

There are so many times in the Bible when God takes someone who is struggling or wavering in their faith...

And He shows them again that He is trustworthy... that nothing is too difficult for Him.

He did it with Sarah.

He did it with Moses.

He did it with Naomi.

He did it with Elijah.

He did it with John the Baptist.

He did it with Peter.

He did it with Thomas.

He will do it with you... but don't forget, with Sarah it took 25 years. Even longer with others.

*Pray*