



Lesson 3 ~ El Roi – The God Who Sees Me Genesis 16

♥ Heart Talk

When you meet with your small group, share something about your continued experience of **being silent for 5 minutes before God** OR share something about the **Heart Therapy Exercises from Lesson 1 or 2**; *taking a walk looking for the goodness and loveliness of God in his creation* or *using music, giving God some undivided attention in praise and worship*. How do these exercises help you *experience* God?

Introduction

Genesis 16 is the only place in the Bible that the name *El Roi* (el raw-EE) – *the God who sees me* – is found; yet, the essential quality of God as *all-seeing* is found all through Scripture. However, the point of this name is not just that God *always sees us* or is *all-knowing*. The point is that God sees us in our place of quiet desperation – our *misery* – and the reason he *sees us* is so that he can *reach out to us* and *help us*. God sees us in order that he may show us compassion, give us comfort and work on our behalf. God **seeing us** is an extension of **his love** for us!

If you have never been *rejected* or *cast aside*; if you have never felt *all alone*, thinking *no one knows, no one cares, no one understands*; if you have never been *misunderstood, mistreated* or *suffered unjustly* at the hands of another; if you have never been *used, abused, not wanted* or *not loved*; if you have never *suffered alone*, lost in a *wilderness hurt, pain and secrets* – then the name, *the God who sees me*, may not have a great impact on you. But if you **have** ever felt *all alone, dying in an emotional wilderness*, you will be comforted and encouraged to know that *El Roi always sees, always knows and always understands* as he meets us in our suffering!

♥ Heart Preparation

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him (Psalm 37:7). Before you begin this lesson – and to prepare your heart to receive what God has for you – **sit quietly before God, in silence, for 5 minutes**. (It might be helpful to set a timer so you can focus on God and not the passing of time.) During this time, don't try to accomplish anything other than just being quiet with God. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to focus on God, saying something like, *Here I am, Lord or I belong to you, God*. By being intentionally silent before God, we are able to hear his words spoken to our hearts in spite of the noise and distractions of life.

Jesus' Encouraging Words to You . . .

I Am with you and all around you, encircling you in golden rays of light. I always behold you Face-to-face. Not one of your thoughts escapes My notice. Because I am infinite, I am able to love you as if you and I were the only ones in the universe. I Am perpetually with you, taking care of you. I am not limited by time or space; therefore My Presence with you is a forever-promise.

Jesus Calling (September 29/30) by Sarah Young

A Prayer to Help Prepare Your Heart

*Write your blessed Name, O Lord, upon my heart,
there to remain so indelibly engraved,
that no prosperity, no adversity shall ever move me from your love.
Be to me a strong tower of defense, a comforter in tribulation,
a deliverer in distress, a very present help in trouble,
and a guide to heaven through the many temptations and dangers of this life.*

Thomas á Kempis
1380-1471

Questions

Read **Genesis 16**. You may want to find **Genesis 16** on the Bible at a Glance chart in your notebook.

1. What are your first impressions after reading this story? Of the three main characters, who do you empathize with the most? The least? Why?

- ♥ What in your life have you had to wait a long time for? Are you still waiting? How do you cope with waiting? What do you think is the purpose of waiting?

Background – The first eleven chapters of Genesis describes God's dealings with the human race. In **Genesis 12**, the focus shifts to a single individual, *Abram*, and his family line. God called Abram to leave his home country of Ur and go to the land of Canaan, which God promised that he and his descendents would ultimately possess. God blessed Abram and promised that through his family line a Savior would be born to reconcile all humankind to God. Abram was obedient to God's call and although God periodically renewed his promise to Abram as time passed, he and his wife Sarai remained childless as they advanced in years. When we pick up the story of Abram's life in **Genesis 16**, it has been at least ten years since God had first made his promise to Abram, who is now 85 years old.

2. It was not uncommon in ancient cultures for a barren woman to give her servant/slave to her husband in order to conceive a male heir. After the baby was born, the wife would adopt the child and he would become a legal heir. Read **Genesis 15:1-6** and explain how Abram and Sarai (later called Abraham and Sarah) might have rationalized their solution to make it agree with God's promise.

- ♥ What contradiction does Sarai state about God in **16:2** and what does it imply about God? Why is *knowing God* just as important as *knowing his promises*?

- ♥ In her desperation, how might Sarai have benefited if she had known and encountered *El Roi*?

- ♥ When have you attempted to supply your solution to God's promise? How did it work out?

- ♥ When are you generally tempted to take shortcuts? Why is it so hard to wait for God to act?

3. The situation deteriorates quickly, with the consequences of one bad decision leading to another. Trace this downward spiral in the chart below, summarizing the choices and consequences in each verse.

Verse	Choices and/or Consequences
16:2	
16:3	
16:4	
16:5	
16:6	

- ♥ Considering Abram's encounter with God in **Genesis 15:1-6**, what could he have done instead of agreeing with Sarai's plan (**16:2**)? When have you chosen *the wrong but easy way* over the *right but difficult way*? *Vice versa*? Share what you learned from these experiences.

- ♥ *Disbelief* leads to *disobedience* which results in "*dissed*" relationships. Describe Abram and Sarai's relationship in **16:5-6**. When have you seen these same patterns in your own life? What is the solution?
 - ♥ Was Sarai right to blame Abram for her suffering? Why or why not? Why is "blame" so tempting?
4. Do you *approve* or *disapprove* of Hagar's behavior in **16:4** and **6**? Why? What advice would you give?

- ♥ How did God view Hagar's behavior? On what do you base your answer?
- ♥ Describe how you think Hagar was feeling. In what ways can you relate to Hagar and her situation?
- ♥ From what difficulty are you tempted to "run"? What do you think would be the result?

Angel of the Lord (16:7) – a heavenly messenger of God, sometimes described as the Lord himself (**Gen. 16:10-13; Ex. 3:2-6; 23:20; Judges 6:11-18**), but at other times as one sent by and distinct from God (**2 Sam. 24:16; Zech 1:12**). God used this messenger to appear to humans who otherwise would not be able to see God and live (**Ex. 33:20**). The *angel of the Lord* performed actions associated with God, such as *revelation, deliverance, and destruction*. Many Bible scholars have speculated that the *angel of the Lord* was God himself – a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. The language in the story of Hagar leads us to believe that the angel in this incident was, in fact, an appearance of God himself.

5. In the desert, God "finds" Hagar. How does God identify Hagar and what does he ask her (**16:7-8**)?

Why do you think God asks Hagar these questions when he obviously already knew the answers?
Why is Hagar's reply important?

- ♥ Why would God bother to find a runaway slave girl in the desert, address her by name and have a personal conversation with her? What do you learn about God from this encounter?
 - ♥ Why do you think God told Hagar to go back and submit to Sarai's authority after she had obviously been mistreated (**16:9**)? Would you have been able to trust God in this situation? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think Hagar agreed to do what God asked of her (**16:9**)? Why might she have felt it was "safe" (**16:10-13**)?
- ♥ What makes it possible to forgive people who have hurt or mistreated you? What part does God play in the process? Discuss with your group the difference between **forgiveness** and **reconciliation**.
7. Hagar tries to capture the significance of her encounter with God by giving him a personal name that expresses her awe and gratitude (**16:13**). What are some things she was implying about God when she said, "*You are the God that sees me . . .*"

- ♥ Why was Hagar so amazed that *she had seen* the God who saw her (**Exodus 33:17-20**)? What lasting, personal impact do you think this had on her?
- ♥ Where have you seen God lately? From the result of your encounter, what name would you give to God or the place where you met him?
- ♥ God responded to Hagar's *misery* (**16:11**). When has a difficult time in your own life helped you gain new insight into God's concern for you?

The name *El Roi* implies much more than a God who is *all-seeing* and *all-knowing*. Hagar made the name very personal when she said, "You are the God who sees *me*." God "seeing" us is much more than just his "awareness" of us. The name *El Roi* implies our value as a person, no matter who we are or what we do; it implies that God sees all hearts and the complete truth about every situation; it implies that because God sees, we are never alone; and it implies that in seeing, God is with us to confront, comfort, protect and deliver. The name *El Roi* specifically applies to God *seeing, hearing, knowing, understanding* and *helping* us in our *misery* (**16:11**).

8. Read each group of verses listed below and write what you learn about *El Roi – the God who sees me*. Write your answers in the first person as if you are speaking to God (You, I, me, etc.).

Isaiah 49:15-16a; Luke 12:6-7; Romans 2:11

- ♥ On a *scale of 1 to 10*, how precious are you to God? Does your *heart* believe your rating? Why or why not?
Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 23:4; Matthew 28:20b

- ♥ If God is always with you, should you always be able to *sense* his Presence? Why or why not?
1 Samuel 16:7b; Hebrews 4:13; Proverbs 15:3

- ♥ God knows the real truth about every person and every situation. How does this *comfort* you? When might it make you *uncomfortable*?
Psalm 121:2-3, 7-8; Psalm 34:15; Psalm 38:9

- ♥ How does knowing *El Roi* encourage you? How do you need him today?

♥ Heart Therapy

SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME WITH *EL ROI – THE GOD WHO SEES YOU* . . .

All we have learned about God in this lesson is **TRUTH**, whether or not we *feel it* or are *experiencing it* in our lives at the moment. When our feelings and/or circumstances seem to contradict God's truth, we, in faith, choose to put our trust in *Truth – God's Word*. This is what it means to live by *faith* and not *sight* (**2 Corinthians 5:7**). *Trust* is always a *choice* made in the midst of *uncertainty* – but it is what God needs from us so that he can work in us and our situations (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Read **Psalm 9:9-10**. On the back of this page, *write a personal prayer of trust to God* expressing the truths you have learned about him and your intention to *trust him completely*. *Listen* for what he may say to you!