

Life Group Notes

Hineni

'Some time later, God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham"' "Here I am,' he replied." Genesis 22:1

Key Texts

Genesis 12:1-8; Genesis 22:1-2 & 9-12; Exodus 3:1-5; 1 Samuel 3:1-21; Isaiah 6:1-8; Isaiah 52:6

Introduction

The Hebrew word 'hineni' appears in all the readings above. Broadly speaking, it means 'I am here.' Said like that, it sounds a very passive word. Yet it also carries the sense of 'I am here for you.' Said that way, it is active and carries a sense of commitment and availability to the one to whom it is said.

What does it mean to be available to other people? To be available to God?

Questions for discussion

1. Abraham makes himself available to God (Genesis 12:1-8) and follows the call. Years later, he is tested (Gen 22:1-2). How have you known testing in your life? How did you respond?
2. Abraham must have wished that he had not made himself available to God (22:1). Yet he is willing to make the sacrifice of Isaac, his son. What point is this story making to us in our our day and age?
3. When Moses says to God 'Here I am', he discovers he is standing on holy ground. What has been holy ground for you? How might you see your everyday places as holy ground?
4. The boy Samuel calls out 'Hineni' (Here I am) not at first knowing who it is that is speaking to him. He runs to Eli, the priest, for counsel. What do you do when you think that God might be speaking? How can we help one another to discern the voice of God?
5. Samuel is given a difficult message for Eli (1 Sam 3:11-14). He has to speak out. What are the things in our world over which we ought to speak out?
6. Isaiah 6:1-13 has been summarised in this way:
 - 'Lo' – Isaiah has a vision of God
 - 'Woe' – confronted with the awesome holiness of God, Isaiah is brought face to face with his own unholiness.
 - 'Go' – having been cleansed by God, Isaiah hears the voice of God saying 'Whom shall I send?'

How does Isaiah's experience resonate with your own? Do we need a similar encounter with God to be prepared to do his work?

7. Isaiah also says 'Hineni' (v8). 'Here I am. Send me!' Where is the Lord sending you? Now? In the future?

Closing Thoughts

In Isaiah 52:6, we again encounter that word: Hineni. God is also here for us – always. When we make ourselves available to him, we will find that he is available to us – and how!

An additional thought

It has been widely commented in the media that there seemed to be an unusually high number of famous people that died in 2016. One of those was Leonard Cohen, writer and singer of such famous songs as 'Hallelujah.' A short time before his death, he released an album containing a track called 'Hineni' in which he seems to be preparing for the end. To truly trust God is to keep saying 'Hineni' to him throughout our lives, even to death, knowing that he has an eternity prepared for those who love him.

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