

DEEP SIX STUDY

January 22nd, 2023

There's Something You Should Know - "The Test I Wasn't Expecting"

MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS *(You can view the full message online at capecodchurch.com)*

Opening: In this series, we're talking about *origin stories* – Abraham's, and our own. Because if you know your origin story – how you became you, and what God has been doing in your life – you can begin thinking about and working on your *legacy*. This week we'll look at a test – a test that you've already taken several times, and probably failed more than once. But take heart, because Abram failed it too!

1. The Test of Importance (Genesis 12:10-20)

- When faced with a test of his integrity and his faith in God's plan, Abram failed miserably, allowing his wife Sarai to be taken as a concubine by the king of Egypt because he (Abram) was afraid. But Abram's test was more than a test of integrity, morality or faith; while each of those is true to some degree, his bigger test was a test of importance. The question he faced: "How important am I?" – and his (wrong) answer: "I'm so important to God's plan, I can do whatever I want."
- For all of us, the test of importance eventually bumps into an unavoidable truth: we're not that important. That's hard to hear, because everything in our being wants to believe we are (self-) important – and our culture reinforces that idea constantly as we "swim in a great sea of affirmation."
- As much as we want to believe we are important, powerful and in control, though, we routinely face situations that highlight our own powerlessness and our need for God's help – and that's where we face the true test of who we are and what we believe to be true about ourselves.

2. How Powerlessness Changes My Story

- While we may go to great lengths to maintain the illusion and appearance of our self-importance, the truth is that powerlessness teaches us great lessons about who we are and how God is writing our story. When I realize that I'm powerless apart from God,
 - a. I Discover My Unearned Value (Romans 5:8) – It turns out that I don't need to cling to the illusion of self-importance, because my *unearned value* – the value God gives me – is far greater than any "value" I could earn in the eyes of the world (or myself). Paul tells us that God proved our value to him by sending his Son to die for us, to show us our ultimate worth – not because we deserved it, not because we could earn it, but because we bore God's image and had *infinite value* to him.
 - b. I Discover the Value of Others (Galatians 5:13-14) – When I know and accept the infinite unearned value I have in the eyes of God, I can appreciate and embrace the same value in others. I don't have to "compete and beat" in order to feel better about myself and my importance, so I'm "set free," as Galatians 5 puts it, to love and value those around me as God loves and values me.
- The best part of Abram's embarrassing episode with Sarai is that it comes at the beginning of his story. God doesn't give up on him, even when he failed the test of importance so miserably – because God still had a great plan for his life. Our past failures don't determine our value to God – Jesus does!

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

These passages may provide additional insights related to the subject of this week's message. All verses are NLT unless otherwise noted.

Psalms 139:13-18; Matthew 5:43-45; Luke 15:8-10; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18, 12:9-10; Philippians 2:3-4

Video of the Week: [The Image of God](#) by the Bible Project

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Answering honestly, what's your gut reaction to the statement that "You're not that important"?
2. The desire to appear important is obviously epidemic in our culture. Why do you think so many people work so hard to build and maintain an image of power, control, influence and importance?
3. In your view, how is the desire to appear important (and competent, and powerful, and in-control) to those around us related to the way we see and think about ourselves?
4. Read Romans 5:8 again. Paul tells us that God loved us so much that he sent Jesus "to die for us while we were still sinners." How, exactly, does that prove that God sees us as having "infinite unearned value"? In your view, is loving someone the same thing as valuing them? Explain your answer.
5. If we believe that verse to be true, why do you think we (followers of Jesus) often continue to strive to perform and compete and look important – including striving to be seen as "good Christians"?
6. Our "homework" from this week's message included the question "Where have you felt powerless in your life, and how did you experience a sense of being valued by God in those times?" If you're willing, share your response with your group.