

**Icebreaker:**

Abram left home to follow God. Where is home for you? When and why did you first leave home?

**Read: Genesis 12:1-8 & Matthew 11:25-30.**

**Discuss:**

1. God tells Abram to leave his country, kindred, and father's house. These are all things which gave Abram meaning and identity. What are the "country, kindred, and father's house" in your life that give you meaning and identity and would be difficult to leave?
2. Abram was discovering his "True North" when he followed God to Canaan. Do you remember a time when you made a significant personal sacrifice in response to God's call?
3. If someone were to ask you the question, "Who are you?" how would you answer?
4. When you read Matthew 11:25, why do you think the gospel is hidden from "the wise and the intelligent?" In terms of the gospel, do you feel more like the wise and the intelligent, or more like a little child?
5. Jesus says that he will give rest to our souls. What in your life exhausts your soul? What practices or things do you do to replenish your soul?
6. Have you had a time in your life where your burdens felt particularly heavy or even crushing? What did you do about it? How did that time or your response change you?
7. A yoke is defined as "wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull." What do you think Jesus meant when he said that carrying his yoke is easy?

**As your group closes, please keep the following prayer requests in mind:**

- > Prayers of healing for Wanda Baker, Cary Davis, Doug Hendren, and Mona Ruby.

**Reminders for your group:**

- > It's time to host the homeless with IHN October 30-November 6. Sign up at [zpc.org](http://zpc.org).
- > ZPC's Fall Celebration on Sunday, October 30 will include one service at 10 am, Congregational Meeting, brunch, face painting, bounce house, and costumes. Candy donations and volunteers are needed. More information at [zpc.org](http://zpc.org).

**Leader's Notes:**

We are called to put our identity in Christ. It's not easy to do. As gifted people, we often try to exhaust our personal resources to fix things, or to base our identity on things other than God. Abraham gives a good example of one who answered God's call, and Jesus gives us great encouragement to come to him and find rest for our souls in him.

**[Question 1]** Who are the people and what are the things that make up your identity? For us, this might be our family relationships, or the success of our children or families, or it might be our homes or careers.

**[Question 2]** There was a time in my mid-20s when I left my home state of Texas to move to Pasadena, California, to go to seminary. I left family, close friends, and a steady job to move to a place where I knew no one. It was challenging, but God was good, and led me during that time to depend on him. In your group, try to go deeper and have your group share their own experiences.

**[Question 3]** For many of us, we might answer, "I'm a \_\_\_\_\_" (insert career / job). Or we might answer with I'm a...wife, husband, mom, dad, sister, or brother. Where we often struggle is that parents to put too much identity in our children's success (or lack of success). God calls us his beloved children. Jesus called his disciples his friends – for whom he would lay down his life. So, who are you?

**[Question 4]** Jesus makes a statement that we can be faithful to him while trusting him. To understand, believe, and to follow the gospel message, we do not have to be wise and intelligent. Yet, we often put our trust in our gifts (intelligence), trying to fix things on our own without God's help.

**[Question 5]** Jesus does not say he will give rest to your bodies – but gives rest to your souls. Most of us need more sleep, but we really need rest for our souls. It may be that anxiety about our families or life issues, jobs, money, or reputation is exhausting to us. Christian author Dallas Willard said silence and solitude are two essential Christian practices. Prayer, reading the Bible, journaling, or being able to share openly with other Christians are also good practices.

**[Question 6]** When we take on our burdens or worries and do not allow others to support us or do not allow God to take them, they can be crushing. This might involve things like sickness, family dysfunction, unemployment, or the death of a loved one. Share how you responded to a difficult time in your life. Were you able to ask God for help or receive help from others?

**[Question 7]** Most would say following Jesus is not really easy. If you are following Jesus, do you find his yoke is resting lightly on you or are you struggling against it? We are called to truly trust in Jesus, to give God our concerns in prayer, and to release ourselves from worry; we can follow Jesus more closely and allow him to carry our burdens.