



ABRAHAM



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INTRODUCTION

The life of Abraham is one filled with many trials, strengthening of faith, and provision from the Lord. Abram is just an ordinary man until the Lord comes to him with promises that will impact thousands of generations. As Abram's faith is tested and strengthened, the Lord holds to his promises from the beginning to the end. To show the full extent of how his life has been changed, Abram's name is changed to Abraham after he walks in faithfulness and is counted as righteous by the Lord. As we study Abraham's journey, we hope to learn and grow in our own faith.

Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

–Hebrews 11:10

ABRAHAM

key themes

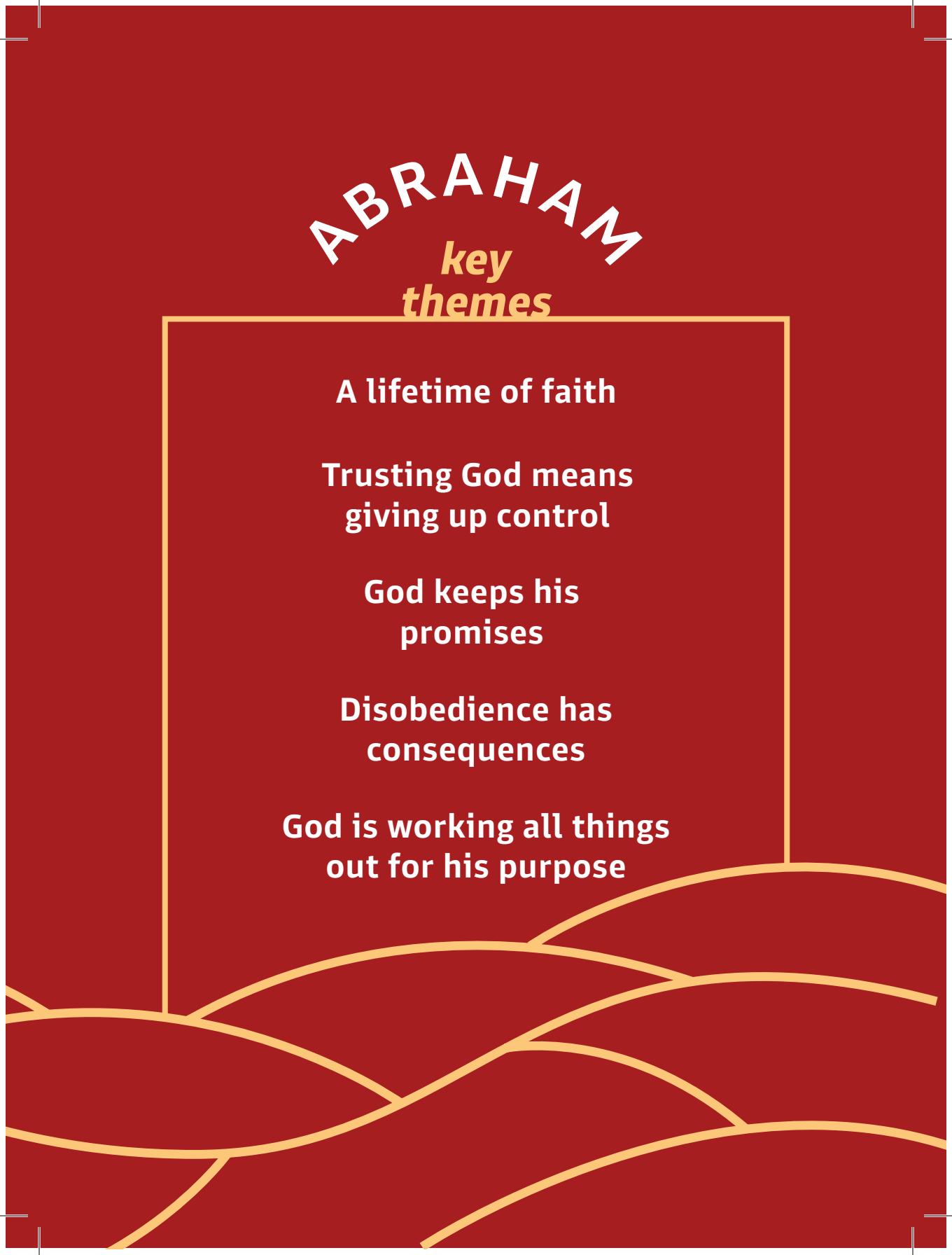
A lifetime of faith

Trusting God means
giving up control

God keeps his
promises

Disobedience has
consequences

God is working all things
out for his purpose

The background of the slide features a dark red color. Overlaid on this are several thick, flowing orange lines that resemble waves or rivers. These lines start from the bottom left, curve upwards and to the right, then dip down and curve back towards the left, creating a sense of movement and depth. The lines vary in thickness and intensity of orange.



WEEK 1, DAY 1

Genesis 12:1–3

¹The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt.

All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

Hebrews 11:8–10

⁸It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ⁹And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

Reflection

Today's passage in Genesis takes place a few hundred years after the flood and about 2000 years since Adam. God had a unique relationship with Adam and Noah, and as we study the life of Abram, we will see his plan continue to unfold through this family's bloodline. Genesis 12 marks the beginning of God's great promise to Abram to bless an entire nation. At this point, Abram has no children of his own and leaves everything behind with only the promise of land, family, and fame to come from God. While Abram does not know the end of the story, we get the privilege of seeing God's plan prevail against all perceived odds. The verses we read from Hebrews 11 prove that God holds true to his word. Abraham is one of the most famous, well-known Old Testament characters, and God not only makes his name great, he also includes Abraham in the bloodline from which the coming Messiah will be born.

1. It takes courage to leave everything you know and love to follow where God calls you. What does Abram's obedience teach you about faith in God?
2. What do the passages from today's reading teach you about God's character?

W1, DAY 2

Genesis 12:4–9

⁴ So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶ Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷ Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the Lord, who had appeared to him. ⁸ After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the Lord, and he worshiped the Lord. ⁹ Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Hebrews 11:12–15

¹² And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

¹³ All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. **They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.** ¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back.

Reflection

God promised Abram that his family would be made into a great nation. Yet, he is 75 years old with no son to carry on the bloodline. Then, the land that God promises him is occupied by another nation known for being enemies to God's people. From a human perspective, the odds do not seem to be in Abram's favor, but God made a promise, and that is enough for Abram to continue to trust him. In his time of wandering, Abram sets up an altar and shows obedience by offering sacrifices for his sin, submitting himself to God's authority, and worshiping God. Abram does not have a place to physically call home, but he is resting in God's promise of what is to come. This is exactly how we are called to live today—as exiles in this world, waiting for our home with Jesus in Heaven. We, too, have been promised a new home that is far better than anything we can imagine.

1. Name a time in your life when God was faithful to care and provide for you or someone you know in a difficult circumstance.
2. How does the promise of Heaven shape the way that you live today?

W1, DAY 3

Romans 4:13–25

¹³ Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴ If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. ¹⁵ For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

¹⁶ So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

¹⁸ **Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations.** For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have!" ¹⁹ And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb.

²⁰ Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. ²² And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³ And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded ²⁴ for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

Reflection

“Even when there was no reason to hope, Abraham kept hoping.” We worship a God who does not always make sense to us, but we also worship a God who is powerful and true to his word. The odds were stacked against Abram to be who God said he would be, but that was no match for the plan God had for this family. It was by faith that Abraham gained an inheritance so great that the whole world would stand to benefit. Now, thousands of years later, we get to reap the blessings of Abraham’s faith. God’s plan was so much greater than Abraham could have ever imagined. Over the course of this study, we will read how the journey wasn’t easy at times, but Abraham did not waver in his belief, and his faith grew through the trials.

1. What does Abraham’s faith teach you about a life of following Jesus?

2. What promises within this passage are for believers?

» What do those promises mean to you personally?



WEEK 2, DAY 1

Genesis 12:10–20

¹⁰ At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹ As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, “Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’ ¹³ So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you.”

¹⁴ And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai’s beauty. ¹⁵ When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶ Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷ **But the Lord sent** terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. “What have you done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?”

¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!” ²⁰ Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Reflection

What an odd story, right?

It seems like a small side story in the grand scheme of what God is doing, but remember the passage we read from Romans last week? Abraham's faith grew over a lifetime of learning, not in an instant. Over the next several passages, we are going to see how Abram desires control and tries to take matters into his own hands. In this case, Abram's lie seems like a means of survival, but it is actually him not trusting God to take care of him and his family in unknown land. As the story unfolds, Abram's deception causes other people harm. Time and time again, Abram will fall short, but God's plan will prevail. Abram will see firsthand the goodness and faithfulness of God despite his own sin, which is why Romans 4 tells us that his faith grew over time, but all glory belonged to God.

1. How have you tried to take matters into your own hands and manipulate a situation to get a certain outcome?
2. What is something in your life currently that you are controlling and need to give over to God?

W2, DAY 2

Genesis 13:1–18

So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned.² (Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.)³ From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before.⁴ This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the Lord again.

⁵ Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents.⁶ But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together.⁷ So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸ Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives!⁹ The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.”

¹⁰ Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

¹¹ Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram.¹² So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain.¹³ But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the Lord.

¹⁴ After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west.¹⁵ I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession.¹⁶ **And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted!**

¹⁷ Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸ So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the Lord.

Reflection

Ironically, Abram and his family end up exactly where they were before. Instead of staying and letting God provide, they moved everything they had all the way to Egypt and back. Now, as Abram gets back to living in tents in this foreign land and worshiping at the altar, Lot begins to cause trouble. In Genesis 12:1, God commands Abram to leave his land and family behind, yet Abram chooses to bring his nephew along. Partial obedience is not fully trusting God, and now Abram has to deal with the consequences. Once Lot and Abram part ways, God proceeds in his original promise to give Abram land and again promises descendants to fill that land. God has given direction and Abram responds with full obedience as he trusts in God's promises.

1. What is an example of a time you partially obeyed?

» What were the consequences?

2. For Abram, settling down was a way to respond in faith to God's promises. What are ways for you to respond to God as a sign that you trust him?

» Example: You are anxious about a test result or making a sports team. Instead of staying up all night stressing about the result, you pray and ask God to give you peace no matter the outcome and then you go to sleep knowing there is nothing you can do about it now.

W2, DAY 3

Galatians 3:1–9

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.² Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ.³ How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?⁴ Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it?

⁵ I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

⁶ In the same way, “**Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.**”⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God.

⁸ What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, “All nations will be blessed through you.”⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

Luke 1:46–55

⁴⁶ Mary responded,

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,

and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy,

and he has done great things for me.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy from generation to generation

to all who fear him.

⁵¹ His mighty arm has done tremendous things!

He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

⁵²He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

⁵⁵**For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever."**

Reflection

Why does a study on Abraham impact our lives today?

The promises God made to Abram in the Old Testament still benefit us today. Those promises were just the beginning of a plan God had to make a way for Jesus to come. Today, we read a part of Luke 1 where Mary is rejoicing over the news that she will be the mother to Jesus. Mary knew that this baby was the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abram. He promised blessings for thousands of generations to come through this family bloodline, and now as Jesus comes, his life will bring about the blessing of salvation for the world. That is how the story of Abram impacts us too. Being the children of Abraham, as Galatians says, is a wonderful gift to us. We, too, get the benefit of righteousness when we put our faith in God.

1. How have you seen Jesus be a blessing in your own life?

2. What have you learned so far about the life of Abram?

» What connections have you made about his life in the Old Testament and the impact it made on the New Testament?



WEEK 3, DAY 1

Genesis 14:1-24

About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim² fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

⁵One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea. ⁹They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹²They also captured Lot—Abram’s nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

¹³But one of Lot’s men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram’s allies.

¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer’s army until he caught up with them at Dan. ¹⁵There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer’s army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

¹⁷After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).

¹⁸ And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. ¹⁹ Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

**“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.”**

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies for you.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

²² Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’ ²⁴ I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

Reflection

Abram went to extreme lengths to rescue his nephew Lot after he was captured. He willingly risked his men and his resources to go and save Lot. So far in studying Abram, we have watched his character develop little by little. In this story, Abram’s loyalty is on display as he takes on the personal risk to save someone he cares about. As a result, many people get to see God at work. Melchizedek comes not only to bless Abram, but he acknowledges God’s work in his life as well. Abram goes to great lengths to keep his name clear and his character in good standing so that all that encounter him will ultimately praise God’s name.

1. What does Abram’s decision to rescue Lot, despite the personal risk, reveal about his character and faith?
2. Is your character one that people would say points them to God?
 - » In what ways can you develop your character to reflect more of God to others around you?

W3, DAY 2

Genesis 15:1–6

Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “**Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.**”

²But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

⁴Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”

⁶**And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.**

Reflection

"And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith."

We have come a long way since Genesis 12 where Abram ran away to Egypt because he didn't think God would provide for his family through a famine. Now, Abram rests fully in God's promise that he will provide a son for his family bloodline to continue.

At this point, Abram has left behind everything and everyone he knew. He has taken his wife to a foreign land trusting that God will make good on his promises. They've endured hardships and have learned what it means to walk obediently with God. It has been in a place of discomfort that Abram has grown to know the Lord the most. He has had to learn how to live by faith and because of that, the Lord counted him as righteous. Abram's name will be remembered and known for the rest of eternity because he was willing to walk with the Lord even when the circumstances were full of unknown.

1. How are you growing your faith in the Lord?

2. How has comfort been an idol in your life?

» What is a comfort that you need to give up in order to trust the Lord more?

W3, DAY 3

Genesis 15:7–21

⁷Then the Lord told him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

⁸But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?”

⁹The Lord told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. ¹¹Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸**So the Lord made a covenant with Abram** that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River—¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites, and Jebusites.”

Reflection

In Genesis 15, God makes a covenant with Abram that his people will live under for hundreds of years. Later, when Christ comes, God makes a new covenant with his people. Take some time to think about the parallels between the two covenants:

The Old Covenant	The New Covenant
Dependent on God—he made the covenant and upheld the promise	Dependent on God—through Jesus, God takes on the sole responsibility of humanity's redemption
Promise of descendants	New life and family through Jesus
Belief in God counts Abram as righteous	Belief in Jesus counts us as righteous
Bound by the blood of animals	Bound by the blood of Christ
Promised land of Canaan	Promised a new home in Heaven

1. What's significant about God holding up both ends of the covenant himself?
2. Read **Hebrews 6:13–20**. Why do these two covenants matter to us today?



WEEK 4, DAY 1

Genesis 16:1-16

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar.² So Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal.³ So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

⁴ So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who's wrong—you or me!"

⁶ Abram replied, "Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷ The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸ The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied.

⁹ The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." ¹⁰ Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

¹¹ And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), **for the Lord has heard your cry of distress.** ¹² This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."

¹³ Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "**You are the God who sees me.**" She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" ¹⁴ So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

Reflection

A lot happens in 16 verses today. Abram and Sarai take matters into their own hands concerning a son to give Abram the descendants that God had promised. Instead of being patient with God's timing, they want to manipulate the situation to get what they want faster. As a result, there is now division among the women in Abram's life. Out of frustration, and probably jealousy, Sarai runs pregnant Hagar off because of the way that she treats her. Even in the hurt that Hagar feels, the Lord meets her in that moment. The angel prophesies about this son she will have and instructs her to return. God's plans will come to fruition. It is not our job to manipulate to gain a false sense of control. Taking matters into their own hands only got Abram and Sarai into trouble. This child that Hagar conceived will be a cause for hostility for generations to come for God's people.

1. Like Sarai, do you ever try to scheme or manipulate to get what you want?
 - » How has this worked out for you?
2. Hagar named the well "Beer-lahai-roi", which means "well of the living one who sees me." She named it this because God saw her in her difficult circumstances. Do you believe, like Hagar, that God sees you right where you are right now?

W4, DAY 2

Genesis 17:1-27

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ²I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

³At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴“This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful. **Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!**

⁷“I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

⁹Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

¹⁷Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” ¹⁸So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

¹⁹But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will

name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant.²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.²¹ But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."²² When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

²³ On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him.²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised,²⁵ and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen.²⁶ Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day,²⁷ along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

Reflection

Abram, a man living in foreign country.

Abram, a man with a wife who is unable to conceive children.

Abram, a man learning how to live faithfully and patiently with God.

Abraham, a man with a promise from God to have a permanent home, nation, and descendants.

Abram to Abraham is not just a name shift—it is an identity shift. God is giving him a new name, a new purpose, and a new future because of the faith that Abraham has. This life change happens to us too. When we walk with the Lord, we are constantly being made new. He is giving us new desires and a new heart that wants to pursue righteousness. This process is called sanctification. Just as God made a covenant with Abraham, God has also entered into a covenant with Jesus on our behalf. Jesus did what no human could do—he made a way for us to be in right standing with God through his death and resurrection.



Scan here to learn more
about covenants in the Bible.

Reflection Continued

1. Have you seen life change in your relationship with God?

» If yes, what has that looked like?

2. What does God's covenant with Abraham reveal about God's character and faithfulness?

W4, DAY 3

Genesis 18:1–33

The Lord appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ² He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³ “My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴ Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵ And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

⁶ So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” ⁷ Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸ When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹ “Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³ Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴ **Is anything too hard for the Lord?** I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the Lord said, “No, you did laugh.”

¹⁶ Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷ “Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the Lord asked. ¹⁸ “For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.”

²⁰ So the Lord told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹ I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.”

²² The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the Lord remained with Abraham. ²³ Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵ Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn’t do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

²⁶ And the Lord replied, “If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake.”

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke again. “Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”

And the Lord said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there.”

²⁹ Then Abraham pressed his request further. “Suppose there are only forty?”

And the Lord replied, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty.”

³⁰ “Please don’t be angry, my Lord,” Abraham pleaded. “Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?”

And the Lord replied, “I will not destroy it if I find thirty.”

³¹ Then Abraham said, “Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?”

And the Lord replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

³² Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don’t be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?”

And the Lord replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

³³When the Lord had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Reflection

“Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

What God had promised Abraham and Sarah, by human terms, was impossible. Sarah could only see all of the reasons God’s promise was ridiculous. When our desires and our dreams cloud our view of God, it’s easy to laugh and think that God’s promises are impossible. Being a mother was on the forefront of Sarah’s mind, and her time was running out quickly. She wanted Abraham to be a father of a great nation, and she wanted a baby to raise and nurture and to have the many descendants that God had promised them. Time and time again, Sarah tries to take matters into her own hands instead of being patient and trusting that God’s timing is better than her own. We often live the same way. We lose patience waiting on God to move, so we control and manipulate to get what we want. It’s easy to pass judgment on Sarah now because we know the ending, but if we are honest, we are not far removed from what Sarah was feeling.

1. What do you try to control and manipulate?

2. When was a time you lost patience with God and tried to get things on your own terms?



WEEK 5, DAY 1

Disclaimer

Today's Scripture reading is a challenging one. God's Word reflects the reality of our broken world, and we want to read and engage even these difficult stories. However, if sexual trauma or brokenness is a part of your story, we encourage you to talk to a parent, leader, or staff before reading today's Scripture.

Genesis 19:1–38

That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground.² “My lords,” he said, “come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again.”

“Oh no,” they replied. “We'll just spend the night out here in the city square.”

³ But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. ⁴ But before they retired for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. ⁵ They shouted to Lot, “Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!”

⁶ So Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him. ⁷ “Please, my brothers,” he begged, “don't do such a wicked thing. ⁸ Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection.”

⁹ “Stand back!” they shouted. “This fellow came to town as an outsider, and now he's acting like our judge! We'll treat you far worse than those other men!” And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

¹⁰ But the two angels reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door.

¹¹ Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

¹² Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. “Do you have any other relatives here in the city?” they asked. “Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it.”

¹⁴ So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters' fiancés, "Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is about to destroy it." But the young men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵ At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!"

¹⁶ When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful.

¹⁷ When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸ "Oh no, my lord!" Lot begged. ¹⁹ "You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁰ See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don't you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved."

²¹ "All right," the angel said, "I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village.

²² But hurry! Escape to it, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." (This explains why that village was known as Zoar, which means "little place.")

²³ Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. ²⁴ Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵ He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. ²⁶ But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Abraham got up early that morning and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the Lord's presence. ²⁸ He looked out across the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah and watched as columns of smoke rose from the cities like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹ **But God had listened to Abraham's request** and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

³⁰ Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters. ³¹ One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone else. And our father will soon be too old to have children.

³² Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³³ So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁴ The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, “I had sex with our father last night. Let’s get him drunk with wine again tonight, and you go in and have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father.” ³⁵ So that night they got him drunk with wine again, and the younger daughter went in and had intercourse with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁶ As a result, both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their own father. ³⁷ When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites. ³⁸ When the younger daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Ben-ammi. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites.

Reflection

Sometimes Scripture is hard to read. It’s complicated because the events we read about today are dark and disturbing, but we also know that they are a reality of the world we live in. Some of you have experienced the immense pain of sexual abuse and harms. We want you to know that we see you, and we would love to talk to you and process these parts of your story with you. Please, reach out to a leader or staff member if this is you.

Second, we see in 2 Peter 2 that God has the final judgment when it comes to unrighteous living, especially involving sexual sin. God saw the sexual sin and lust of the city men, and he did not allow them to continue in their ways. In this case, God intervened quickly. That does not always happen, but God always sees our hurt. He has dealt with all sin and suffering at the cross, and he will further deal with it in eternity. That should comfort us as well as tell us how seriously God takes sexual sin.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were so corrupt, the Lord felt the need to do away with them completely. Yet the Lord provided a way out for Lot and gave him a way of escape to a nearby town. In the same way that Abram was not willing to stay in one place and allow the Lord to provide, Lot also found himself escaping the town that the Lord had originally provided for safety. In the mountains, his daughters take matters into their own hands and cause generations of trouble between their sons’ lineage and the people of God.

Just as it is important for us to know that God deals with those who cause suffering in our lives, we must also know that our sin has consequences. Lot’s daughters may have been offered up to the men of the city and harm was done to them by their

father, but that does not give them the right to partake in sin themselves. Our job is to trust that God will take care of us and allow him to be the final source of justice.

1. Is there anything at all from today's reading that you need to talk to a parents, leader, or staff member about?
2. What does today's reading teach us about God's character?
3. How has not trusting the Lord fully played out for Abram and Lot so far?
 - » In what ways are you struggling to fully trust the Lord?

W5, DAY 2

Genesis 20:1-18

Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner,² Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, “She is my sister.” So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, “You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!”

⁴But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵Didn’t Abraham tell me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘Yes, he is my brother.’ I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean.”

⁶In the dream God responded, “Yes, I know you are innocent. That’s why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don’t return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die.”

⁸Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹Then Abimelech called for Abraham. “What have you done to us?” he demanded. “What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?”

¹¹Abraham replied, “I thought, ‘This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.’ ¹²And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³When God called me to leave my father’s home and to travel from place to place, I told her, ‘Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.’”

¹⁴Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵Then Abimelech said, “Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live.” ¹⁶And he said to Sarah, “Look, I am giving your ‘brother’ 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared.”

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸ For the Lord had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.

Reflection

Does this story seem familiar?

It should! In week 2 of this study, we read about a similar circumstance in Egypt. In this passage, Abraham and Sarah travel to a new land where they once again lie because of fear of people. Their inability to trust God with their lives gets them in trouble once again. This chapter seemingly focuses on Abraham's disbelief, but despite that, God is clearly protecting and providing in the background. It is evident that the only character who is fully faithful to his word is God. He is committed to his plan even when humans are sinful and unfaithful.

1. Abraham's fear is greater than his trust in God. What in your life are you fearful of?

» How is it difficult for you to trust God when you are afraid of the outcome?

2. What do we learn about God's character in today's reading?

W5, DAY 3

Genesis 21:1–21

The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised.² She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. **This happened at just the time God had said it would.**³ And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴ Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵ Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

⁶ And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷ Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

⁸ When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. ⁹ But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac. ¹⁰ So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”

¹¹ This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. ¹² But God told Abraham, “Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. ¹³ But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”

¹⁴ So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar’s shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. “I don’t want to watch the boy die,” she said, as she burst into tears.

¹⁷ But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, “Hagar, what’s wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸ Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants.”

¹⁹ Then God opened Hagar’s eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, ²¹ and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

Reflection

“The Lord kept his word.”

“At just the time God had said it would.”

The life of Abraham, up to this point, has been a lot of ups and downs. Abraham was given a promise, and since then, he has spent many years half obeying, not trusting, or living in fear of the unknown. But from the very beginning, God has been nothing but faithful to the promise he made with Abraham in Genesis 12. Now, the biggest promise yet—the birth of a son—is fulfilled. In this time, a son would have guaranteed the family bloodline to continue on. A son would be the provision and protection for the next generation to come. It was an act that only God could do. Yet, with the new blessing, comes tension and Sarah demands that Ismael and Hagar be sent away. Abraham and Sarah’s actions years ago had consequences. Once again, while the men and women of this story may be sinful and broken, God still proves to be faithful and good.

1. How does Sarah’s reaction to Isaac’s birth reflect her journey of faith?
2. What does today’s reading teach us about God’s character?
3. What role does patience play in Sarah’s story?



WEEK 6, DAY 1

Genesis 21:22–34

²² About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. “God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do,” Abimelech said.

²³ “Swear to me in God’s name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner.”

²⁴ Abraham replied, “Yes, I swear to it!” ²⁵ Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech’s servants had taken by force from Abraham’s servants.

²⁶ “This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Abimelech answered. “I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before.”

²⁷ Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. ²⁸ But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. ²⁹ Abimelech asked, “Why have you set these seven apart from the others?”

³⁰ Abraham replied, “Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well.” ³¹ Then he named the place Beersheba (which means “well of the oath”), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

³² After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. ³³ Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and **there he worshiped the Lord, the Eternal God.** ³⁴ And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

Reflection

The word is spreading about God's faithfulness in Abraham and Sarah's lives. In Genesis 21, Abimelech offers a peace treaty with Abraham because it is obvious the power of God is not something Abimelech ever wants to be in opposition with. Later, in Genesis 26, this same exact treaty happens again for Isaac, Abraham's son. Abimelech actually has a correct view of God and his people in both cases. Because he fears God, he acknowledges his power and gives proper respect for him. God is protecting his people, and in the process, the world will see that he is not someone you want to be up against. Time and time again, God proves that he will do exactly what he said that he would.

1. Why does Abimelech fear God and God's people?
2. Why does the proper view of God matter to our relationship with him?

W6, DAY 2

Genesis 22:1–24

Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

² "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

³ The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. **We will worship there, and then we will come right back.**"

⁶ So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷ Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

⁸ "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. ¹¹ At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

¹² "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the Lord will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

¹⁵ Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶ “This is what the Lord says: **Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that** ¹⁷ **I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies.** ¹⁸ **And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.**”

¹⁹ Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

²⁰ Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor’s wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. ²¹ The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), ²² Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. ²³ (Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, ²⁴ Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Reflection

Genesis 22 is a big turning point in Abraham’s relationship with God. God has always been faithful to his promises and provided a way for Abraham, but now, we get to witness Abraham walk obediently with the Lord through a significant moment. This is not a story of halfway obedience. This time, Abraham is willing to trust God all the way.

How does someone have a faith like this?

This kind of faith is cultivated over time. God’s faithfulness has proven to be steadfast and true. There is no doubt in Abraham’s mind that God will provide. God had made promise after promise, and doubting God only ever got him into trouble. While we know the end of the story, Abraham didn’t. Full obedience meant possibly killing his own son, and yet, Abraham knows that God will not fail him. His faith is rooted in confidence.

1. When was a time the Lord asked you to give something up?

» What was the result of your willingness (or lack thereof) to give up that dream, sin, possession, etc?

2. What did you learn about God's character from today's reading?

W6, DAY 3

Genesis 23:1–20

When Sarah was 127 years old,² she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders,⁴ “Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial.”

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham,⁶ “Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way.”

⁷Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites⁸ and said, “Since you are willing to help me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar⁹ to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family.”

¹⁰Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as the others listened, speaking publicly before all the Hittite elders of the town.¹¹ “No, my lord,” he said to Abraham, “please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead.”

¹²Abraham again bowed low before the citizens of the land,¹³ and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. “No, listen to me. I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there.”

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham,¹⁵ “My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth 400 pieces of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead.”

¹⁶So Abraham agreed to Ephron’s price and paid the amount he had suggested—400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard. The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

¹⁷So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees.

¹⁸It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate.¹⁹ Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron).²⁰ So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

Reflection

God had promised Abraham land for his family to prosper in, but up to this point, they have been living as foreigners. When Sarah dies, Abraham wants to protect his family's burial process, so through a series of negotiations, he ends up buying a piece of land in Canaan. This is significant because there is now physical ownership of land that God said would belong to Abraham one day. Generations to come of Abraham's family will also be buried here. Slowly and steadily, we are watching the promises that God made come to life.

1. When was a time in your life you had to be patient with the Lord's timing?

» How did that impact your faith?

2. Why does Abraham's reputation among the foreign nations matter?

- » We are called to live in the world, but not be like the world. That means that our reputation and how we represent God matters. In what ways do you do this well?

- » What are ways you could do this better?



WEEK 7, DAY 1

Genesis 24:1–27

Abraham was now a very old man, **and the Lord had blessed him in every way.**² One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, “Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh.³ Swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women.⁴ Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac.”

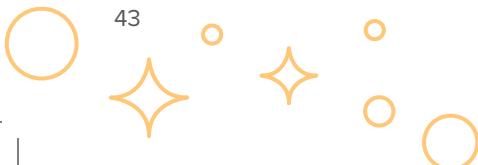
⁵ The servant asked, “But what if I can’t find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?”

⁶ “No!” Abraham responded. “Be careful never to take my son there.⁷ For the Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants. He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a wife there for my son.⁸ If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there.”

⁹ So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham’s instructions.¹⁰ Then he loaded ten of Abraham’s camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham’s brother Nahor had settled.¹¹ He made the camels kneel beside a well just outside the town. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

¹² “O Lord, God of my master, Abraham,” he prayed. “Please give me success today, and show unfailing love to my master, Abraham.¹³ See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water.¹⁴ This is my request. I will ask one of them, ‘Please give me a drink from your jug.’ If she says, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’—let her be the one you have selected as Isaac’s wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unfailing love to my master.”

¹⁵ Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham’s brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah.¹⁶ Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again.¹⁷ Running over to her, the servant said, “Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.”



¹⁸ “Yes, my lord,” she answered, “have a drink.” And she quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough to drink.” ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw water for all his camels.

²¹ The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the Lord had given him success in his mission. ²² Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets for her wrists.

²³ “Whose daughter are you?” he asked. “And please tell me, would your father have any room to put us up for the night?”

²⁴ “I am the daughter of Bethuel,” she replied. “My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah. ²⁵ Yes, we have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and we have room for guests.”

²⁶ The man bowed low and worshiped the Lord. ²⁷ “Praise the Lord, the God of my master, Abraham,” he said. **“The Lord has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master’s relatives.”**

Reflection

Abraham, firm in his convictions about who Isaac’s wife should be, sends a servant back to his homeland to find a woman to continue the family bloodline. Abraham’s primary concern is that this woman knows God and partners with Isaac to continue in the way of the Lord. In this passage, Abraham’s servant is on a mission that he cares deeply about because of his loyalty to his master. The servant is clear that the Lord will go before him, and what he prays for falls in place before his own eyes. In response, he is filled with worship and praise—God has provided the exact woman Abraham wants for his son. Not only is Abraham’s life marked by faith, but the people around him are too. The servant gets to experience the faithfulness of God now because of Abraham’s faithfulness. This is an example for us to live by. We are also called to live as lights in a world full of darkness so others come to know and experience God through us.

1. What is one step you can take to live in such a way that people see God through you?

2. When things are going well for you, do you respond in praise and worship like the servant does here?

3. Would you consider yourself to be prayerfully dependent on the Lord?

» In what ways do you need to grow in this?

» Who can you talk to who will hold you accountable?



W7, DAY 2

Genesis 24:28–67

²⁸ The young woman ran home to tell her family everything that had happened.

²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who ran out to meet the man at the spring. ³⁰ He had seen the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man had said. So he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. ³¹ Laban said to him, "Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the Lord! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?"

³² So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw for their bedding, fed them, and provided water for the man and the camel drivers to wash their feet. ³³ Then food was served. But Abraham's servant said, "I don't want to eat until I have told you why I have come."

"All right," Laban said, "tell us."

³⁴ "I am Abraham's servant," he explained. ³⁵ "And the Lord has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The Lord has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys."

³⁶ "When Sarah, my master's wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master's son, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ And my master made me take an oath. He said, 'Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ³⁸ Go instead to my father's house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.'

³⁹ "But I said to my master, 'What if I can't find a young woman who is willing to go back with me?' ⁴⁰ He responded, 'The Lord, in whose presence I have lived, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful. Yes, you must find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father's family. ⁴¹ Then you will have fulfilled your obligation. But if you go to my relatives and they refuse to let her go with you, you will be free from my oath.'

⁴² "So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: 'O Lord, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. ⁴³ See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, 'Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.' ⁴⁴ If she says, 'Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too,' let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master's son.'

⁴⁵ “Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ ⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’ So I drank, and then she watered the camels.

⁴⁷ “Then I asked, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁴⁸ “Then I bowed low and **worshiped the Lord. I praised the Lord**, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master’s niece to be his son’s wife. ⁴⁹ So tell me—will you or won’t you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I’ll know what to do next.”

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The Lord has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say. ⁵¹ Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has directed.”

⁵² When Abraham’s servant heard their answer, he bowed down to the ground and worshiped the Lord. ⁵³ Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothing and presented them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive presents to her brother and mother. ⁵⁴ Then they ate their meal, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight.

But early the next morning, Abraham’s servant said, “Send me back to my master.”

⁵⁵ “But we want Rebekah to stay with us at least ten days,” her brother and mother said. “Then she can go.”

⁵⁶ But he said, “Don’t delay me. The Lord has made my mission successful; now send me back so I can return to my master.”

⁵⁷ “Well,” they said, “we’ll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks.” ⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah. “Are you willing to go with this man?” they asked her.

And she replied, “Yes, I will go.”

⁵⁹ So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham’s servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah’s childhood nurse went along with her. ⁶⁰ They gave her this blessing as she parted:

“Our sister, may you become
the mother of many millions!
May your descendants be strong
and conquer the cities of their enemies.”

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham's servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

⁶² Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi. ⁶³ One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming. ⁶⁴ When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel. ⁶⁵ "Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?" she asked the servant.

And he replied, "It is my master." So Rebekah covered her face with her veil. ⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

Reflection

The faithfulness of God continues as we read the rest of Genesis 24. As Rebekah prepares to leave her family, they prophesy over her about her descendants. Saying yes to the Lord provides Rebekah with the opportunity to be a part of a story much bigger than herself. God's plans will always prevail, but there is so much for us to learn and be a part of in the process. Abraham's descendants will be great and many because God has promised that, but Rebekah gets to be part of that because of her willingness to go and her family's willingness for her to leave. The same is true for us. God's plans will prevail, but he gives us the opportunity to be part of those plans and if we are willing to say yes, he promises a multitude of blessings to come.

1. In what ways have you said "yes" to God in your own life?

2. How has saying "yes" to God been hard for you?

W7, DAY 3

Genesis 25:1–11

Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah.² She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.³ Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummmites.⁴ Midian's sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

⁵ Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. ⁶ But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

⁷ Abraham lived for 175 years, ⁸ and he died at a ripe old age, having lived **a long and satisfying life**. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death.⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite.¹⁰ This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah.¹¹ After Abraham's death, **God blessed his son Isaac**, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

Reflection

This chapter marks the end of Abraham's life. Isaac and Ishmael both are there to bury their father. Later, they will become two separate nations—one will be established as God's people, and the other will live in open hostility towards God's people. While Abraham's life is filled with ups and downs, it is marked by faith. He trusted the Lord to come through on his promises, and he got to see the goodness and faithfulness of God up close.

1. Write down 3-4 ways you've seen God fulfill promises he made to Abraham throughout his life, and take note of what that teaches you about God's character.



2. How have you seen the Lord work through the life of Abraham?

» How did you see Abraham grow as he walked in faith with the Lord over time?

» What did you learn about obedience in Abraham's life?



