

Bible Stories for Adults

God Makes a Covenant with Abram

Genesis 12 - 22

Opening

Gathering: What faith lessons have you learned from your parents and/or passed on to your children?

Today's Focus: We are heirs by faith of the great promises that God made to Abraham and guaranteed through Jesus.

Key Verses: *Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.* Genesis 15:6

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
Galatians 3:29

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Father of the Jews? (*Galatians 3*)

Who did the Jews consider as their father?

Joshua 24:3 = Abraham

What, if any, relationship do Christians have with Abraham?

Galatians 3:6-7 = Abraham is our father – our spiritual father

Why is it important that we are officially considered to be children of Abraham?

Galatians 3:26-29 = As children of Abraham, we are heirs to the promise

What does it mean to be heirs of Abraham's promise?

Galatians 3:10-14 = Christ took our curse so we could receive Abraham's blessing by faith

Abram's Family Tree (*Genesis 11:27-32*)

Who were the members of Abram's family? = Put Family Tree on board

Genesis 11:27-29 = Don't complete Sarai-Terah line

How was Abram related to Sarai other than marriage?

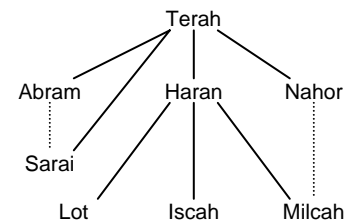
Genesis 20:12 = His half-sister, Complete Tree

Did this family stay in Ur of the Chaldeans?

Genesis 11:31-32 = Terah, Abram, Lot and Sarai left Ur for Canaan and settled in Haran

Ur = Center of Sumer (southern Iraq), 1st great civilization. Modern, wealthy, advanced city

Haran = 600 miles from Ur (Turkey), Different Hebrew spelling than Abram's brother



The Call (*Genesis 12:1-3*)

Did God want this family to stay in Haran?

Genesis 12:1 = No, God told Abram to leave everything he knew and follow Him

What did God promise Abram in response for his obedience? = Make name great

Genesis 12:2-3 = *I will bless you...you will be a blessing...all the peoples of the earth*

How are all nations blessed through Abram?

Matthew 1:1, 17 = Jesus descended from David, who descended from Abraham

Galatians 3:8-9 = We are blessed with righteousness through faith

Was Abram selected because he was righteous or devout?

Joshua 24:2 = No, his family worshipped idols

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Abram's Response (*Genesis 12:4-6*)

What was Abram's response to God's call?

Genesis 12:4 = Abram left, 75 yrs old

How was he able to leave everything he knew at such an old age?

Hebrews 11:8-10 = *By faith Abraham obeyed and went, he didn't know where he was going*

What questions, explanations and details did Abram ask of God?

Genesis 12:5-6 = None (Not Where, When, How or Why), He just obeyed

Why is it so important that we obey God's commands?

John 14:23 = It shows our love for God, He comes and lives with those who love Him

Another Promise (*Genesis 12:7-8*)

What new promise did God give after Abram obeyed His first command?

Genesis 12:7a = Promise of land of Canaan to Abram's offspring

Why was *offspring* a significant part of God's promise?

Genesis 11:30 = Sarai was barren (*Genesis 12:4 - Abram was 75 yrs old*)

How could someone so old become a father?

Hebrews 11:11-12 = *By faith Abraham became the father of multitudes*

Was it any easier for Abraham to have this faith than for us?

Romans 4:18-24 = No, he had hope and faith against all hope, though as good as dead

Was God giving this land to Abram at this time? = Abram had no land

Acts 7:5 (*Hebrews 11:13-16*) = God promised to descendants although Abram had no kids

How did Abram show his faithfulness to God?

Genesis 12:7b-8 = Built altars and worshipped God

Promises to Abraham (*Genesis 12-25*)

What promises did God make to Abram when He called him? = Write on board

Genesis 12:2-3 = great nation, bless you, name great, be a blessing, all blessed through you

What was Abraham's responsibility under this agreement? = Separate column

Genesis 12:1 = Leave and follow God

What did God promise after Abram let Lot choose his land? = Add to board

Genesis 13:14-16 = All visible land, offspring like dust of the earth

What did God promise Abram after he rescued Lot and gave a tithe? (*Gen 14*) = Add to board

Genesis 15:1 = I am your shield (protect you) and great reward (bless you)

Genesis 15:13-14 = Descendants will be slaves 400 years but will return with great wealth

Genesis 15:15-16 = Long life, peaceful death, descendants will return

Genesis 15:18 = Land from Brook of Egypt (Wadi, SW of Gaza) to Euphrates

What promise did God make the year before Isaac was born, when Abram was 99 years old?

Genesis 17:6-8 = Father of many nations and kings, eternal covenant, all Canaan

What promise did God make to Abraham after he obeyed the command to sacrifice Isaac?

Genesis 22:16-18 = Descendants as stars in sky and sand on seashore; all nations blessed

What did Abraham have to do in order to receive these promises? = Add under second column

Genesis 15:6 = Have faith, believe – Compare the two lists, same for us

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Blood Covenant

- Absolute and Unbreakable guarantee of a man's word; Bound two parties together as one
 - Very serious and solemn - Reserved for only special and critical agreements
- Three large animals split down the spine
 - Halves placed on the ground opposite each other
 - Trail of blood between the halves was called *the Way of Blood*
 - May this happen to me if I break this covenant*
- Parties exchanged coats - exchange of authority, *What I have is yours*
 - Exchanged weapons - *My strength is yours, Your enemies are mine*
 - Walked twice through *the Way of Blood*
 - Met each other in the center
 - Stated pledges of agreement - *the Blessing of the Covenant*
 - Curse for breaking the covenant was pronounced
 - Parties swore by their god, making him a third party
- Cut hands and wrists - *the Cut of the Covenant*
 - Bound wrists together to intermingle the blood
- Joined names together
- Ate a covenant meal of bread and wine together (Bread for flesh, wine for blood)
 - Represented willingness to lay down lives for each other

God's Covenant with Abram (Genesis 15)

- How did God guarantee his covenant with Abram?
 - Genesis 15:8-11 = God had Abram prepare a blood covenant
- Did both Abram and God walk through *the Way of Blood*?
 - Genesis 15:12, 17 = No, only God did; One-sided covenant
- What was significant about the *smoking firepot* and *flaming torch*?
 - Exodus 13:21 (Exodus 3:2; 19:18; Acts 2:3) = God with Israelites in pillars of cloud and fire
- How did God guarantee His covenant with us?
 - Hebrews 7:22 = Jesus is the guarantee of the better covenant
- How did Jesus act as *the Way of Blood*?
 - Hebrews 9:12 = Not by blood of goats and lambs but by his own blood

God Confirms His Covenant (Genesis 17:1-8)

- What did God do around 15 years later to remind Abram of His covenant?
 - Genesis 17:1-2 = Confirmed His covenant, Would greatly increase Abram's numbers
- Why did God change Abram's name to Abraham? = Right to give name belonged to the owner
 - Genesis 17:3-5 = *for I have made you a father of many nations*
 - Abram / Abraham* = Mean *the (my) father is exalted / father of many*
- What was Abraham's responsibility under this covenant? = *circumcise* means *to cut off*
 - Genesis 17:9-10, 14 = All males circumcised, visible sign reminding Israel of special calling
- How long did it take Abraham to complete what God commanded?
 - Genesis 17:23 = *On that very day*

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Justified by Circumcision? (*Romans 4*)

Was Abraham justified (deemed righteous) and blessed because of his circumcision?

Romans 4:9-11a = Abraham was righteous by faith, before he was circumcised

Are God's promises to Abraham's descendants only to the Jews (circumcised)?

Romans 4:11b-12 = Promises to those of faith, not circumcised

How did Abraham receive the promise? By obeying the law?

Romans 4:13-15 = No. Through the righteousness that comes by faith

How can we be heirs to the promises God made to Abraham?

Romans 4:16-18 = Promise comes by faith; Abraham is father of the faithful in God's sight

How can righteousness be credited to us?

Romans 4:22-25 = Righteousness will be credited to those who trust in Christ

God's Covenant Through Sarah (*Genesis 17:15-16*)

Why did God change Sarai's name to Sarah? = Name change indicates change point in life

Genesis 17:15-16 = Mother of nations and kings

Sarai / Sarah = Mean Haran moon goddess / *princess* (royalty would come from her)

How did this differ from Abraham's understanding of God's plan?

Genesis 17:17-18 = He thought God would fulfill promises thru Ishmael

Why did God wait until Abraham and Sarah were old before bringing Isaac? = Isaac - *he laughs*

Genesis 17:19 = Only possible by God, Ishmael from Abraham taking matters in his own hand

How had God introduced Himself to Abram, and why?

Genesis 17:1 = *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), total control over nature, inc Sarai's barrenness

Jeremiah 32:27 = *I am the Lord ... Is anything too hard for me?*

What is the significance of circumcision having been instituted before Isaac?

Colossians 2:11-12 = Chosen to be *cut off* from sinful world before covenant child comes

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. Do I live in the faith and righteousness of my faith-forefather Abraham?
(*Genesis 15:6; John 8:31-42; Romans 4:13-25; Galatians 3:6-9; Hebrews 11:8-19; James 2:20-24*)
2. Am I building a legacy of faith for those who will follow me?
(*Genesis 12:1-5; Deut. 6:4-9; Joshua 24:2-3; Matthew 23:1-13; Romans 4:1-3; 1 Cor. 4:14-16*)
3. Have I listened and heard God's call to me?
(*Genesis 12:1-3; 1 Samuel 3; Matthew 13:11-16; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 1:5-7*)
4. How have I responded to the call God has given to me?
(*Genesis 12:4; Exodus 3:1-4:18; Isaiah 6:8; Luke 10:1-4; Romans 11:29; Ephesians 4:1-13*)
5. What promises of God have I seen fulfilled?
(*Genesis 8:22; 15:5-6; Psalm 145:13; Romans 4:16; 2 Cor. 1:20; Hebrews 11:13-16; 2 Peter 3:8-9*)