

# THE GOD WHO PROMISES

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM  
GENESIS 12-22

## The Call of Abraham - Genesis 12:1-9

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*(Leaders, please use these questions as a guide for discussion. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)*

#### Warm-Up

1. If you had to leave your home tomorrow with no clear destination, what's the one thing (besides people) you'd struggle most to leave behind?
2. Who is someone you deeply trust, and what is it about their words and actions that has built that trust over time?

#### RECAP

3. Looking at Genesis 4–11 (Cain, the flood, Babel), what pattern of human behaviour do you notice?
4. Why is it surprising that God doesn't abandon humanity after Genesis 11? What does this reveal about his character?

#### Read Genesis 12:1-3

5. What is God asking Abram to leave behind? Why would this have been difficult?
6. What do God's promises to Abram reveal about God's plan for the world?
7. Which part of the promise (nation, blessing, global blessing) stands out most to you, and why?
8. Why is Abram an unlikely choice for God's plan (see 11:27–30)? What does this show about how God works?
9. How do these promises begin to answer the problems introduced in Genesis 1–11?
10. How are these promises ultimately fulfilled in Jesus? (Consider Galatians 3:13–14, 29)

#### Read Genesis 12:4-9

11. How does Abram respond to God's call? What stands out about his faith?
12. What risks or uncertainties would Abram have faced in obeying God?
13. What does Abram's worship (building altars) reveal about his relationship with God?
14. In what areas of your life is God calling you to trust him more deeply right now?
15. How can we be sure that God is completely trustworthy so far in our series in Genesis?
16. What is one specific promise of God you find hard to believe or live out? How could you intentionally act on that promise in a practical way?
17. Where in your life are your actions not fully lining up with your stated trust in God? What might it look like to begin to close that gap this week?

**PRAY:** *Faithful God, you speak and keep every promise. Forgive our weak trust and divided hearts. Help us to take you at your word, to obey with courage like Abraham, and to fix our eyes on Jesus. Grow our faith, shape our lives, and make us a blessing to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**TITLE:** The Call of Abraham

**PASSAGE:** Genesis 12:1-9

**LOCATION:** St John's Wishart 9AM

**BI:** God intervenes in the sinful world by promising blessing through Abraham fulfilled in Jesus

**AIM:** See how faithful God is. This awe should lead us into radical obedience to him.

**STRUCTURE:**

- Gen 1-11
- 12:1-3: The Call and Promise
- 12:4-9: The Response
  
- Rach and I enjoy watching a TV show called survivor.
- It's a reality TV show, where 24 contestants get put on an island, split into two tribes, made to make a camp themselves, forced to compete against each other in challenges, vote one person off the island every other day, and the last person standing gets half a million dollars and the title of sole survivor.
- It's really quite the social experiment and each new season brings new people with different personalities.
- But the question that remains the same throughout every series is "How do you know you can trust someone in the game?"
- In a game when you're all competing for this title and the money and only one can win, how do you know that you can trust someone? How do you know if they are your friends, or if they are just playing you like a fiddle to get their ends met?
  - People say that trust is earned - that people need to prove that they are good on their word
  - People say that trust is just a 'gut-feeling' - it's almost indescribable - it's just the gut feeling of it all!
  
- But even outside of the game of survivor, how do we know that we can trust someone in our lives?
  - The super cynical or paranoid will probably say - you can't trust anyone!
  - The naive will probably say - you can trust anyone!
- But at the end of the day, we can only really trust someone by their words and if their actions back up their words.
  - I know that I can trust Rachel my wife, because that's what we agreed on our Wedding day, when we made our promises to one another - our vows - our covenant with one another
  - But it's not just her words, but her actions back these words up completely!
  - And I know that Rach trusts me - because of the same things - words and actions that back up those words
  - But the thing is - I know that I'm not perfect. I know that I can be selfish, short, and all sorts of things! I know that my actions don't always back up my words!
  
- But how do we know that we can trust God?
- In short, trust is taking God at his word and acting on it - how do we know that we can do this?
- Well - same thing, we can look at what God has done in history, and see if his actions back up his words.
- And the amazing news is that God has given us a record of what he has done throughout history in the bible!
- The bible isn't a random collection of sayings, it's not the musings of an enlightened person who has stared at his belly-button for too long, it's not even a rule book!
- The bible is one big story of the goodness, love, glory, justice, power, and sovereignty of God, that all centres on Jesus Christ.

- Every page gives us a fresh glimpse, a different angle, another piece in the tapestry - and when we take a step back - and look back at what God says and what God does we can see that they completely and utterly match up.
- And so the only conclusion - is that God is totally worthy and deserving of our trust and our praise.
- And so that's why over the next 8 weeks, we are going to be looking at Genesis 12-22 and the call and promises to Abraham.
- These chapters contain the most foundational promises not only to Abraham or even to Israel, but to the whole world - you and me here today 2000 years later!
- And these chapters show the faithfulness of God.
- He's a God who speaks and what he speaks happens even in the most unlikely of circumstances.
- And comes through on his promises all in his son Jesus.
- Which means, he is completely deserving of our trust.
- But let's orient ourselves.
  
- **Gen 1-11**
- We're in the book of Genesis and we're launching into chapter 12.
  
- But looking back a bit - In Chapters 1-2 - God created the heavens and the earth just by his word! He created women and men in his own image and it was very good!
  - Humanity had a perfect relationship with God. It was perfect!
- However, it didn't stay that way for long as in Chapter 3 - humanity rejected God.
  - Adam and Eve disobeyed God.
  - So instead of experiencing the blessings of living with God in the garden - God tells them that they'll experience the curses.
  - Because of their disobedience, there'll be a fractured relationship with God; fractured relationships with one another, and a fractured relationship with creation.
  - BUT it wasn't without hope.
  - God still kept them alive firstly! But also promised to them that there would come a person who will crush evil. Crush the serpent's head who deceived them.
- But the very next generation turned to murder and it didn't take long for humanity to completely reject God, so much so that he sent the flood to wipe them all out apart from one family.
- Noah was chosen to build the ark, keep humanity alive and the animals - but he wasn't the one to crush the serpent's head. He too was sinful - as was his family.
  
- And then in chapter 11 - humanity tried to build a tower to make a name for themselves. To try and exult themselves, to try and be better than God!
- And so God confused their language. People were dispersed. Still no one has come to crush the head of the serpent.
- But rather, it seems that people kept on listening to the serpent, listening to the evil one rather than God.
- Even after a reboot after the flood - humanity is still the same. Choosing evil over good, selfishness and pride over servanthood, choosing other gods instead of the Lord.
  
- And you wouldn't be surprised to read in the next verses, *that God then destroyed everything and walked away, because humanity was constantly rebelling against him. The experiment didn't work. God will try something else.*
- BUT that's not what happens.
- What we see is God's amazing grace and faithfulness to his creation and us - his image bearers.
- God is going to raise up a nation, a people group for himself. Who will show off what it means to live the blessed life that God designed us to live in relationship with him. Who will live as God's people - and all the other nations should see this nation and want to join and glorify God.

- And this nation was the nation of Israel.
- And the father of this nation? Abraham.
  
- **The Call and the Promise**
- Let's go back to 11:27 "Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child."
- Abram was born in Ur - which is probably in modern day Iraq and around 2000 years BC
- Ur was a city, it was probably wealthy, and had the religion of worshipping a moon-God.
- And he had a wife Sarai - but Sarai couldn't have any children. She was barren.
  
- Who does God choose to launch this plan for his people? This plan for the salvation of the nations?!
- A nobody who lived about 1600km away from the land that he had in store for them. And what's more - is that his wife couldn't have kids!
- And we aren't told anything about what Abram is like, nor what his character is like, or if he's up to the task...
  - We aren't told that Abram was a role model follower of God who had his one hour of quiet time a day...
  - There's nothing at all here that tells us why the Lord chooses him!
  - *He doesn't choose a prince, nor a warrior, not even a woman who can have children!*
  - *But - this is how God works, this is the type of people who God uses. The nobodies, the least, the humble, the lowly!*
  - *The people like us.*
  
- And then calls Abraham.
- 12:1 "Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."
- You know it's easy to read these words and not feel the full impact of them.
- But here the Lord is telling Abram to leave everything behind.
  - Leave your family, leave your household, leave your comfort, leave your house to go where?
  - Well Abram isn't told initially! God just tells him to go to the Land which he'll be shown!
    - *Imagine being told extremely clearly from God, to leave your extended family, your house, your job, your comfort, your airconditioning, your place of birth and just keep on driving west...just keep driving...*
    - *It would be a bit disconcerting wouldn't it!!*
- But this didn't come without a promise to Abram.
- In fact there will be three promises. This is what we'll see is the covenant from God. A deep and big and significant promise.
- 12:2 "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
- Firstly - a great nation.
  - Now this seems unlikely at first because his wife is barren - and also by this point Abram could have been around 75 - as we are told in V4!
  - By all human means and standards - this is just pie in the sky thinking! It's impossible!
  - But this is the promise of God!
- Secondly - blessings upon blessings upon blessings.

- God is going to Bless Abram - with this great nation, with wealth, with his relationship with God.
- And his blessings are going to overflow to others as well! He is going to be a blessing.
- And then - all the families of the earth are going to be blessed.
  - Not just his family is going to be blessed, not just the Israelites are going to be blessed - no IN HIM **ALL** families are going to be blessed.
- Though Abraham - God is going to bless the world - like a return to before the fall.
- These promises seem wild. History changing. Eternity changing! Because they are!
- And what is Abraham going to do with them? How is Abram going to respond to God's call and promises?
- Can Abram trust God and take God at his word?
  
- **The Response**
- V4 "So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan."
- He had faith in the Lord and left everything behind and went to the land of Canaan. The future land and home of his family.
- The journey from Ur (his birthplace) to Harran - about 880km. From Harran to Canaan - about 640km.
- That's a LONG WAY!
  
- What's more - is that there were already people in this land.
  - *I don't know if you've had the experience of going to a open home with the intention of purchasing it?*
  - *You go in, but there's someone else's stuff in it, their beds, their furniture,*
  - *You try and kind of work out where you could put your dining table, imagining your future there...*
- Well - Abram is doing just that for his descendants! Because God gives another promise:
- V7 "Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him."
- Abram goes from North to South to West looking around, but also worshipping the Lord in the midst of the people. Building altars and calling on God's name. Praying to God. Worshipping him.
- It's kind of mind blowing the amount of trust Abram had to go to the land.
  
- He did this all by faith - by trusting in God. By listening to God and taking him at his word:
- Thousands of years later - the preacher would write Heb 11:8 "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going."
- And he had this great trust - even when he didn't clearly know how it was all going to work out.
  
- But for us here in Wishart 4000 years later - we do know how this all works out!
- The great nation of Israel came from Abram and his family! He eventually did have a son and from him came God's chosen people!
- And yes, they did come to inhabit the promised land, the land of Canaan - for a bit anyway.
- And YES - through Abraham, all nations, including us here today, can be blessed.
- You don't have to be a physical descendent from Abraham to receive this blessing from God.
- Because from Abraham and from God's people - came Jesus Christ.
- And it's through Jesus Christ, that we can become Abram's sons and daughters and receive that blessing!

- Paul writes in Gal 3:13-14 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” — so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”
- And then V29 “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”
- God came through on his promises to Abraham through Jesus!
- And if we trust in Jesus, then the effects of the fall and the effects of sin and rebellion against God will be broken - through his death on the cross.
- The serpent’s head has been crushed - on the cross.
- So then,
  - Instead of being under the weight of the curses of our rebellion against God - those who trust in the Lord, will experience the blessing of being right with God, of being called sons and daughters of God.
  - And the joy and blessing of being able to call him our Father - right now and for eternity.
- So then - do you trust God?
  - We’ve heard God’s promises (his word)
  - We’ve seen God’s actions (giving Abraham a family, giving that family a land, and giving blessings to the whole world through his great-grandson Jesus Christ)
- Abraham had almost nothing to go on when he packed up his stuff and went to Canaan... we have so much more evidence today!
- See how faithful God is to his promises to Abraham and throughout history!
- What more could we possibly need?
- No one else’s word is as sure as our Lord’s. No one else is unchangeable as God is.
- No one else is as trustworthy as he is!
  - So then - when he promises to hear our prayers, do we believe him?
  - When he promises that he cares for us and he urges us to cast all our anxieties on him - do we believe him?
  - When he promises that he is with us by his Holy Spirit - do we believe him?
  - When he promises that even if we are persecuted for sharing our faith here, there’s so much more ahead for those who trust in him - do we believe him?
  - When he promises that those who lose family or friends for the sake of his name, will gain so much more - do we believe in him?
  - When he promises that our record of sin is completely gone, shame gone, guilt gone - do we believe him?
  - When he promises that we will rise again even after death - do we believe him!
- When he calls on us to leave everything behind and trust him, Deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him - and then promises that we will gain a blessed eternal real life - do we believe him?
- *If I can be real here with you - lately my actions aren’t matching up with my belief.*
- *My trust seems so feeble. My prayers so small. My eyes focussed down instead of up. My bible reading so routine and almost like a tick-box exercise - not expecting God to speak through his word! My personal evangelism is weak...*
- *The heart of this is relying on and trusting in myself and my own narrative and words - rather than relying on and trusting in God!*
- But my life is a whisper, my words are like dust - but God is eternal and his words are alive and active and his promises are sure!
- I need this reminder from Genesis 12!

- God calls us just as he called Abraham - to leave everything behind and trust him!
- This isn't a blind trust, but a trust that's based on history and historical evidence!
- God is calling you today to trust him. Trust in his covenant and promises to us.
- And we will be blessed with the joy of being one of God's children now and for eternity.