

THE GOD WHO PROMISES

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM
GENESIS 12-22

Abraham in Egypt - Genesis 12:10-20

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!)

Connect: How can we be sure that God is completely trustworthy?

Warm-Up

1. Have you ever tried to “take control” of a situation instead of trusting someone else to handle it? What happened?
2. Why do you think fear so often affects our decision making?

Read Genesis 12:10-13

3. What pressures and fears is Abram facing in this passage?
4. What does Abram’s plan reveal about what or who he is trusting in at this moment?
5. What is notably missing about Abram’s actions (or, more specifically how he made the decision)?
6. Abram had just received God’s promises in chapter 12. In what ways does Abram act as though God is absent or unreliable?
7. Can you think of examples in your own life where fear, insecurity, or distrust in God led you toward sinful responses or poor decisions?

Read Genesis 12:14-20

8. What consequences flow from Abram’s deception?
9. How does this passage shatter an overly idealised view of biblical heroes like Abraham?
10. Why is it encouraging that the Bible honestly records the failures of its major figures?
11. Abram tries to save himself through deception and self-protection. What are some modern ways we try to “save ourselves” instead of trusting God?
12. Why are the words “But the LORD...” so important in this story?
13. How does this passage relate to both the Exodus and Exile? How do these events expand our view of what God is like?
14. Who is it that we are saved through? What are we saved from? How do we receive this salvation?
15. Read Romans 5:8. How should God’s faithfulness to sinners shape the way we respond to our own failures, guilt, and ongoing struggles with sin?

Apply: How can God’s faithfulness to us in Jesus encourage us this week to live for him?

PRAY: *Lord, thank you that your faithfulness does not falter and that you indeed are working out your purposes. Please help us to trust in your promises, be patient in your timing, and quick to seek out your purposes. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

TITLE: The Call of Abraham

PASSAGE: Genesis 12:10-20

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: God is still faithful to us despite our unfaithfulness

AIM: God's promises aren't dependent on how good we are or what we do. We can't earn them or prove ourselves worthy, they are a free gift.

STRUCTURE:

- 10-13 - Abram Doubts
 - 14-16 - Sarai Sold
 - 17-20 - The Lord Rescues
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- Last week, we began our series looking at the story of Abraham.
 - And we saw God's amazing promises and how God came through on his promises in Jesus Christ.
 - Through Jesus, we (as in non-jewish folk) get to be part of these promises and receive these blessings.
 - Primarily, the blessing of a restored relationship with God like it was in the garden of Eden.
 - We get to be called sons and daughters of Abraham!
 - And so we came to the conclusion that if God's word is sure, and God comes through on his promises, then he alone is worthy of our trust and our praise.
 - And if you've grown up in Sunday School, you might have had this song stuck in your head:
 - *Many sons, many sons, many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you so lets all praise the Lord!*
 - It also should be noted that this includes both sons and daughters...but the phrase "Many descendants...many descendants..." doesn't quite fit!
 - And we saw Abraham's amazing trust in the Lord and his promises..going to the unknown land of Canaan and praising and worshipping God there.
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- But if we aren't familiar with the story of Abraham, we might be tempted to have this glowing view of him...
 - That he was the perfect forefather and patriarch of the faith...that he never stumbled..that he was in perfect relationship with God and perhaps he even glowed...roaming around the earth..
 - But today in 12:10-20 - if you have that view, be prepared to have that window pane shattered completely.
 - Because in the very next verses following the ones describing Abram's amazing faith, we see his faith tested and Abram falls quite short.
 - We could adopt the old song to sing:
 - *Father Abraham had many faults...many faults had father Abraham...*
 - But despite Abraham's sinfulness and doubts and faithlessness, our gracious Lord was still faithful to him and is still faithful to *us* despite our sinfulness.
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- **Abram Doubts**
 - Now to give us some context, Abraham has been in the land of Canaan for a while. He's been doing a bit of a tour, checking it out, living as a bit of a nomad in the land with his tent...
 - And the land was good - but it was reliant on rain to grow food.
 - So if there was no rain...there would be no food.
 - And that's what happens to Abraham...it was a bad famine.
 - The author wants us to know that it was bad because he repeats that there was a famine and calls it severe in the second repetition.

- V10 “Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.”
- Now Abram’s response to this life threatening famine was to go to Egypt.
- Egypt wasn’t as reliant on the rain, because they had the river Nile going through it to water their crops and to provide food.
- And so often, nomads would go through it when times were tough.

- Now some people have said that this is the first fault of Abraham...you know if Abraham really trusted God, then he would have stayed in the land...Abraham didn’t really ask God what to do in the face of this!
- But the writer is silent on this and as is God. There’s no real comment on if this was the right or wrong thing to do. After all, the land wasn’t necessarily for Abraham, but for his descendants. So it’s a neutral action..
- But what Abraham does next isn’t so neutral...

- V11 “When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance”
 - Aww isn’t that nice! Abram tells his wife that she is beautiful...how lovely!
 - And remember at this stage, Sarai is probably in her 60’s! So blokes...take note!
 - But let’s read on..
- V12 “and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.”...
 - Oh....Blokes...don’t take note of this part.

- Abram assumes that the Egyptian men are going to want to take Sarai for themselves and kill Abram.
 - There’s no real pattern for this that we can find. Abram didn’t think of this when he entered into the land of Canaan!
 - We’re not sure exactly what’s going through Abram’s head here.
- But his solution is fascinating.
 - He gets Sarai to lie and say that she is his sister. Why? “That it may go well with me!” That Abraham’s life may be spared!
 - Now - this is really only a half lie as we’ll see later on in the series. Sarai is actually his half-sister! And that has with it all other complications...but park it for now and make sure you are here in a few weeks time!
- But he’s really focussed on himself here.
- He wants to save his own backside! And threatened with the possibility of death - he turns to lies and deceptions!
- But even bigger than this - he doubts God’s promises.
 - When put under pressure...he not only doubts God’s promises, he acts as if God doesn't exist!
 - God doesn’t even factor into his thinking!
 - So he tries to take matters into his own hands. And resorts to the tactics of the evil one...lies and deceptions.

- Doubting God’s promises and even forgetting about God can really lead us to do all sorts of things.
- That feeling of insecurity...disatisfaction...uncertainty...unease...unrest...injustice...can lead us to taking matters into our own hands. And this can present itself in so many ways...
 - Lashing out at people...wrangling the truth a bit to make it fit our narrative
- In fact the root of all sin is really doubting God’s promises, goodness, and plan for our lives!

- Adam and Eve were led to doubt God's goodness and so they ate...
- Abram doubted God's protection and forgot about God and let him lie...
- Moses doubted God's goodness and so struck the rock to get water from it...
- David forgot about God's holiness and good design and so slept with Bathsheba, lied to her husband, and then got him killed to save his own backside...
- Can you see the pattern?
 - Distrust in the gospel leads to legalism and religiosity
 - Distrust in God's wisdom leads to folly and foolishness
 - Distrust in God's holiness and design for us leads to sin
 - Distrust in the goodness of God leads to going our own way.
 - We all do this! Don't we! I know I do!
- And let's just be clear - questions about God are fine! Welcomed! We should have questions! But distrust and forgetting about God - that's what got Abram into a mess...and that's what gets us into our tangled messes.
- And so that's why we need constant reminders that God is trustworthy, God is good. His plan for us is perfect...to prod us back into trusting him!
- Because fortunately, as we'll see, despite our unfaithfulness...God is still faithful...
- But before it gets better for Abram...it's going to get worse.
- **Sarai Sold**
 - Now it's possibly the case that in Abram's head, he was just thinking that they'd go into Egypt and Sarai would lie so that they'd be safe...and they'd just go about their business.
 - But as much as he tried to take control and take things into his own hands...things are about to go completely out of control and out of Abram's hands....
 - V14 "When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels."
 - Beautiful Sarah is seen by the King's servants...she's recommended to Pharaoh...and she was taken into his house...that is - she's taken as a wife of Pharaoh.
 - She's become part of his group of women for himself. His harem!
 - She's pretty much become enslaved to Pharaoh, because of course - who could say no to the king whose country is keeping them alive!
 - And Abram gets paid!
 - Abram gets paid in all types of animals and in servants.
 - He traded his wife for safety and finances - all because of the lies and deceptions that stemmed from his distrust of God.
 - Oh how the mighty have fallen. Oh how our feeble attempts to take control and deceive can lead to all types of destruction and tangled messes.
 - And so here's the situation.
 - Abraham is in Egypt, and because of his lies and deceptions, his wife is now Pharaoh's wife in his palace.
 - So what are his options? Storm the palace? A one man raid on Pharaoh's guarded palace to rescue his wife?
 - There are no real good options for him. It's helpless for him.
 - But not for God.
 - Thankfully, the Lord is bigger than us, and more faithful than we realise.
 - He is mighty to save.

- **The Lord Rescues**

- V17 “But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. So Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.” And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.”

- Those are three wonderful words..**But the Lord**...God intervenes.
- Despite Abram’s lack of faith, his distrust, and his forgetfulness of God - God is still faithful to his promises and to his people!
- God sends plagues - probably skin diseases - to Pharaoh and his household...
- Somehow Pharaoh makes the link and grabs Abraham and confronts him asking him “Why have you lied!”
 - Notice how the Egyptian Pharaoh even had more morality than Abraham did!!
- And so Sarai and Abram are sent away - with all they had.
- They left rich! Pharaoh didn’t even want his stuff back...he was probably so afraid of Abraham, he just wanted him gone!!
- The Lord saved his people...and the Lord still saves his people today...no matter their record of sin or morality levels or their faithfulness or unfaithfulness - God is still in the business of pouring out his amazing grace to his people...as he’s been doing throughout history...//

- I wonder if this narrative seems a bit familiar? Sarai enslaved in Egypt, God sent a plague on Pharaoh and his household, God rescued Sarai and Abraham and they left with riches and riches?
- This story is like a mini-exodus!
- Because eventually God’s people (Abraham’s descendants) will find themselves enslaved in Egypt, harshly treated, and in need of rescue. God will send plagues on the Egyptians and eventually, the plague of the firstborn son, God will rescue his people - and God’s people will leave Egypt with riches and spoils!
 - And it wasn’t because they were an impressive bunch of people, the Israelites..they were slaves after all!
 - But it was because of his love for them and his faithfulness to his promises! (Deut 7:7)
- But even after they came to inhabit the promised land and drive out the canaanites [partially] - God’s people were still unfaithful to him. King after King came and they departed further and further away from God - and so God raised up the nation of Babylon to come and smash the land of Judah and take them away from the land again.
- And yet 70 years later, he brought them back into the land. He rescued his people. He loved them. He was faithful to them.
- The exile is described in the prophets like the exodus!
- But that wasn’t the end. Because the return wasn’t exactly triumphant. It wasn’t glamorous. And the people of God were still unfaithful and sinful.
- But God wasn’t done with them yet. He was still faithful.

- And so history was ready. It was just at the right time, that God sent his one and only Son into the world - to rescue his people. His unfaithful people. His stubborn and stiff necked people!
- And they put him to death on the cross. As Jesus was being nailed to the cross - the ultimate act of defiance against God, the ultimate act of unfaithfulness - Jesus cried out “Father forgive them...for they don’t know what they are doing!”
- Because that death wasn’t the end...that death and resurrection was the fulfilment of all of God’s promises to Abraham, and to his people - despite their unfaithfulness - God was and is still faithful to his promises!

- And this is amazing news for us here today - because we can be so unfaithful.
- We can forget God, doubt his goodness, question his character.
- When faced with trials and temptations - we can take things into our own hands and try and weave our way through without God's help!
- And sometimes, we can know God's way, we can know what God wants us to do, but we flat out disobey and disregard him.
- We can be so unfaithful...but God is still faithful.
- Rom 5:8 "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still **sinners**, Christ died for us."
 - Not while we were perfect, not while we were on an upward trend, not while we were in anyway deserving of it...
 - In fact - we were God's enemies!
 - But while we were still unfaithful, distrusting, forgetful, sinners - Christ died for us.
- He rescued us from our slavery to sin and death - not because we were deserving, but because he is loving!
- And so anyone who turns to Christ and asks for forgiveness - can be rescued and reconciled to God!
 - No matter their background or record of sin..
- Because God is faithful. Because God is loving.

- So then - I wonder if we sometimes despair at our unfaithfulness..
 - Maybe our bibles are looking very dusty at the moment...maybe you've been in a season of going through the motions a bit and have forgotten about God...Maybe there's persistent sin in our lives that we just can't shake
 - The temptation is sometimes to wallow in shame and guilt...we might speak words to ourselves that just aren't true! And we might believe the narrative that God doesn't want us...
 - But just as God saved Abram and Sarai while they were in a right mess of lies and deceptions...God has saved us through his son Jesus Christ.
 - He is faithful and just. Loving and kind. Gentle.
 - So yes, we should grieve our sin...but remember the faithfulness of our God.
 - Our sins they are many...but his mercy is more.