

# Abraham: Father of Faith

## Booklet One



Bible Studies from Genesis 12-17



# **Abraham: Father of Faith**

## **Booklet One**

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## **Study 1**

### **Abram's Call – Gen 11:27–12:20**

1. Would other people ever describe you as a risk-taker? Might it ever be appropriate to encourage someone else to take a risk?
  
2. Read Genesis 11:27-32 and draw Abram's family tree. What stands out for you? In which ways do they fall short of the Old Testament ideal for a family? (see Joshua 24:2, Psalm 127:3)
  
3. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and list the promises given by God to Abram. What else is added in v6-7?
  
4. What does God's call of Abram teach us about God's dealings with humanity?
  
5. What reasons might Abram have had to doubt God's promises?

6. How does Abram end up responding in vs 4-9? (see also Hebrews 11:8-12)
7. Read the episode in Genesis 12:10-20. What is Abram fearful of? In light of God's promises, how legitimate is this fear?
8. What was it that caused Abram to stumble? What lessons might there be for us in Abrams failure?
9. Do we learn anything further about God through his actions while Abram is in Egypt?
10. As Christian believers, what promises are given from God to us? (some examples: Romans 10:9; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 1:9). What might it look like to doubt these promises?
11. Identify an area where your faith can be strengthened. What practical steps can be taken to strengthen your trust in God? Pray about it.

## Study 2

### **Abram and Lot – Genesis 13:1–14:24**

1. “Bad company corrupts good character” 1 Cor 15:33. Is this true in your experience?
2. What is the problem faced by Abrams clan in 13:1-7?
3. In what way is Abram’s solution risky?
4. Why does Lot head towards the east? What danger is alluded to in vs 12-13?
5. What lesson might we discern from the story so far? (See also Matt 7:13-14)
6. In what way does God rehearse his promise to Abram in vs 14-18? What challenges would have still been in the way? How does Abram respond to this promise?

7. Read 14:1-12, and do your best to work out who is fighting whom. Maybe try and draw a chart. What piece of information is most important for the story of Abram?

8. Read 14:17-21. How would you describe the contrast between the King of Salem and the King of Sodom? What do you think they want from Abram?

9. Who does Abram side with? Why? (vs 22-24).

10. How ought our life's choices reflect the promises we've received from God? (see Phil 3:12-14; Col 3:1-4; Titus 2:11-14)

Extra Question: What significance does the NT attach to Melchizedek? See Hebrews chapter 7.

### **Study 3**

## **God's reassurance to Abram – Genesis 15:1-21**

1. When was the last time you hung up while placed on hold?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read Genesis 15:1-3. How would you describe the relationship between God and Abram? Do you feel the same freedom to ask questions of God's plan as Abram?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Read vs 4-5. How does God reassure Abram? What pictures of the promised future are available to us?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How does Abram attain righteousness before God (v6)? What does this example teach us about what true religion looks like? See also Rom 4:1-5.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What further question does Abram have for God (vs 7-8)? Does having questions necessarily imply a lack of faith? What questions might you like to ask God regarding his plan?

6. Read vs 9-20. How does God reassure Abram this time around? Would this ceremony have been a neat and clean affair?

7. What blood can we look to in order to gain assurance of God's promises? (Hebrews 9:28)

8. What elements of Old Testament history are outlined in God's foretelling of the future in vs 13-16?

9. How might v16 help us understand the more violent parts of the OT, especially those parts where Israel wields the sword?

10. What habits can we put in place to help us maintain faith in God's promises?



## Study 4

# God's call for a response - Genesis 17:1-27

1. Can you think of any circumstances when you are called to act in response to someone promise?
2. What role has Abram's obedience played in the story so far?
3. Read 17:1-2 What familiar dynamic is presented to us in these opening verses?
4. Vs 3-8. What emphasis do we find in this rehearsal of God's promises?
5. What response did God call forth from Abraham? Is the same physical action required from us today? (Follow this theme through the following: Deut 30:6, Rom 4:9-12)
6. What does v12 teach us about infants and the promises of God?

7. What new information does God give Abraham in vs 19-22 How long will Abraham have waited before the promise of descendants starts to come true? (See Gen 12:4).

8. In what areas of life might you need to show the same patience?

9. What is commendable about Abraham's response in vs23-27?

10. How does this chapter help us to understand the relationship between God's promises and our own obedience to his commands?

## Leader's Notes

### Study 1

## Abram's Call – Gen 11:27-12:20

1. Would other people ever describe you as a risk-taker? Might it ever be appropriate to encourage someone else to take a risk?

*The pastoral goal of these studies is to help people strengthen their trust in God. The idea behind this question is to help people identify any inherent dispositions against taking the risk of faith in God and his plan. Abram overcame this risk, which is the model we are aspiring to.*

2. Read Genesis 11:27-32 and draw Abram's family tree. What stands out for you? In which ways do they fall short of the Old Testament ideal for a family? (see Joshua 24:2, Psalm 127:3)

*Note Sarai's infertility. Joshua 24:2 informs us that Abram's family were worshippers of false Gods. Also Nahor's marriage to his niece. Not strictly forbidden by the Old Testament, but it's skirting close to the edge of what would latter be forbidden by Israelite law.*

3. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and list the promises given by God to Abram. What else is added in v6-7?

*Promises of descendants, of a famous name, of these descendants being a blessing to others, of land.*

4. What does God's call of Abram teach us about God's dealings with humanity?

*That he doesn't wait for us to do something righteous before he calls us. This is an example of grace. Even when Abram was worshipping idols God reached out to him. God operates by grace in both the Old and New Testaments.*

5. What reasons might Abram have had to doubt God's promises?

*Sarai's infertility; the land was already occupied by another people group (12:6); His own age (75!).*

6. How does Abram end up responding in vs 4-9? (see also Hebrews 11:8-12)

*He listens and obeys. He understood that God's promises were trustworthy, and he took action with a major life decision. Note also his response of praise and worship, including the fact that he started to call on the name of the Lord. God's promises lead us to respond in prayerful dependence upon him.*

7. Read the episode in Genesis 12:10-20. What is Abram fearful of? In light of God's promises, how legitimate is this fear? What was it that caused Abram to stumble? What lessons might there be for us in Abrams failure?

*Abram is fearful that he might be killed if recognized as Sarai's husband. He needn't have feared this if God's promises were true. How could he die if he were yet to receive an heir? Interestingly, it was not any doubt about God's character that stopped him from believing, but a fear of humankind is capable of. What we can learn is that obstacles to faith in God can come from different places and at unexpected times. Who would have thought that a mix of famine and his wife's beauty would be the stumbling block!*

8. Do we learn anything further about God through his actions while Abram is in Egypt?

*Note God sticks to the programme of blessing Abram despite Abram's failure. Another example of God's grace. Note also this episode is where Abram's great wealth comes from.*

9. As Christian believers, what promises are given from God to us? (some examples: Romans 10:9; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 1:9). What might it look like to doubt these promises?

*The NT verses here are just for starters. Ask the group for some other examples. Try and get some specific answers here, and point at areas where Christians often deny their belief in God's goodness: relationships, money.*

10. Identify an area where your faith can be strengthened. What practical steps can be taken to strengthen your trust in God? Pray about it.

## Study 2

### **Abram and Lot – Genesis 13:1–14:24**

1. “Bad company corrupts good character” 1 Cor 15:33. Is this true in your experience?

*A question to help us think about the difference between Lot and Abram. Lot's life choices are questionable (hanging out with the Sodomites), while Abram manages to make (most) decisions in light of God's promise to him.*

2. What is the problem faced by Abram's clan in 13:1-7?

*They have too many possessions! A sign of God's blessing already upon this family*

3. In what way is Abram's solution risky?

*What if Lot went right instead of left? That would mean that the promised land of Canaan would have fallen into Lot's hands. We can trust that God's providential hand is at work in Lot's decision.*

4. Why does Lot head towards the east? What danger is alluded to in vs 12-13?

*The land is better for grazing. The danger, however, is that he is coming into the orbit and under the possible influence of Sodom.*

5. What lesson might we discern from the story so far? (See also Matt 7:13-14)

*There is wisdom in choosing the right environment in which to live. Some will be more helpful for godliness than others. Some decisions we make will either help us or hinder our walk as God's people.*

6. In what way does God rehearse his promise to Abram in vs 14-

18? What challenges would have still been in the way? How does Abram respond to this promise?

*A challenge would have been the occupation of the land by other people groups, plus the fact that the better land for building a dynasty was now in Lot's hands. Abram continues to worship God.*

7. Read 14:1-12, and do your best to work out who is fighting whom. Maybe try and draw a chart. What piece of information is most important for the story of Abram?

*The most important piece of information is that Lot was captured!*

8. Read 14:17-21. How would you describe the contrast between the King of Salem and the King of Sodom? What do you think they want from Abram?

*King of Salem: praises God, provides gifts and a blessing upon Abraham. King of Sodom: wants to make a deal where he gains something for himself, even though he owes his rescue to Abram. It would seem that both wish to form some sort of pact with Abram, given he has just proven himself to be a capable armed commander.*

9. Who does Abram side with? Why? (vs 22-24).

*Abram sides with the King of Salem, because in doing so he is really siding with God and remaining dependent upon God for his success. For Abram to side with Sodom would be to start compromising himself*

10. How ought our life's choices reflect the promises we've received from God? (see Phil 3:12-14; Col 3:1-4; Titus 2:11-14)

*God's promises lead us to side and trust in him, and to reject the shiny promises that come our way from evil sources. When we make life's decisions, in whom are we really trusting?*

Extra Question: What significance does the NT attach to Melchizedek? See Hebrews chapter 7.

*Hebrews makes much of this episode in Genesis 14, although the way Hebrews uses this story isn't immediately obvious from what we have in Genesis. Melchizedek is a priest as well as a king, but one that exists as a priest before those that were established in the time of Moses. Hebrews says that Jesus is a priest "in the order of Melchizedek", that is, one who provides atonement for sin apart from the OT system of priests that would come later. Melchizedek is used as a symbol of the salvation provided by Christ as opposed to a salvation supposedly provided by a system of ceremonial sacrifices.*

*How might Hebrew's use of this story fit with the way Melchizedek is used in Genesis? In both books Melchizedek is seen as a symbol of grace. In Genesis he comes out to bestow gifts and blessing upon Abraham in the name of God, while in Hebrews he is seen as an embodiment of the salvation that comes freely to us by Christ's sacrifice.*

### Study 3

## God's reassurance to Abram – Genesis 15:1-21

1. When was the last time you hung up while placed on hold?

*A question to get us thinking about how patient we are. What is becoming clear in this series is just how much Abraham requires patience as he waits for God's promises to come into fruition.*

2. Read Genesis 15:1-3. How would you describe the relationship between God and Abram? Do you feel the same freedom to ask questions of God's plan as Abram?

*God is often reassuring Abraham, and Abram is now starting to ask questions. It's a relationship of both love and honesty.*

3. Read vs 4-5. How does God reassure Abram? What pictures of the promised future are available to us?

*A wonderful picture of God using a beautiful gesture. The pictures that are available to us are those of the age to come; Rev 21-22 comes to mind.*

4. How does Abram attain righteousness before God (v6)? What does this example teach us about what true religion looks like? See also Rom 4:1-5.

*Abram's righteousness credited to him because he has simply believed. True religion is not about racking up a list of good deeds, it's about a believing promises that God tells us. It's heavily relational.*

5. What further question does Abram have for God (vs 7-8)? Does having questions necessarily imply a lack of faith? What questions might you like to ask God regarding his plan?

*What's noticeable about the whole Abraham narrative is that Abraham often has these interactions with God where he asks lots of questions, yet his faith is never questioned by the Biblical authors. Asking God questions is OK!*

6. Read vs 9-20. How does God reassure Abram this time around? Would this ceremony have been a neat and clean affair?

*God enacts a type of ceremony to establish his promises. There would have been lots of blood!*

7. What blood can we look to in order to gain assurance of God's promises? (Hebrews 9:28)

*The blood of Christ! Not only does Christ's blood remove our sins, it's also a sign of God's intention to come good on his promise of salvation*

8. What elements of Old Testament history are outlined in God's foretelling of the future in vs 13-16?

*The enslavement in Egypt, the Exodus, the entry into the promised land under Joshua*

9. How might v16 help us understand the more violent parts of



the OT, especially those parts where Israel wields the sword?

*Some critics of the Bible have an issue with what they call the 'genocide' of the people in Canaan at the hands of the Israelites when Joshua entered the land. But v 16 helps us realise that the people in the land were evil, and the entry of the Israelites into the land was just as much a moment of justice as it was the fulfilment of a promise to Israel.*

10. What habits can we put in place to help us maintain faith in God's promises?

## **Study 4**

### **God's call for a response - Genesis 17:1-27**

1. Can you think of any circumstances when you are called to act in response to someone promise?

*Maybe voting in response to an election promise. Maybe loving a spouse in response to a wedding vow.*

2. What role has Abram's obedience played in the story so far?

*The promises of God have not been granted in response to any good deed Abram has carried out. Apart from the initial action of leaving his homeland, the focus has been on God's promise.*

3. Read 17:1-2 What familiar dynamic is presented to us in these opening verses?

*Abram is now 99, he's been waiting for God's promise a long time! God is offering words of assurance in the face of Abram's patience.*

4. Vs 3-8. What emphasis do we find in this rehearsal of God's promises?

*The emphasis here is on the effect that these promises would have beyond Abram's family. 'Abraham', as he will now be known, will be the father of many nations.*

5. What response did God call forth from Abraham? Is the same physical action required from us today? (Follow this theme through the following: Deut 30:6, Rom 4:9-12)

*The response of circumcising the males in his household. No, this action is not required today. Note Deut 30, the intention was always for our response to be on the level of the heart rather than simply skin deep. Rom 4 is key: what's important is faith in God's promise itself rather than the sign.*

6. What does v12 teach us about infants and the promises of God?

*Infants have a part in receiving God's promises! See also Mark 9:36-37. This is why we baptise babies.*

7. What new information does God give Abraham in vs 19-22 How long will Abraham have waited before the promise of descendants starts to come true? (See Gen 12:4).

*The son is finally on his way. "By next year" Abraham is told. He is also told what to call the boy. Abraham would have waited 25 years since he first received the promise.*

8. In what areas of life might you need to show the same patience?

*Try to encourage some honest reflection*

9. What is commendable about Abraham's response in vs23-27?

*He responded immediately.*

10. How does this chapter help us to understand the relationship between God's promises and our own obedience to his commands?

*While God's promises are not offered on account of our righteousness, our obedience is called forth as an appropriate response to what we are freely given.*