



FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 02/04/2024

Series: Genesis - Abraham

Text: Genesis 15:1-21

BIG IDEA: God Speaks to Accomplish His Purpose.

ICEBREAKER: We have all probably heard the song (and it will now be stuck in your head for the rest of the day!) - "Father Abraham, had many sons, and many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you. So let's just praise the LORD!"

CONTEXT: In chapter 14, Abram rejected the offer from the king of Sodom for the victory spoils as a reward. In response, God now states that Abram's "...reward shall be very great" (15:1). By rejecting the use of human wealth to achieve greatness (14:22-24), Abram demonstrates his willingness to wait for God to provide.

God addresses Abram's anxiety over prolonged childlessness with one of the Bible's most powerful affirmations of the goodness of God toward His people. God confirms His promise to Abram of offspring and land.

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PASSAGE: Read Genesis 15:1-21. (For further enrichment, read Romans 4.)

DISCUSSION:

1. How did you navigate a time when you believed what God had called you to, yet you were not seeing it play out the way you thought it would?
2. Read Romans 4:18. When Paul says, "In hope he believed against hope..." what do you see as impossible in your life, but you are still to believe in the promises of God?
3. How are you continually "believing God" day by day as you walk with Him? Where are you finding it hard to believe? Easy to believe?
4. Read verse 8. Tell of a time when you were brought to a point to ask God, "How am I to know...?"
5. Read verses 13-15. In your life, how do you handle the answer of "I will...but not just yet" or "not the way you think it will be" of God's promise?

APPLICATION:

6. What circumstances surround you where you need to remember that the Lord is your shield (protector)? (Cf. Psalms 7:10; 84:9)
7. Read Galatians 3:2-3. How have you been tempted to try to continue in your flesh what only God can do for us and in us through the Spirit?

K4 CONNECTION:

The circumstances of life frequently tempt us to doubt God's goodness. Like Abram in his childlessness, our lives often seem to be spinning out of control. Relationships, work, sickness, anxiety—there is much that threatens to overwhelm us. Above all, our own sin burdens our conscience and weighs us down. Through it all, the Christian Gospel is a message of hope founded on our faith in what God alone can provide: the invincible rock of Christ's atoning work. Leaving our moral resumes at home, we are invited into God's shining favor if we will bring nothing to Him but our need, with trust in His ultimate care. It is Christ-trusting sinners, not the self-trusting "righteous," who are the children of Abraham and are entitled to all the promises God made to Abraham (Mark 2:17; Luke 19:10; Galatians 3:26-29).

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CARE AND PRAY:

- If you have been trying to be "perfected by the flesh," repent and ask the Lord to show you [again] how to live in the Spirit. (cf. Galatians 3:3)
- Remember to pray and encourage one another throughout the week; bearing one another's burdens and "so fulfill[ing] the law of Christ." (cf. Galatians 6:2)

COMMENTARY

[v. 1] After Abraham's difficulties with Lot [chs. 13, 14], the Lord appears to Abraham "in a vision [mahazeh]" (15:1). This was the fifth revelation to the patriarch. Mahazeh appears elsewhere only in Numbers 24:4, 16, and in Ezekiel 13:7, and it always seems to refer to a divinely initiated vision...[T]his was the means by which God communicated with Abraham, assuring him in his adversity that God was his "shield and exceedingly great reward." This phrase indicates that God would both protect and fulfill all the covenant promises to him. Abraham's response indicated the depth of his concern about his lack of a son and heir. He addressed God as "Lord Jehovah" (ASV). Abraham was the first to combine [Adonai] and YHWH, and this gives us some insight into Abraham's theology. He called God "Lord" because He was his master; he called God "Jehovah" because He had given him the covenant promises. Abraham clearly had no doubts about God's omnipotence."

Commentary taken from "Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis", p. 184, John J. Davis, ©1975

[v. 5] Tens of thousands of stars are listed in the General Catalog used by astronomers, but it is estimated that there are 100 billion more! God did not say that Abram would have that many descendants but that, like the stars, there would be too many to count. Whether Abram looked down at the dust (13:14) or up at the stars (15:5), he would recall God's promise and have confidence. This promise [would be] repeated to Abraham (22:17) and reaffirmed to Isaac (26:4).

[v. 6] "Abram believed the LORD..." Promises do us no good unless we believe them and act on them. Abram had already trusted God's promise (12:1-3) and proved it by leaving home and going to Canaan (Heb. 11:8). But Genesis 15:6 is the first reference in the Bible to Abram's faith. It is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament, and for this reason, the New Testament writers use it to illustrate salvation by faith. The Hebrew word translated "believed" means "to lean your whole weight upon." Abram leaned wholly on the promise of God and the God of the promise[!]

Later, Abram proved his faith by his works when he offered Isaac on the altar (Gen. 22; Jas 2:14-24). Abram was not saved by obeying God, or even promising to obey God, but his obedience proved his faith. Sinners are not saved by faith plus works but by a faith that works.”

Commentary taken from The Transformation Study Bible, Warren Wiersbe, ©2009

Genesis 15:6 provides an important note, but it does not pinpoint Abram’s conversion. That occurred years earlier when he left Ur...Abram’s faith is recorded here because it is foundational for making the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant did not give Abram redemption; it was a covenant made with Abram who had already believed and to whom righteousness had already been imputed. The Bible clearly teaches that in all ages, imputed righteousness (i.e., salvation) comes by faith.

Commentary taken from The Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old Testament, Walvoord & Zuck, Cook ©2004

[v. 9 - 17] What is described in verses 9-17 was known in the day as “cutting a covenant.” This solemn ritual involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The persons making the covenant would sacrifice several animals and divide the bodies, placing the halves opposite each other on the ground. Then the parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrifices in declaration that, if they failed to keep their word, they deserved the same fate as the animals (cf. Jer 34:18-19).

Commentary taken from The Transformation Study Bible, Warren Wiersbe, ©2009

[v. 13-14] The words of God in the covenant ceremony assured Abram that his descendants would definitely be in the land, although a painful detour into Egypt would delay fulfillment until long after his demise.

Commentary taken from The MacArthur Study Bible, John MacArthur, ©1997

WHERE’S THE GOSPEL

Although Abram had been demonstrating his faith through his actions, it was his belief in the Lord, not his actions, that made Abram right with God (Romans 4:1-5). We too can have a right relationship with God by trusting Him. Our outward actions—church attendance, prayer, good deeds—will not by themselves make us right with God. A right relationship is based on faith—the heartfelt inner confidence that God is who He says He is and does what He says He will do. Right actions will flow naturally as byproducts.

~The Life Application Study Bible, Zondervan ©2000