

SESSION 3

# GOD'S PROMISE OF BLESSING

Leader pages on pp. 110-113

**THE POINT:**

**GOD PROMISED TO BLESS ALL PEOPLE THROUGH HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE.**

## GENESIS 12:1-3, 15:5-7, 17:7-11

<sup>12:1</sup> The LORD said to Abram: "Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

<sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

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<sup>15:5</sup> He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."

**MEMORY VERSE**

**<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**

<sup>7</sup> He also said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

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<sup>17:7</sup> "I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you and your future offspring throughout their generations. It is a permanent covenant to be your God and the God of your offspring after you.

<sup>8</sup> And to you and your future offspring I will give the land where you are residing—all the land of Canaan—as a permanent possession, and I will be their God."

<sup>9</sup> God also said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations are to keep my covenant.

<sup>10</sup> This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to keep: Every one of your males must be circumcised.

<sup>11</sup> You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you."

**KEYWORDS**

**To the land I will show you (v. 1)**—The phrase "I will" appears six times in verses 1-3 concerning the covenant God was making with Abram.

**Abram believed the LORD (v. 6)**—This is one of the most significant verses in all Scripture and is a significant aspect of the

gospel message. Despite the fact that at this time he did not have a son to be his heir, Abram accepted by faith what he could not see or understand

**I will give (v. 8)**—God is the Creator and therefore the Owner of all that exists. In this instance, it is the land of Canaan that He was giving to Abraham.

# HOW DOES GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM IMPACT ALL BELIEVERS?

Study or visualize the sinks you have in the rooms of your home. Connected to the sinks there are pipes, faucets, and hoses. Considering these fixtures, what do they all have in common?

Yes, they help to bring water into our living environment.

Someone might ask, "Which of these items is most important?" Well, from one perspective, they're all important. Without any one of them, the water doesn't make it into the sink. Yet, the water is what's most important; the other items only create a means through which the water can flow.

God's plan of salvation included Abraham and his descendants—ultimately the nation of Israel—as His spiritual vessel. God professed that Abraham would be the "father of many nations" to include kings (Gen. 17:4-6) and ultimately the King of Kings. Through this bloodline, God would bring a Savior, Jesus, and through Jesus, God would bring hope and reconciliation to the whole world.

In essence, God promised to bless all people through His chosen people.

The book of Genesis records how God promised Abraham that through him, blessing would come

to the world. Today's session features Bible verses important to laying the foundation for God's purpose and plan.

## Blessed through Abram //

**Genesis 12:1-3**

God's call of Abram (later Abraham) is one of the Bible's defining moments. Everything else in God's plan to redeem the world flows from that defining moment, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12), Abraham's great-grandsons' names will adorn the city gates. We'll still be talking about him in heaven!

God's call required Abraham to do something that went against the grain. God commanded Abraham to leave his homeland, his birthplace, and his father's house. Around the time of 2,000 BC, it was not typical to depart from your extended family and familiar surroundings. However, in today's fast-paced society people often branch out on their own to explore what the world has to offer.

God also commanded Abraham to go to a land God would show him (v. 1). Consequently, Abraham "went out, even though he did not know where he was going" (Heb. 11:8). He left his kinfolk in Haran



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and traveled hundreds of miles before he came to a city called Shechem in the land of Canaan. It was there God told him, "To your offspring I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7).

God also promised to do the following for Abraham (v. 2):

- Make him into a great nation.
- Bless him.
- Make his name great.
- Make him a blessing.

How would God make Abraham a great nation? Abraham and his wife Sarai (later Sarah) had no children (Gen. 11:30). God demonstrated that there is nothing too difficult for Him. God would work a miracle in their lives in the days ahead and give them a son, Isaac (Gen. 21:1-2). God wanted all to know this family began by His power and for His purpose. God indeed blessed Abraham and made his name great as he is still relevant some 4,000 years later!

God promised to bless those who blessed Abraham and to curse anyone who cursed him (v. 3) by word or deed. The Lord and Abraham had a special relationship. The Bible later describes Abraham as God's friend (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23), and God would surely take care of His friend.

Finally, God told Abraham, "All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (v. 3). God's covenant brings blessing to all of us because the ultimate blessing of the Abrahamic covenant was Jesus, Abraham's descendant. Through Jesus, we all may enter a covenant relationship with God.

God later repeated similar words to Abraham's son Isaac (Gen. 26:3-5) and to Abraham's grandson Jacob (Gen. 28:14) as the covenant continued into the next generations. The Savior would come through Abraham's lineage, and all nations would be blessed through Him. God's covenant with Abraham brings blessing to all of us through Jesus Christ. That's why these verses from Genesis represent a defining moment, not only for Abraham, but for God's plan of salvation for all humanity.

### HOW IS THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM A DEFINING MOMENT FOR ALL ETERNITY?

## Blessed through Faith //

Genesis 15:5-7

Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran for the land God would show him (Gen. 12:4). The text later reveals Sarah



### DIGGING DEEPER MOUNT SINAI

The first five books of the Old Testament are called the Pentateuch derived from Greek words penta, "five" and teuchos, "vessel." The pivotal event of the Pentateuch is God's revelations of Himself at Sinai. In Genesis 12:2, God promises Abram that he would be a blessing to the whole world. Later God explains that this would involve being the recipient of the divine revelation (cp. Deut. 4:5-8), being a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a special treasure "out of all the peoples, although the whole earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5-6). At Sinai the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob formally became the God of Israel, binding Abraham's descendants to him by confirming the eternal covenant (Ex. 31:16-17; Lev. 24:8; cp. Judg. 2:1). Finally, Sinai is anticipated in Genesis 26:5, where the Lord recognizes that Abraham "listened to me and kept my mandate, my commands, my statutes, and my instructions."<sup>7</sup>

**What was your Mt. Sinai experience with God? How has it shaped your relationship and walk with Him?**



was ten years younger than Abraham (Gen. 17:17). Having children seemed out of the question— But God!

Some time had passed since God first told Abraham He would make him a great nation (Gen. 12:2). Abraham must have recognized he needed at least one descendant to make that happen, and the situation had already seemed bleak when God initially suggested it.

God visited Abraham in a vision and told him not to fear (v. 5). Abraham confessed his struggle to God; it appeared one of his leading servants would inherit his estate, and if so, God's promise would fail. But that couldn't happen, and it wouldn't.

God challenged Abraham to look to the heavens and count the stars—something Abraham could not possibly do. God then told him, "Your offspring will be that numerous" (v. 5). Now Abraham had a choice: would he choose to believe from a human mindset, or would he choose to believe God's promise?

Abraham chose to believe God's promise: "Abraham believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (v. 6). He trusted God and took Him at His word that he would have descendants and be the channel of God's blessing to all people.

### HOW DOES GOD'S CREDIT OF FAITH AS RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPACT THE WAY WE LIVE?

When the apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans, he cited Genesis 15:6 as part of his discussion of salvation by grace through faith. He declared that salvation came as a gift of God, apart from any good works we might do (Rom. 3:24-28). He used Abraham, the ancestor of our faith, as an example of someone who trusted in God's promise fully, and God counted him righteous on that basis (Rom. 4:18-22). Paul then concluded that God's promise of salvation is for all who believe as Abraham did (Rom. 4:23-25).

God confirmed His covenant with Abraham through what may seem to us an unusual ceremony (Gen. 15:9-17). Abraham divided animal carcasses in two and laid them in two rows, and a mysterious smoking firepot passed between the carcasses.

Abraham would have known from his culture exactly what God intended to communicate. Covenants were sometimes made using this ceremony. God was showing Abraham He was serious about honoring His word. He reaffirmed His covenant in this manner to help Abraham trust Him and take Him at His word.

## Blessed throughout All Generations // Genesis 17:7-11

Consider Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 16. The law of the time allowed a second wife to serve as a surrogate mother for a first wife. Sarah's slave Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham, and by law, Ishmael was Sarah's son.

The last verse of Genesis 16 tells us, "Abraham was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him" (Gen. 16:16). The first verse of Genesis 17 says Abraham was ninety-nine years old when God appeared to him again. When God appeared to Abraham in Genesis 17, He again referenced His establishment of a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:2). This was not a new covenant, neither was the covenant in Genesis 15:18. God was simply revealing another aspect of His covenant with Abraham.

God reaffirmed Abraham would become the father of many nations, and even changed his name from Abram to Abraham to emphasize Abraham's

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expanded role (Gen. 17:4-5). No longer would he be called “exalted father,” but rather “father of a multitude.”

The word translated “residing” (v. 8) has the connotation of temporary residency or sojourning. Abraham lived in the Promised Land, but he only owned the piece of land he purchased to bury Sarah (Gen. 23:17-20). However, God would give Abraham’s descendants all of Canaan permanently, and He would be their God. He expected Abraham’s descendants to keep His covenant (v. 9). The word “keep” also has the sense of “guard.” God’s people were to give His covenant careful attention! As they did, they would experience life as it was meant to be, life as God had designed it.

God instructed Abraham to circumcise every male of his household (vv. 10-11). Scholars do not agree on the exact reason for God’s command. Some suggest it was to promote hygiene. Whatever the reason, it’s clear God intended the circumcision to set Israel apart as distinct from many other nations that did not practice this custom. God calls His people to be distinct, and observing God’s commands marks us as distinct from the rest of the world.

### HOW DOES GOD CALL HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE DISTINCT IN TODAY’S WORLD?

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, Arabs, and Phoenicians practiced circumcision (Jer. 9:25-26), but normally on adolescents. God made it the sign of his eternal covenant with Abraham, to be kept by all generation of his male descendants (Gen. 17:11-14).<sup>8</sup> Today circumcision is “most common in Jewish and Islamic faiths and “is a religious rite or a ceremonial tradition” in many cultures worldwide.<sup>9</sup> Although an elective procedure within the United States, “the National Center for Health Statistics estimates that about 64 percent of newborn boys undergo circumcision” with the number varying among socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic groups.<sup>10</sup> According to World Population Review, “about one-third of males worldwide are circumcised”<sup>11</sup> with prevalence, again, varying based on location and culture. There are also potential health benefits of circumcision. So, for those who have chosen circumcision, the decision likely holds both spiritual and health significance.

**Biblical Truth:** Circumcision of a body is optional, however, God desires the circumcision of our heart.

**How can believers live the distinct, set apart life God has called His people to in today’s society?**

## LIVE IT

### As Abraham’s descendants, how can we serve as examples and witnesses to God’s blessing?

Abraham is an example of how sometimes we try to figure out how God is going to fulfill His promise in our lives. That is not for us to determine. It is up to us to stand on God’s word and not divert to our own plan. Just as Abraham had to demonstrate faith in the promise he did not see, we must do likewise. God is not asking us to produce the promise, simply believe in Him who made the promise.

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- **Blessings to all of us.** Genesis 12:1-3 highlights a defining moment for the rest of Scripture. Read these verses reflectively and consider how this is true.
- **Trust in all things.** Identify areas of your life where you struggle to believe God’s promise because your circumstances suggest otherwise. Ask God to help you trust Him more fully.
- **Set apart in all the earth.** Ask yourself, “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” What would those who know you say is distinctive about your life?

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. TRUSTING WHAT GOD SAYS // LUKE 1:45

Mary believed in the impossible. She received a word from the Lord and surrendered her life to God's will. In Luke 1:38, she submits, "May it happen to me as you have said." Later in verse 45, Elizabeth calls her blessed for believing the Lord. Mary listened to the Angel Gabriel and accepted God's will for her life; her trust was evident to those around her (Elizabeth). This is a pattern we can follow. When we read the Bible, we are reading God's Word. Spend time in God's Word and accept what is written as true. The Bible tells us that "God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?" (Num. 23:19). We can trust anything God says. His word is true!

**Allow Scripture to direct your life. See how others respond to your faith walk.**

## 2. GIVE IT UP // MATTHEW 4:18-20

You win the lottery. You get a large inheritance. You find one hundred dollars on the ground. We can imagine what we would do if we received a large sum of money. But what would we do if we had to give up our wealth and possessions? What would we do if God asked us to leave everything? In Matthew 4:18-20, Jesus calls four men to follow Him. They respond by leaving their nets, boats, and families to follow Jesus. Their willingness to leave everything to follow Jesus results in one of the greatest mentoring relationships. When hands are open to release, they can also receive.

**Take an inventory of your most prized possessions and relationships and tell God you would give it all up to follow him.**

## 3. LET'S MAKE A DEAL // GENESIS 15:5,7

In the game show Let's Make A Deal, contestants are offered gifts they cannot see. The gifts are hidden in boxes or placed behind curtains. Contestants are given an individual gift and asked if they want to keep it or trade it for another

unknown box or package. It is painful to watch contestants struggle to make the choice. They are all thinking the same thing. Which choice has the best deal? Abram left it all at God's request. In verses 5 and 7, God tells Abram that his offspring will be numerous, and He has a promised land for Abram. We don't have to worry about our choices when we follow God.

**Choosing to follow God is the best deal.**

## 4. THE BLESSINGS OF FAMILY // GENESIS 15:4-6

You can't choose your family. You can't control the people born into your family tree. Those attending family reunions can testify there are people they wish were not relatives. God promised that Abram would be the father of many and told him that nations and kings would come from his family line. Remember that Abram's descendants were not perfect but were part of God's plan for the world. Family mattered then, and it matters now. God has great plans for your family as well. At that next reunion, remember that great things can come from your family.

**Think about your relatives. Thank God for all of them and ask God to bless them and use them for His glory.**

## 5. EMBRACE BEING SET APART // 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14

Paul writes to the church at Corinth to encourage believers to live holy. In verse 14, Paul explains the importance of being set apart. Light and righteous living cannot exist with darkness and lawlessness. This principle has been true from the Old Testament to the New Testament to today. Living a holy life according to God's ways will require us to part ways with some of our old habits and lifestyles. If we try to hold onto both, we will put ourselves in compromising positions. Identify parts of your life that are lawless and conducted in the dark. Follow Paul's teaching in verse 17, "Come out from among them and be separate."

**Remember that being set apart is the start to living holy.**