



CrossConnect
MINISTRIES

GOD'S PROMISE OUR BLESSING

JACKIE OESCH

GENESIS 12-25

LESSON 1: THE PROMISE – *ABRAM BELIEVED THE LORD*

LESSON 2: THE COVENANT – *I WILL BE YOUR GOD*

LESSON 3: THE VISITORS – *IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?*

LESSON 4: THE INTERCESSOR – *FOR THE SAKE OF TEN*

LESSON 5: THE DESTRUCTION – *THE OUTCRY IS SO GREAT*

LESSON 6: THE SACRIFICE – *WHERE IS THE LAMB?*

“...I have stored up your word in my heart...”

Psalm 119:11

Produced by **TENTHPOWERPUBLISHING**
www.tenthpowerpublishing.com

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GETTING STARTED

You are embarking on an adventure that will shape the rest of your life. Your journey will be unique to you and will be determined in part by your eager and enthusiastic desire to grow in your understanding of the Book called The Holy Bible. Your commitment to the study promises to enrich your life as God speaks to you through His Word.

As you study you are encouraged to have some recommended supplies on hand:

1. This Bible study unit: *God's Promise, Our Blessing*
2. English Standard Version of the Holy Bible (ESV). Note: If you are making a new purchase, look for a Bible, if possible, that has:
 - a. a cross-reference column preferably down the center of each page,
 - b. a Concordance usually found in the back of the Bible, and
 - c. a few basic maps also found in the back.
3. Pen or pencil
4. 3x5 or 4x6 index cards

With the three features listed in #2 you will adequately supplied for your study and be ready to successfully navigate through these lessons. If, however, this is your first exposure to the Bible, you may want to consider beginning with the study entitled *Navigating the Bible*. This study provides navigational tools designed to help you develop skills and make you a more confident Bible student. *Navigating the Bible* may be downloaded at no cost or obligation on the CrossConnect web site at www.crosscm.org. Although this study is recommended, it is not essential for success in studying *God's Promise, Our Blessing*.

Do not hesitate to mark up your Bible. It's your Bible to study. Make it your own with your notes, your underlining, highlighting, circling and arrows! You may choose to use a notebook or tablet for recording thoughts, questions, and tracking your journey through the study.

The study material is written so that you are able to learn on your own. With a degree of self-discipline you will cover the material with little or no difficulty. At the same time, you will acquire new information, share new insights, and ask some challenging questions that will beg for answers. Anticipating this response you are encouraged to seriously consider inviting a couple of friends to study with you.

May you find joy in your study. May your heart be receptive as God speaks to you through His Word. May these Bible stories reassure you of His great love given to you through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Editor's note: For clarification, capitalized pronouns reference God. i.e. "...what He said."

LESSON ONE

ABRAM BELIEVED THE LORD

GENESIS 12, 15-16 – THE PROMISE

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INTRODUCTION

Stories are an important part of our lives. New segments are added to life stories each day. Things happen. We all have a unique story to tell. We are constantly in the process of growth and development. Different people and circumstances make our personal journeys unique and ultimately shape and mold us into the individuals we become. With each experience and relational encounter we are given the opportunity to choose how we will respond. Some of these responses are conscious choices. Others are given little, if any, serious forethought. These are the choices, however, that shape our individual stories.

God's Promise, Our Blessing is the story of Abram, whom God named Abraham (Genesis 17:5). We will study several stories that shaped his life. These stories will reveal the intimate relationship he had with God and how God used him to fulfill the promise made to Adam and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3:15). In each of the stories we will learn something about his character, attitudes, and his reactions to God's intervention in his life. We will learn about family relationships, about his children, and about God's interaction with his family. His story will give us insight into our own life stories. Significant questions will be asked that demand introspection on our part as we watch for God at work in us and among us.

As we move into the lessons watch for Abraham's life stories. Enjoy them. Use your notebook to track questions. Consider reading the stories as though listening to Abraham tell you about his significant experiences that helped to shape him into the man of faith he was. Listen to God reveal who He is and watch for words and phrases that express His great love for all humankind. Listen to Abraham share his story and look for ways in which his life can influence your life.

In *God's Promise, Our Blessing* anticipate learning the *facts* of the story. Read and ask questions. Watch for *truths* God reveals about Himself as He responds to the sinful condition of the people He created. And, look for ways in which these biblical stories touch our hearts and lives as we ask the "so what?" questions. In other words, so, after all is said and done, what does this story mean for me and my life? This question deals with personal *application* and connects my life to God as He works in and through the life of Abraham.

It's time to let the adventure continue! Enjoy the stories! Enjoy the study! Turn in your Bible to Genesis 11. Begin by writing down the opening words of verse 27:

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: A caravan of nomads left the land of Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:31) and set out for the land of Canaan. Check one of the maps in your Bible and locate Ur to the northwest of the northern end of the Persian Gulf. The land of Canaan may not be as easy to identify. The territory is due west of the land of Ur. Canaan is a small strip of land west of the Arabian Desert and runs along the eastern coast of the Great Sea, the Mediterranean. We will identify Canaan's borders later in the study. What is important for you to observe on your map is the vast expanse of the Arabian Desert between Ur and Canaan. The route that these nomads took was north along the Euphrates River. They were traveling as a large band that included many animals. All of the travelers needed the provision of water. Traveling north in order to go west was not the shortest route but, undoubtedly, it was essential for the well-being of family, servants, and all the livestock.

TEACHING: Who were these people? The last several verses of Genesis 11 tell us who they are. Begin with verse 27: "Now these are the generations of Terah." Read verses 27-32. Now, let's review. Terah was Abram's _____. Sarai was Abram's _____ and the only other thing we learn about Abram and Sarai was that they had no _____ because Sarai was _____. This is a critical point because the culture taught that the barren woman was not a woman of favor. She was scorned, looked down upon, considered to be less than by others in her community. Often she was regarded as a curse to her husband.

Terah as the head of his tribe or family clan took Abram and Sarai along with him. In addition, he took his grandson _____. Lot's father had died before they left the land of Ur and as part of this clan Lot traveled with his grandfather as they all set out for Canaan. However, when this caravan arrived in Haran, they _____ there (Genesis 11:31). Terah lived to be _____ years old and died in _____. We do not know how long he lived in Haran before he died. We know that he chose to settle there and not continue the journey to Canaan.

Genesis 12 is where the story of Abram begins. Abram acquired his own servants, livestock, and possessions. He was a wealthy man. Many things we do not know about Abram and Sarai at this point in their story but we do know that God chose to come into an intimate relationship with Abram that would forever change the course of history. When God enters a person's life nothing is ever the same again.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 12 and note especially verses 1-9. Although many names and places are mentioned, focus on Abram and Sarai. You may choose to note the different individuals and locations in your notebook for future reference.

EXERCISE: In Genesis 12:1-3 God spoke to Abram and gave him a directive. In essence God said that if you do this then I will do this. God called Abram and invited him to join Him in His work of redeeming humankind from its oppressive and sinful condition. *Note: Remember, the battle is raging for the hearts of all people. The battle is between God and Satan, between good and evil.* Now is the time God has chosen to activate His plan that He already promised back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15. This story is essential because through Abram God establishes the bloodline for Jesus, His Champion and our Savior.

1. In verse 1 what was Abram to do? “_____ your country, your kindred and your father’s house and go to the _____ that I will show you.”
2. Now put yourself in Abram’s place. He was called to separate himself from everything familiar and to travel to a place yet to be determined. God seems to say, “Just go. Leave the rest to Me.” My response would probably be, “Yah, right!” Consider what your response might be: _____

3. Would you want more information? Maybe you’re the type that is ready for the uncertainty of the adventure. Or, are you the person that needs to know the exact route and what time you’ll get there? A part of me wants to say, “OK, Abram, you go, check it out, and once you’re settled, let me know and then I’ll come.” Take some time and write a few concerns you would need to work through if God had said to you, “Go…” _____

Part 2

EXERCISE: Abram was to leave and go. The second part holds the promise of God to Abram. The promises all begin with “_____.” God makes all the promises. What exactly does He promise? Verse 2: “I will _____ and I will _____ you and will _____ and _____.”
Verse 3: I will _____, and _____ I will _____; and in you all _____ of the earth shall be _____.”

TEACHING:

1. The first promise that God made to Abram is that He will make him into a great nation. It is the promise of offspring. But, God doesn't just say that Abram will have children. Instead He says, "I will make of you a _____." Reread Genesis 11:30. What was the problem with God's promise? _____
2. God goes on to promise that He will make Abram's _____ great. Has God fulfilled that promise? Consider the different religious sects in our world today. How many are rooted in Abraham, the place where their religious history begins? Consider the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims, for example. Yes, God has made Abram's name great.
3. Then God speaks of blessing those who bless Abram and cursing those who curse him. God in essence tells Abram that I am going to bless you and the blessing you receive from Me will make you a blessing to others. Verse 2 says: "I will _____ you" and "you will be a _____." What God chooses to do to Abram and through Abram will bless all the peoples on earth.

God's call to Abram invited him to *leave* his family and country and everything and everyone that was familiar and to *go* to that land that God would show him. God's call also included the promise of progeny and rich blessings for Abram that would enable him not only to be blessed but to be a blessing to others as well. Abram responded to God's invitation and God's promises. All he needed to know was that God was calling him.

EXERCISE:

1. Who are we told went with Abram (verse 4)? _____
2. How old was Abram? _____
3. Who and what all did Abram take with him (verse 5)? _____

4. Where did they arrive (verse 6)? _____

REFLECTION: If Sarai was barren and Abram was 75 years old at the time God called him and then promised him that He would make him into a great nation...

1. What do you think God was thinking? _____
2. What do you think Abram was thinking? _____
3. What would you be thinking? Use your imagination and place yourself in Abram's shoes. Write some of your thoughts: _____

APPLICATION:

1. How eager am I to respond to the unknown and to what seems impossible? _____

2. Consider if there has been a time I have felt that God was “moving” me? _____

3. Abram believed God and acted on what He knew about God. What are some things you know about God? How do you find yourself responding to what you know about Him? _____

PRAYER: O God, Abram responded to Your call to leave everything that he knew. He willingly went to a land that You would eventually show Him. He believed Your Word and Your promises. Grant me such a faith that believes You and trusts You to do what You say you will do. _____

Part 3

INTRODUCTION: Our band of nomads has just arrived in the land of Canaan. When they arrived they traveled through Canaan from north to south. Canaanites inhabited the land (Genesis 12:6). So, consider the picture. Abram has left everything and has come with God’s promise of offspring and His promise of land. In the big picture, Abram and his clan were quite a motley crew, totally incapable of seizing land from the Canaanites and other tribes occupying Canaan. And, don’t forget, Abram has brought with him his barren wife. Yet God says to him, “To your *offspring* I will give this *land* (Genesis 12:7). Abram must have believed God because in the same verse it says that “he built there an _____ to the Lord,” a place of worship. He acknowledged that the One who made the promise (God) was the One who would keep the promise. Abram acted on who gave the promise, specifically God, and what He said, not on what he (Abram) knew, namely that he was 75 years old, Sarai was barren, and that this land of Canaan belonged to the Canaanites, the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and others.

ASSIGNMENT: In Genesis 12-14 we see God at work in Abram’s life. *Note: Read these three chapters. Watch God as He begins to establish Abram in the land. If you don’t read this material at this time, take a highlighter and highlight Assignment to remind you to return and read these chapters. Don’t get bogged down. Press on and move down to the next Exercise (*).*

1. Read Genesis 12:10-20. Abram and Sarai journey to Egypt because of a famine in the land where they lived. We see Abram threatened and fearful. At the same time we see God's hand of protection over them in this strange land.
2. Read Genesis 13. In this chapter we see the generosity of Abram and learn about the character of his nephew Lot. Even though Lot appeared to acquire the best that was offered, the Lord came again to Abram. Once again He renewed his promise with Abram. Take particular notice of verses 14-17.
3. Read Genesis 14:8-17. Once again we encounter Lot. Four kings joined forces and went to battle and defeated five other kings. In the process Lot was carried off. When Abram learned this he set out to rescue Lot. God enabled Abram to defeat King Kedorlaomer, the king who had taken Lot. As a result, the defeated kings allied with Abram. Abram's reputation was established in the land.

***EXERCISE:**

1. Again, after Abram's victory, God came to him in a vision. Read Genesis 15:1. What were His words of reassurance to Abram this time? Write out God's promise. _____

2. One gets the sense that Abram has had enough said about the promise and now needs some concrete action. Notice verse 2. He cries out to the Lord and asks: "_____ will You give me for I continue _____?"
3. Who was in line to inherit his estate (verse 2)? _____
4. Who was Eliezer (verse 3)? _____
5. Then in verse 4 the Lord said: "This _____ shall not be your _____, your _____ shall be your _____."
6. The Lord went on to reassure him. He took Abram outside and said: "_____ toward _____ and number the _____, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "_____."

MEMORIZATION: Genesis 15:6 is a verse you will want to put to memory. It's very simple. After Abram comes before the Lord and asks him questions, the Lord tells him once again that what He first said, He still promises He will do. Then we read these words: "[Abram] _____ the _____ and _____ it to him as _____." He believed the Lord and trusted that what He said He would do, He would do. Write out this verse on an index card and put it to memory, forever holding it in your heart.

Part 4

DIGGING DEEPER: *Note: Some who are engaged in this study may want to take a side trip and look into other related Bible passages. This section Digging Deeper is designed for you. If you are among the eager beavers who choose to stay focused in Genesis, press on. Continue with the next Exercise (*).*

1. Other places in the Bible make reference to this one verse, Genesis 15:6. Look at the cross-reference in verse 6 that follows the word “righteousness” and then note the verses indicated in the cross-reference column. One of the cross-references is in the New Testament Book of Romans. Read Romans 4:3 and then skip down and read verses 18-25. We are told in these verses that Abram was incapable of fulfilling the promise. His hope was in God. He believed. Verses 20-21 tell us, “No _____ made him _____ concerning the _____ of God, but he grew _____ in his _____ as he gave _____ to God, being fully _____ that God was _____ to do what He had _____.”
2. Verses 23-24 say that what applied to Abram also applies to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead. In other words, God also will credit righteousness for us who believe that Jesus was delivered over and crucified as the punishment for our sins and who also believe that He was raised again to life. We are now *justified*. We are declared righteous. We are made right again in our relationship with God the Father, our Creator. God, through St. Paul who wrote the Book of Romans, wants us to know that just as Abram was considered righteous because of his faith in God so we, too, are considered righteous because of our faith in Jesus who died to forgive us of all our sins. His resurrection from the dead became God’s declaration of our righteousness. The debt we owed God for our sins has been stamped, “Paid in Full!”

***EXERCISE:** Turn to Genesis 15:18. Keep a finger on this page and turn to the map section in the back of your Bible. You might need to look at the second or third map to locate both the Wadi of Egypt, which is the southern boundary of the land God promised to give to Abram and the Euphrates River, which is the northern boundary. Remember the Euphrates is the river that Terah followed from Ur to Harran before he settled in Harran.

Part 5

EXERCISE: Read Genesis 16. Two new characters are introduced. Abram and Sarai are about to take matters into their own hands.

1. Verse 1: Sarai is Abram's _____. She had borne Abram no children.
2. But she had a _____. Her name was _____.
3. Verse 2: What was Sarai's plan that she shared with Abram? _____

Sarai had given up hope and thought that she might be able to have a family if her maidservant gave birth to a child for her.

4. Verses 2-4: It's been over 10 years since God made His promise to Abram who now agreed with his wife. Sarai gave her Egyptian _____ to Abram to become his _____. Abram _____ Hagar and she _____
5. How did Hagar respond to Sarai once she was pregnant (verse 4)? _____
6. How did Sarai respond to Hagar's treatment? _____
7. How did Abram respond to Sarai's complaints? _____
8. How did Sarai treat Hagar? _____
9. What did Hagar do (verse 6)? _____
10. Where did the angel of the Lord find Hagar? _____

Once again you are encouraged to look at your maps. Hagar was found near a spring in the desert on the road to Shur. Notice on your map the Desert of Shur located in the Sinai Peninsula between Egypt and Canaan (present day Israel).

11. Verses 8-12: The conversation begins between the angel of the Lord and Hagar:
 - a. What did the angel ask Hagar? _____
 - b. What was Hagar's response? _____
 - c. What was the instruction of the angel? _____
 - d. What else did the angel tell Hagar in verse 10? _____
 - e. In verses 11-12 what did the angel of the Lord tell her about her child?
 - i. You shall bear a _____. You shall call his name _____.
 - ii. Ishmael means God _____. (See footnote.)
 - iii. The Lord has listened to your _____.
 - iv. Ishmael will be a _____
 1. His _____ everyone.
 2. Everyone's _____ him.
 3. He shall dwell _____ all his _____.
12. Verses 15-16: Hagar bore Abram a son named _____. How old was Abram when he was born? _____

REFLECTION:

1. What thoughts are going through your head as you finish reading this story? _____

2. What would it be like to be told that your son would live in hostility toward all his brothers?

APPLICATION: God showed mercy and compassion on Hagar in spite of the disrespect she showed her mistress and the way she despised her.

1. What might be your response to someone who mistreats you or a friend? _____

2. What is Jesus' word of encouragement for us? See Matthew 5:43-48. _____

PRAYER: O Lord, I have to confess that all too often I get impatient and choose to take things in my own hands and handle them my way. As a result, many times there are painful consequences to bear. Forgive my urgency and grant me a quiet contentment that rests in You. Enable me to respond to individuals who offend those I love as You would. May Your love and compassion flow through me.

LESSON TWO

I WILL BE YOUR GOD

GENESIS 17 – THE COVENANT

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INTRODUCTION

There was turmoil in Abram's tent. Ten years had passed since God had made His promise to him. Sarai remained barren. Hagar was pregnant and gave birth to Abram's son Ishmael. And, on top of everything else, Sarai and Hagar were at odds with one another. Thirteen years have passed. Abram's story resumes in Genesis 17. Abram is now ninety-nine years old.

Once again the Lord appears to Abram and this time He makes a covenant with him and his descendants forever. "I will be their God." The covenant demanded circumcision and included all males born in Abram's household. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and Abram.

The fact remains. Abram and Sarai are childless. God, however, not only covenants with Abram but with his descendants and declares that his descendants will greatly increase in numbers. All these years Abram believed the promise of God. Now God changes Abram's name and says his name will be Abraham which means father of many! He also changes Sarai's name to Sarah which means mother of nations! How can this be?

God reassures Abraham that his wife Sarah will conceive and give birth to a son. The covenant could not be valid without an heir, for the covenant God made included his descendants. We can hear Abraham laughing and thinking, "I'm going to be 100 years old and Sarah will be 90." But Abraham believed and God credited it to him as righteousness.

Would you laugh with Abraham and Sarah? Or, would you maybe laugh in unbelief at their foolishness to believe such a promise for so many years? God, however, made the promise with Abraham and his descendants and Isaac was born. Imagine the joy and celebration! Hear all the laughter!

What is it like to wait with hope when everything appears hopeless? This is Abraham and Sarah's story. What is yours? When have you asked for the impossible? What kept your hope alive? What was your struggle like? Did you find yourself laughing incredulously? What support, or lack of, did you receive from family and friends? God remained faithful to Abraham, to His promise, and to His covenant. The Lord remains faithful to His people, to you and to me. Although Abraham and Sarah never saw "the nations" they believed in the One who said, "I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be Your God."

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: Abram is now 99 years old. The Lord God again comes to him and again confirms the covenant He made with him almost 25 years earlier.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 17:1-8.

EXERCISE: Notice all God says to confirm the covenant He made with Abram.

1. Verse 2: God says that He will “_____ My _____
between Me and you, and may _____ you _____.”
2. Verse 3: Abram falls facedown and God goes on to declare His covenant “You will be the
_____ of many _____ (verse 4).”
3. Verse 5: God changes Abram’s name to Abraham. *Note:* Your Bible may have a notation at the
bottom of the page that tells you Abram means *exalted father*. Abraham means *father of many*.
“No longer shall your name be called _____, but your name shall be
_____, for I have made you the _____ of many
_____.”
4. Notice the “*I will*” in these next three verses (verses 6-8). Use your highlighter to mark them.
 - a. “I will _____.”
 - b. “I will _____.”
 - c. “I will _____
_____.”
 - d. And, the whole land of Canaan where he now is regarded as an alien and foreigner God
says, “I will _____.”
5. In verse 8 God made a promise to Abraham regarding his descendants? He says, “... and I will
_____.”

REFLECTION: Put yourself in Abraham’s place. Twenty-five years ago God promised that He would be with him and that He would make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Ten years later Sarai gave up all hope that she would become a mother and resigned herself to the fact that God may have had her husband in mind when He made His promise but the promise certainly must not have included her. So, she gave her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham. A child was born to Hagar. Strife broke out within the family between Sarai and Hagar. Abraham must have regretted creating his own plan of action and in faith could only believe that God would fulfill His promise to him however and

whenever He chose, but he would do nothing again to manipulate God's plan. When Abram is 99 years old God again appeared and reiterated the same promise. He covenanted with Abram, changed his name to Abraham, and declared all the *I wills* of the promise.

If you were Abraham's best friend and he had confided in you all that was going on from way back before they left Harran (Genesis 12:1) to the present when God had changed his name (Genesis 17), what would you say to him this time when Abraham comes to share a meal with you in your tent and report his latest visit with God? _____

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. Recall a time when you had to wait, maybe not as long as Abraham, but, nevertheless, the situation demanded patient waiting. _____

2. What were some of your thoughts during the time of waiting? _____

3. How did the story end? _____

REFLECTION: Many of us have been given promises that were never kept. Promises that are not kept can hurt and even destroy relationships. Maybe you have been one who has made a promise but have not kept it. Admitting that we have been hurt or confessing to another that we have hurt someone gives God the opportunity to bring healing and wholeness back into relationships. Who might be a person who comes to your mind? This may be the time to initiate an attempt to heal the brokenness and separation from this person and offer God the opportunity to reconcile the relationship. _____

PRAYER: O God, thank You for Your faithfulness to Abraham. Thank You for giving to him the faith to believe that the promises You made You would keep. You never break Your promises. At times I have made promises to others and have not kept my word. Please forgive me and by Your power enable me to take the initiative to admit truth to myself and confess the offense I have done to others. Let healing and wholeness be restored once again. _____

Part 2

EXERCISE: God also renewed the promise that He had made to Abram regarding his wife Sarai. Read Genesis 17:15-17 and verse 19.

1. What does God say concerning Sarai?
 - a. In verse 15 regarding her *name*: _____
 - b. In verse 16 regarding the *promise*: _____

2. Abraham is obviously struggling to believe that what God has promised will actually happen. Read verse 17 again. He saw the utter hopelessness of the condition. At eighty-five Abram was still able to conceive and now at 100 years of age Abraham saw that now both he and Sarah were not capable of conception. What does this verse tell us that reveals his utter despair?
 - a. Notice his posture and emotional response in verse 17: _____
 - b. Notice his questions:
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____

3. God heard the cry of his heart and reassured him that what He had promised He would accomplish. God knew Abraham understood that no longer was the fulfillment of this promise possible because of man's initiative or capability but the fulfillment was totally dependent upon God.
 - a. Verse 19: Then God said, "Sarah your wife will _____
 - b. His name will be _____. "I will _____."
_____."

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Have you ever found yourself saying something like, "This is out of my hands. There's nothing I can do"? Or, "There's absolutely nothing humanly possible"? At times like this, we, too, find ourselves in utter despair wondering what the outcome will be and oftentimes dreading that the worst will happen. As God was faithful to Abraham and Sarah in keeping His covenant promise to them regardless of their feelings of hopelessness so His faithfulness remains for us through His promises. Take a moment to find the reassurance of God's love in Deuteronomy 31:8 and to thank Him for the comfort of His Word: The Lord is enough. " _____"
_____."

MEMORIZATION: Long ago this passage from Deuteronomy 31:8 was spoken to Joshua by the great leader Moses. Moses was about to die. Joshua would be his successor. He left Joshua with these words

which Moses himself knew were true. His life was proof that the Lord would go before him to prepare the way, go with him to guide and direct, and would stand beside him never leaving or forsaking him as He destroyed fear and gave Joshua boldness and courage to lead. For your memory work, write Deuteronomy 31:8 on an index card and enjoy memorizing these words Moses spoke to Joshua that continue to be so relevant to each of us during this 21st Century.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Verses that we memorize take on new and relevant meaning for us when we verbalize them to others. Do you know a leader or someone with whom you would like to share these words offering them the reassurance of God’s steadfast presence in their life? Maybe it’s a parent, a teacher, a boss, or colleague. Or, maybe a friend who is undergoing struggles, surgery, or severe loneliness. Be bold in your witness sharing with them God’s faithfulness and kindness. Consider what you might say... _____

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for Your great love expressed in Your faithfulness to Abraham and Sarah and also to me. Help me to understand that this doesn’t mean I always get what I want but it does mean that Your love and faithfulness to me never waver. _____

Part 3

TEACHING: The covenant that God established with Abraham was to be an everlasting covenant. The covenant was not only for Abraham and Sarah but for the descendants that would follow for generations to come. This everlasting covenant is best understood as we examine its parts.

1. **DEFINITION:** A *covenant* is a promise or an agreement made between two parties.

In Genesis 17:4 the covenant is initiated by the greater of the two parties, namely God, and agreed upon by the lesser of the two parties, namely Abraham. The two parties covenant with one another by agreeing to the stipulations articulated by the initiator.

God tells Abraham what He promises to do. These are the “*I wills*” we looked at previously in Part 1. Then God tells Abraham what He expects him to do. The fact that this is an *everlasting* covenant is because it was initiated by God who said the covenant was also made with Abraham’s descendants and with the generations yet to come.

In Genesis 9:16 we remember that God made an everlasting covenant between Him and “every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” This is the covenant given to Noah. This covenant is different. It was initiated by God, all the stipulations of the covenant were made by Him, and He alone was to keep the covenant. The rainbow was the reminder of that covenant and remains to this day.

EXERCISE: Let’s take a closer look at the everlasting covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 17.

1. Look at the end of verse 7. What is the very first thing God promises as His part of the covenant promise? “I will _____.”
2. After He promises to be their God and thus to take them as His people, He says in verse 8, “I will give to _____ and to your _____ after you the _____ of your _____, all the land of _____, for an everlasting _____.”
3. Again, He promises in verse 8, “...and I will be their _____.”
4. The next thing God does as He covenants with Abraham is to articulate what He expects of Abraham, his descendants, and the generations to come. In verses 9-14 God stipulates what their part would be. Read these verses and write out verse 10 and 11: “Every male _____

_____ between Me and you.”
5. Verses 12 and 13 give more information of what God’s instructions were regarding the circumcision of Abraham’s household and his offspring: _____

Part 4

TEACHING: God expects obedience and then promises to bless those who keep the covenant, those who are circumcised. At the same time, there are consequences for those who do not obey and are not circumcised. In Genesis 17:14 what does God say will happen to those who are disobedient? _____
_____ God does not take the covenant lightly. He will keep His Word, His part of the covenant, and He expects Abraham and his descendants to be circumcised, to keep their part of the covenant.

Although the covenant was given to Abraham as the head of his tribe and family and although the men were circumcised indicating that they were a part of this covenant, the covenant did not exclude the woman. Women were brought into the covenant relationship through their fathers and kept under the

blessing through their husbands. Recall God's words concerning Sarah in verses 15-16. They were almost identical to His words to Abraham in verses 5-6.

In the 21st Century many infant boy babies are circumcised already before leaving the hospital. In Jewish families, however, this rite is often done by the rabbi in the setting of the home or synagogue. Whether circumcision was done to Abraham and his household in tents on the eighth day or as a rite in the Jewish home or synagogue today or in modern hospitals before leaving, we know that circumcision demands the shedding of blood. Once again we recall from previous lessons that the shedding of blood throughout history was imperative. The shed blood was the necessary covering over sin. Now God wanted His people to carry this identification as His people. They were all covered over by the shed blood. Their relationship was secure because of His covenant relationship with them. He made Himself to be their God (verse 7) and He declared them to be His people (verse 14).

REFLECTION: At first glance it may not seem like a big deal that God chose to covenant with Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants. But if we take a closer look we may come to a new level of appreciation of God's desire and claim to be their God and for them to be His people. Look up the following verses and reflect on who this God is and learn more about who these people are:

1. Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:27
 - a. Who God is: _____
 - b. Who man is: _____
2. Genesis 17:1
 - a. Who God is: _____
 - b. What God expects of man: _____
3. Psalm 8:1-2 and Psalm 139:14-16
 - a. Who God is: _____
 - b. Who man is: _____
4. Jeremiah 2:11, 13, 19 and Jeremiah 33:8
 - a. Who man is: _____
 - b. Who God is: _____

Write a summary of these passages expressing who God is: _____

Write a summary of these passages describing who man is: _____

PRAYER: O Lord, Your love abounds in my life. You are the One who created the heavens and the earth. You are the One who is perfect, the Lord God Almighty. Your name is majestic in all the earth. You are my Creator and have created all the peoples of the earth. You desire my life to be without fault, yet in spite of Your greatness, You think about me and know all that concerns me. You also know all of my sinful thoughts, words, and rebellious actions, but despite that You have forgiven me and have washed me clean in the blood of Jesus my Savior. You have made the claim on my life to be my God and have chosen me to be one of Your chosen people. To You alone I lift my heart in praise and thanksgiving.

Part 5

INTRODUCTION: Before we continue with the life of Abraham we need to satisfy our curiosity about what happened to Ishmael. Let's review. Sarai gave her handmaiden Hagar to Abram. He slept with her and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant Hagar began to despise Sarai (Genesis 16:4) and in the end, Sarai so mistreated Hagar that she fled (Genesis 16:6) and was found by the angel of the Lord in the desert. She was told to return to Sarai her mistress and to submit to her. Then the angel gave her the promise to increase her descendants so that they would be more than she could count.

The words of the angel of the Lord to Hagar in Genesis 16 regarding her son are somewhat perplexing. First, her pregnancy is confirmed and she is told that she will have a son. She is told that she is to name him Ishmael. His name means that the Lord has heard your misery. Then the angel goes on to say that Ishmael will be a wild donkey of a man, that he will be against everyone and everyone will be against him and that he will live in hostility toward all his brothers. As the chapter ends we are told that Hagar bore Abram a son; he was named Ishmael and Abram was eight-six years old.

EXERCISE:

1. The next time we hear about Ishmael is in Genesis 17. In verse 18 Abraham seems to be pleading with God when he says, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you." God responds to Abraham by telling him that Ishmael will live under His blessing, however, he would not be the one with whom God would establish His everlasting covenant.
2. What does God say about Ishmael in Genesis 17:20? "As for Ishmael, I have heard you,
 - a. I have _____ him;
 - b. and will _____. He shall _____, and
 - c. I will _____."

3. On the very day that the everlasting covenant was given by God Abraham responded obediently. Read Genesis 17:23-27. Notice what is said about Ishmael.

- a. Verse 23: What did Abraham do? _____

- b. Verse 24: “Abraham was _____ years old when he was circumcised.”
- c. Verse 25: “...Ishmael his son was _____ years old...”
- d. Verse 26: Abraham and Ishmael were both _____ on the same
_____.
- e. Verse 27: Who else was circumcised with them? _____

And, to think that one didn't need to be a son of Abraham to receive the blessings that his own son received. Every male whether born in his household or brought into the household because he was bought from a foreigner was circumcised and thus brought under the blessing of the everlasting covenant. What an act of God's grace, His undeserved love!

TEACHING: Looking ahead to Jesus we learn that all who believed that His shed blood on the cross was the blood that covered over our sins are brought into a covenant relationship with God the Father. What an awesome thought! Abraham, Ishmael and all of the others in the household did nothing to earn access into the everlasting covenant. God was His undeserving love came to Abraham and brought to all of them the covenant promise: He would be their God and they would be His people. So, as we will learn in future studies, God has come to us in baptism and laid claim on our lives declaring to us that He is our God and that we are made His children through the blessing of the water and the words, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

PRAYER: Lord God, as You covenanted with Ishmael, You covenant with me. You have made me a member of Your family. You have called me Your child. You are my Heavenly Father. You are my God, the One I worship and adore. Thank You for Your act of grace in my life, for letting my salvation totally rest on what You have done for me. Keep me mindful of Your blessings poured out on my life, especially the blessing of a restored relationship with You through Jesus, my Savior. _____

Part 6

ASSIGNMENT: Another reference to Ishmael is found in Genesis 21:8-21. Isaac is finally born to Abraham and Sarah. Read these verses.

EXERCISE: Trouble arises again within Abraham’s household. What is the trouble this time?

1. Verse 8: What do we learn? Isaac grew and once he was weaned Abraham held a great _____.
2. Verse 9: But what did Sarah observe? _____ The attitude of the mother was passed down to her son.
3. Verse 10: So what did Sarah demand of Abraham? _____

4. Verse 11: Abraham was greatly distressed. After all, Ishmael was his _____.
5. Verse 12: What was God’s instruction to Abraham? _____
_____ It is through Abraham’s son Isaac that the promise was given.
6. Verse 13: What is God’s promise to Abraham regarding Ishmael? _____

TEACHING: God had not forgotten Ishmael or the promise that was made to Hagar in the desert on the road to Shur several years before when she was pregnant with him. Now Sarah has told Abraham to get rid of the Egyptian slave handmaiden and her son. God instructs Abraham to listen to Sarah. So, the next morning Abraham takes some food and water, gives them to Hagar, and sends her off with Ishmael.

Verse 14 ends with the words, “She _____ and _____ in the _____ of _____.” It’s easy to read, but how difficult it must have been for father and son to separate, especially for the father to send off his son whom he would probably never see again. What would that have been like? For thirteen years Abraham and Ishmael had lived together. Undoubtedly, Ishmael had given Abraham many delightful moments as he grew into a young man. Now the relationship ended as mother and son were sent on their way out into the vast desert of Beersheba. Abraham knew that the food and water would only get them so far and then the supply would run out.

EXERCISE: Now the story resumes with mother and son in the desert. In Genesis 21:15 we learn that the water has just run out and Hagar has put her young son under one of the bushes.

1. Verse 16: What did Hagar do next? What was she thinking? _____

2. Verse 17: Her son was heard crying. “And God _____ the _____ of the boy... ‘What _____ you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has _____ the _____ of the _____ where he is.’”
3. Verse 18: What was she instructed to do? _____

4. Verse 19: What did God reveal to her when she opened her eyes? _____
So Hagar filled the empty bag with water and gave the boy a drink?
5. Verse 20: What happened to Ishmael? God was with the boy as he grew up.
 - a. Where did he live? _____
 - b. What did he become? _____
 - c. What was the name of the desert where he lived? _____
 - d. Where did his Egyptian mother find a wife for him? _____

Part 7

TEACHING: God’s love and provisions for Ishmael were constant. And, we ask, why? He and his mother despised and mocked Sarah and Abraham. Why did Ishmael continue to experience God’s love and provisions for his life? Genesis 21:13 tells us why God was faithful to him. “...because he is your _____.” He was Abraham’s son, circumcised and living under the eternal covenant. Ishmael was given the promise of becoming a great nation. The promise of God was his.

God’s grace, His undeserved love, falls on us all. Many people in this world are not able to recognize God’s undeserved love poured out on both the just and the unjust. We see it with the rain. He pours forth rain and water falls on us all. His love is never earned, never deserved. Love began with Him and is given to all. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because He first loved us.”

MEMORIZATION: It’s time to bring another Bible passage into our memory library. Romans 6:3-4 reminds us that we have a new life because we have been baptized into Christ Jesus and just as He died for our sins so in our baptism we died to sin and just as He rose from the dead so we also are given new life in Him! Begin by writing these two verses on an index card. Memorize them throughout the week. Take time to answer the following questions:

1. What difference does it make for you to know that you have the privilege of coming under the everlasting covenant of sins forgiven and now have a new life because you have been freed from the consequence of sin? _____

2. What are some of your reflections as you consider that like Abraham and Ishmael you and I can do nothing to earn or deserve the blessings God gives as He declares Himself to be our God and us to be His people? _____
-

On the back side of your index card for Romans 6:3-4 write *Personal Application*. As you learn these verses continue to add any new insights or discoveries of what it means that you have a new life to live free from guilt and shame, a life lived under the everlasting covenant of sins forgiven.

PRAYER: O God, Your undeserved love is poured out on us all. Thank You. I see it in the beauty of each new day, in the love of a child, in the friendships that surround my life. Thank You and enable me to believe that Your grace is all that I need for life everlasting with You. _____

Part 8

REVIEW: Let's take time for a review. We have been introduced to several people and places. In the column on the left determine whether the word is the name of a location or individual and then in the last column write words that tell something you have learned about each through your study. Do not hesitate to use the passage reference to hunt down an answer that you may not recall. This is not a test!

	PLACE/PERSON	LEARNING
	Harran (Genesis 12:4)	
	Abram (Genesis 11:27, 31)	
	Sarai (Genesis 12:5)	
	Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:31)	
	Canaan/Canaanites (Genesis 10:6, 15-19)	

Lot Genesis 12:5		
Hagar (Genesis 16:1)		
Ishmael (Genesis 16:15)		
Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:5, 15-16)		
Hebron (Genesis 13:18)		

LESSON THREE

IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?

GENESIS 18 – THE THREE VISITORS

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INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, all of us can think of something that is too hard for us to do. Maybe another way is to say we can all think of something that is impossible for us to do. As human beings we have limitations. We can only do so much. In this lesson Abraham is confronted with the question, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” The answer seems obvious. No, nothing is too hard for the Lord. After all, He’s the Creator of heaven and the earth.

In Genesis 18 we are forced to consider the situation confronting Abraham and his wife Sarah. They are very old and Sarah who is barren is now past childbearing years. Sarah’s response is to laugh in disbelief questioning, “Will I really have a child, now that I am old?” And the Lord says, “Is anything too hard?”

God continues to hold before Abraham His promise that he and Sarah would have a son and “Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.” Everything about the situation was unbelievable but Abraham believed the Lord. *God* had made the promise. *God* had said that he would have a son. *God* gave Abraham hope. And Abraham believed God for God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18).

No, nothing is too hard for the Lord! If the Lord appeared at your house today, would you welcome Him in? What is the impossible in your life He might tell you is possible? Is it forgiveness for something in the past or recovery over the death of a loved one? Maybe the impossible in your life is recuperating from thwarted love. You decide. What in your life is not too hard for the Lord?

Maybe there’s one more thing to consider. What is too hard for us is not too hard for the Lord. The past sin that we find too hard to forget, the Lord remembers no more (Jeremiah 31:34). The love that we desperately search for, the Lord offers as His everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). The security of a relationship that protects us from loneliness and feelings of abandonment He provides with the promise to never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Not only are these things not too hard for the Lord, they are His promises. He cannot lie. His Word is Truth and Truth is the essence of who He is.

Is it too hard for God to love us who have desired to follow the ways of this world (Ephesians 2:1-10)? Is it too hard for God to love us who have chosen to live separated from Him and would rather live as His enemies? Is it too hard for God to love us and make us fully alive with Him? Is it too hard for us to receive His free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus? Is it too hard for us to believe that He created us in Jesus to do good works? Thanks be to God who says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).”

Part 1

TEACHING: We learn so much about people when we listen to their stories. Often when we share similar experiences or take time to listen as others reveal themselves through the conduit of storytelling, we begin to get acquainted with people who eventually become close friends. In this lesson we will read four different stories that involve Abraham and his family. These stories will be found in Genesis 18-22.

As we read these stories we will ask three questions:

1. What are the *facts* of this story? For example: Who are the characters? Where does the story take place? What actually happens?
2. What *truths* do we learn about God and humankind from this story?
3. What *application* does this story have for me as I live my life?

In addition, you are encouraged to do the reading assignments between the stories. Remember, this study cannot include all the happenings written in the Bible but we can begin with some that will give a foothold on future study. The adventure is about to continue. In the first story we learn of three visitors who came to visit Abraham and Sarah one day. This visit would change their lives forever.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 18:1-15.

EXERCISE: Looking for the *facts* of the story...

1. Genesis 18:1 seems to start out so matter-of-factly. Who appeared to Abraham? _____
2. Where was Abraham and what was he doing? _____
3. What time of the day was it? _____
4. Abraham looked up (verse 2). Who did he see standing nearby? _____
5. What did he do when he saw them? _____

QUESTIONS: One cannot help but ask questions. For example,

- Who were these men?
- Did Abraham know them?
- Were his actions in verse 2 customary?
- Would he have done the same for anyone coming to visit?
- What might be a question you have? _____
- What might be another question? _____

EXERCISE CONTINUES: *More facts...*

1. What did Abraham offer the men in verse 3? _____
2. His warm invitation continues in verse 4: _____
3. Such lavish hospitality (verse 5)! _____

REFLECTIONS:

- Hospitality was expected as people journeyed through the land from one community to another. What attitudes do you observe as Abraham receives his guests? _____

- Abraham humbled himself before his guests. He sought to meet their physical need to be refreshed with water for their sandaled feet that were undoubtedly tired and dusty from the journey. And, he offered food for refreshment before they continued on their way. Hospitality refreshes others. Your thoughts: _____

Part 2

EXERCISE CONTINUES: *Still more facts...*

1. Notice what Abraham does next. What does he ask Sarah to do? _____
2. He selects a choice, tender calf and what does he ask his servant to do? _____

3. In addition, what did he bring to them and serve with the meal? _____
4. Abraham set the food before them and while they ate what did he do? _____

He was ready to serve them and wanted to make sure they had everything they needed. His hospitality was all for his guests. He was eager to provide whatever refreshed them.

5. The conversation begins in Genesis 18:9...
 - a. What do they ask? _____
 - b. What is Abraham's response? _____
 - c. What is the promise in verse 10? _____

6. All these years they had waited for the promise to be fulfilled. No longer were their own bodies able to procreate and now after so long the Lord appears to them and tells Abraham that next year, about this time Sarah will give birth to a son. Where is Sarah during this conversation (verse 10)? _____

7. In the next verse we are reminded how impossible this promise was. What are we told in verse 11? Abraham and Sarah were _____
Sarah was _____
8. What was Sarah's response to this promise of the Lord? _____
9. What does she think about this promise delivered by these men? "After I am _____
_____?"
10. Then the Lord asked Abraham, "Why did _____?"
11. Sarah no longer believed that the fulfillment of the promise was possible. What is the Lord's response to her laughter in verse 14? _____
12. The Lord then goes on to repeat the promise: "I will _____
_____"
13. To seemingly make matters worse Sarah was _____ (verse 15). So she denied her actions with the words, "I did not _____."
14. But the Lord held her accountable for her actions and said, "_____."
He alone reassured her of who He was. She "laughed to herself ...". Only the Lord could hear the cry of her heart and call her to believe in His Word of promise to her and Abraham.

Part 3

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD? Earlier in this lesson we were told that we would be looking within the stories to discover what truths they reveal about God. So, the question is asked, "What do we learn about God from this story of Abraham and his three visitors?" Biblical scholars tell us that the three men were two angels and the Lord embodied in human form. He was visible, ate a meal, and engaged in conversation with Abraham and Sarah.

What does this encounter tell us about Him? Write down your thoughts as you reflect on the story...

Now, at last the Lord comes in a physical presence to tell Abraham that Sarah will have a son. When He does tell Abraham, Sarah laughs in unbelief. It's impossible. When the Lord challenges her about her laughter she cowers in fear and tries to hide behind a lie. Even though she was caught her actions do not dissuade the Lord and cause Him to withdraw His promise. Regardless of Abraham and Sarah's unbelief, God faithfully acts according to what He said He would do.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Before completing our study of this story we need to discover and reflect on applications that connect God’s Word to our lives. We want to find ways to make the story more than an historical event.

1. We see Abraham graciously display generosity towards his guests. His cordial hospitality is exemplary. Can you remember entertaining someone prominent at your home, someone you considered to be significantly important? It may have been a boss, an instructor or a mentor, someone you highly esteemed. Maybe it was a friend or an out-of-town guest whom you hadn’t seen in a long time. Showing hospitality to someone we consider to be significant is one thing.

Now take time to consider a situation when you had the opportunity to provide hospitality for a stranger or someone with whom you were not well acquainted. What are some thoughts that come to your mind? Who might that person be? How did you demonstrate hospitality to them? Would you do anything differently? _____

2. You may choose to think about entertaining the stranger in the light of Hebrews 13:2. In this verse we are encouraged to entertain strangers. Who might the stranger be for you? _____

3. As you read this story again, reflect on God as the one who is always faithful to His Word. God responds to us with undeserved love even when we laugh in doubt and unbelief. His actions toward us are loving and kind, regardless of our lack of faith to believe. What might be some things that you are learning about Him that you find next to impossible to believe and find yourself responding in unbelief, laughing on the inside? _____

PRAYER: O Lord, You are the one I desire to welcome into my heart. Abraham humbly received his guests and then opened his home to demonstrate his love toward them. I know that You have loved me and demonstrated Your love, not by the things I have done or not done, but purely out of Your love for me. As I learn to know You I ask You to give me the faith to believe that You are who You say You are. And, as I live my life, give me the faith to believe that “nothing is too hard for the Lord.” _____

LESSON FOUR

FOR THE SAKE OF TEN

GENESIS 18:16-33 – ABRAHAM, THE INTERCESSOR

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INTRODUCTION

Lesson 4 is relatively short; however, this practical teaching in this lesson will encourage us as we bring people and situations before the Lord in prayer. Prayer is the means God's people use to praise Him, thank Him, and bring cares and concerns before Him. Prayer offers the opportunity for us to bring our concerns for others. This act of praying on behalf of others is called intercessory prayer.

Abraham's nephew lived in the town of Sodom in the southern region of the land of Canaan. The wickedness of Sodom was so great and the sin of the people so grievous that God was set to destroy the city. The Lord shared with Abraham what He was going to do. We learn that Abraham, however, was not going to give in to the Lord's plan of destruction easily. He spoke up and pleaded with the Lord on behalf of the righteous. Why should the righteous be destroyed with the wicked? Then Abraham begins to negotiate, "If there are 50 righteous...45...40" and at last he asks, "What if only ten..." and the Lord promises that for the sake of ten He will not destroy Sodom. Abraham knew that God was the Judge of all the earth and that He was just.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us that we, too, have an intercessor. In Hebrews 7:25 we learn that [Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them." Because of He offered Himself for our sins once and for all He intercedes on our behalf to God the Father. We have nothing to fear. Our perfect and blameless intercessor is heard because of He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Now He intercedes for us removing the punishment we deserve for our sins.

But there's one more piece to this act of intercession. We who have become members of God's family of faith are given the privilege and responsibility to intercede on behalf of family and friends calling upon our Heavenly Father to be gracious and not give to them what they deserve. We are given the opportunity to "stand in the gap" as intercessors for others. We are called to pray for them and with them. As God the Father gave us Jesus to be our intercessor before Him, He encourages us to come before Him with our petitions, our supplications, our requests for both believers and unbelievers alike. Our petitions call upon God to bring others under the shelter of His loving kindness.

Read about Abraham's circumstances, especially as he asks the Lord not to destroy the righteous with the wicked. And, in Lesson 5 learn the outcome of his prayer of intercession.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: The story in Genesis 18 continues to recount what happens next when Abraham's three visitors are ready to leave and continue on their way. It's a good news—bad news story. First, the good news... The Lord tells Abraham and Sarah that about the same time next year Sarah will give birth to a baby boy. Celebrate! Then just before the bad news story comes a conversation between Abraham and the Lord. It's a story that reveals the intimacy of their relationship. Be on the alert. Watch for relational insights.

Once again, as we proceed with this study remember that our challenge will include a) looking at the *facts* of the story, b) discovering the *truths* we learn about God and humanity, and c) finding relevancy in the practical *application* that ties the historical event to our everyday lives.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 18:16-33.

TEACHING: Abraham's hospitality in his tent provided the environment in which the three visitors announced to him and Sarah the good news of the promised offspring. Now they had an approximate time frame and could face the reality and anticipate a new son. Using your imagination can you visualize Sarah busy setting up the baby's nursery, making frequent visits to Babies R Us, refinishing baby furniture, and purchasing the bassinet, changing table and stroller with all the gadgets—maybe even lining up weekly diaper service? Admittedly, that may be a little overboard on imagination but it may help us bring the story into situations we can relate to. For the next several months little else would be as important as planning for this upcoming and promised event.

The three visitors got up to leave. They had delivered their message to Abraham and now needed to continue on their journey. They had other things that needed to be done. Verse 16 says that “when they got up to leave, they looked down toward _____...” This necessitates the study of maps to understand locations and proximities. Look at one of the first two or three maps in the back of your Bible and locate the Dead Sea. On the west about one third of the way south along the Dead Sea you will find Hebron. The great trees of Mamre mentioned in verse 1 are at Hebron. (See Genesis 13:18.) This is where Abraham lived and where the visitors came. Verse 16 says that they looked down toward Sodom. The exact location of Sodom is not known but scholars suggest that it is further south in the direction they would have looked, or possibly down in elevation.

The verse goes on to say that Abraham walked with them awhile as they resumed their journey toward Sodom. Again, we observe his guests experiencing his warm cultural hospitality.

EXERCISE: In verse 17 the Lord lets us in on some of His own thoughts. Listen in on what He is saying...

1. "Shall I _____?"
2. Verse 18: "Abraham shall surely become a _____ and _____ nation, and all _____ shall be _____."
3. Verse 19: "For I have _____ him, that he may _____
_____ him."
4. In verse 20 He speaks to Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah. What does the Lord say?

Part 2

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the distinction between Abraham in Genesis 18:18, 19 and Sodom and Gomorrah in verses 20 and 21? _____

2. God had chosen Abraham, blessed him, and through him would accomplish His righteous purposes. He was giving to Abraham land, descendants, and wealth. Above all, the relationship was established as He covenanted with Abraham to be his God and the God of his descendants (Genesis 17:7). According to Genesis 18:17-21, what was God's answer to His own question?

3. If you were Abraham, what would such inclusion into the mind of God mean to you? _____

EXERCISE CONTINUES: The two men turned away and continued their journey to Sodom.

1. Verse 22: But what do we learn about Abraham? "Abraham _____."
2. Verses 23-25 reveal Abraham's boldness as he states his case before the Lord. First, he asks three questions:
 - a. _____?
 - b. _____?

- c. _____?
- Abraham knew the Lord to be both righteous and “Judge of all the earth” (verse 25). He acknowledges both God’s righteousness and His justice as he continues to state his case.
- a. “Far be it from You to _____
_____ Far be it from You!”
- b. “Shall not the _____?”
3. Why was Abraham so concerned about Sodom? Review Genesis 13:10-13. _____
4. In verse 26 the Lord as the righteous judge responds to Abraham. What does He say? _____

- In verse 27 we see Abraham fearful of the wretchedness of Sodom and yet lovingly concerned for his nephew Lot. Observe Abraham’s humble approach before the Lord as he says, “Behold, I have undertaken to _____.”
5. Now what are his questions in verse 28?
- a. _____
- b. _____
6. And the Lord responds, “If I find _____.”
7. Verse 29: The conversation continues and the Lord promises not to destroy Sodom if only _____ are found there.
8. Verse 30: The one who humbly sees himself as dust and ashes again boldly speaks asking that the Lord withhold His anger from him and says, “Suppose _____ are found there?”
9. Verse 31: Abraham asks, “What if only _____ can be found there?”
10. Verse 32: Then Abraham asks to speak just once more. “Suppose _____ are found there?”
And the Lord answers _____
- Their conversation is over. The Lord departs and Abraham returns home.

Part 3

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD: We have just finished gleaning facts about Abraham’s conversation with the Lord regarding the salvation or destruction of Sodom. So, we ask the question: What do we learn about God from this story? Abraham tells us something about who He is. Reread Genesis 18:25. He refers to God as Judge and knows that He will do what is right. God is both just and righteous. He is the One who declares mankind innocent or guilty. He is the only one who can. All of us have sinned and have fallen short (Romans 3:24) of the mark of perfection that His holiness demands.

Abraham acknowledged that God is a just judge and the one who can pour out His wrath on humankind for what we deserve or He can pour out grace (God giving what isn't deserved) and mercy (God not giving what is deserved). Abraham also recognized God's righteousness and believed that God was only capable of doing the right thing because both righteousness and justice are a part of who He is. It's His DNA. He cannot deny Himself.

REFLECTION:

1. Consider a time when you were in the position of having the right to dissolve a relationship because the person involved betrayed you, or maybe slandered your name, or hurt you in some way. _____
Justice would say that you would have every right to break off the relationship and maybe even take the person to court. Perhaps, however, a third party came to you representing this person and pleaded on their behalf. This party acknowledged that you had every right to sever the relationship and take this guilty person to court, but he or she pleaded with you not to deny what they knew to be true about you and begged you to offer this person forgiveness and acceptance in the place of justice.
2. We know that justice is needed, for example, when we break the law. We also know that at times we mess up. We violate trust within relationships or mistreat someone. Yet, we have probably all experienced a time when, in spite of our actions, a friend, spouse, or even a co-worker has responded with a loving action. We acted selfishly and deserved justice. We certainly did not deserve the love and forgiveness that they offered.

APPLICATION: As you consider relationships in your life...

- Recall a time when you had every right to act with justice toward someone and yet found yourself offering love and forgiveness.
- Remember who was involved.
- Review your side of the story and then their side.
- Reflect on how the story ended. You had the right to be just but you chose to forgive. Would you have said or done anything differently?

PRAYER: O Lord, I thank You that You are a just God. You govern the world with justice. I am reminded that Your justice declares me guilty but You have acted with mercy offering Your love and forgiveness. Thank You for forgiving me and for giving me the opportunity to offer Your love and forgiveness to others. _____

Part 4

TEACHING: In this story Abraham has a special role as he pleads with God on behalf of the people of Sodom and especially for his nephew Lot. Abraham interceded on behalf of others, namely the people of Sodom and for Lot and his family.

DEFINITION: Intercession – This is the act of coming before God on behalf of another pleading for the concerns of the other. In 1 Timothy 2:1 we are all encouraged to be *intercessors*, ones who come before God on behalf of others.

APPLICATION: One application from this story encourages us to be people who plead to God on behalf of others. Friends who are ill, going through rough times, experiencing loss of job, or struggling with children who have run away are all examples of times when we can be intercessors who bring before the Lord concerns on their behalf.

1. Who is one person in my life for whom I can intercede? _____
2. What is one concern you can bring before the Lord on his/her behalf? _____

3. What do I want to ask of God regarding this person's concern? _____

DIGGING DEEPER: In Romans 8:26-27 we can find great comfort knowing that God's Spirit is our intercessor. He knows both our concerns and the will of God for us. As our intercessor He prays for us even when we don't know what to pray. In your notebook write thoughts regarding the comfort you find knowing that God listens to His Spirit as He intercedes on our behalf.

MEMORIZATION: We need to have before us the constant reminder that God's Spirit intercedes on our behalf. This gives us comfort and reassurance. Take time to write out these two verses (Romans 8:26-27) on an index card and begin to memorize them. Begin to pull these verses apart by sentences and phrases.

1. What does verse 26 tell us?
 - a. When are we told in this verse that the Spirit helps us? _____
 - b. Do we always know what to pray for? _____
 - c. When we're at a loss what does the Spirit do for us? _____

2. What does verse 27 tell us? Why do we never need to fear? _____

Part 5

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. What are some things that cause you frustration or feeling overwhelmed? What are some thoughts that make you feel as though your situation or circumstance is impossible? _____

2. How comfortable are you knowing that God’s Spirit is intimately acquainted with you and knows more about you than you know about yourself? _____

3. What difference could knowing that God’s Spirit intercedes for you make in the way you approach difficult people, difficult experiences, and difficult times in your life? _____

4. How might you prepare for the next difficult time that will undoubtedly come your way? _____

TEACHING: Coming before God on behalf of another is a privilege. Abraham courageously pleaded with the Lord. He acknowledged that he was nothing but dust and ashes yet he continued with his plea for mercy. Although the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was so grievous that these cities were about to be consumed by God’s wrath, yet Abraham believed that he could turn the heart of God and cause Him to change His mind. His relationship with God was intimate. Abraham’s relationship with the One who could destroy him was also a relationship with the same One who listened to Abraham’s cry for mercy on behalf of others.

PRAYER: Abraham came boldly yet humbly before the Lord. So, in boldness and humility bring your prayers before Him lifting up your words of praise and thanksgiving, requests and concerns: _____

Consider a certain person or situation and be an *intercessor* on behalf of that person or situation. Today, Lord, I’m thinking of _____ . I pray that

LESSON FIVE

THE OUTCRY IS SO GREAT

GENESIS 19 – THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

OVERVIEW OF LESSON 5

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INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we clearly see God's wrath poured out on all the godlessness and wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is a disturbing story to read because it vividly reveals the justice of God that His holiness demands. He shows no leniency to the people of these towns. The angels acted with great resolve. They urged Lot, "Hurry! Or you will be swept away." And when Lot hesitated the men grasped their hands and safely led them out of the city. Lot, his wife, and his daughters were mercifully saved. Judgment was cast on Sodom and Gomorrah but patience and kindness on Lot and his family.

The previous lesson revealed God *grace* to Abraham as God promised to answer his prayer for Lot, his family and for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Lesson 5 we see God's *justice* at work as the towns are destroyed because of the wickedness and the great outcry against them had reach Him. We also find God acting with *mercy* as He spares the lives of Lot and his family. God was appalled by the sin of the men of Sodom; however, His love prevailed for those whom Abraham loved and He kept the promise He had made to him.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: Genesis 19 is a disturbing chapter to study. Its content is a source of contention for some people, yet we must remember that the purpose of this study is not to argue for or against a particular position but rather to gain knowledge of what is written in the Bible with the understanding that what is written is God's Word for us.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 19:1-29.

EXERCISE: At the end of Genesis 18 we read that after finishing their conversation the Lord left and Abraham went home. Although we do not know where the Lord went, we do know from Genesis 19:1 that the two angels arrived in Sodom.

1. What time of the day was it according to verse 1? _____
2. Who did they encounter? _____
3. Where was he? _____
4. What was Lot's immediate reaction when he saw them? _____

The gateway or entrance to the city was a common meeting place for the men of the city. In Genesis 18:1 we found Abraham sitting at the entrance to his tent.

5. The hospitality that Lot offered was similar to the hospitality that Abraham showed. What did he offer the men in verse 2? _____

QUESTION:

1. Do you think that Lot recognized them? Why or why not? _____

2. Immediately he appears to be offering gracious hospitality to them. Do you think Lot seems overzealous with his insistence that they stay at his home? Why or why not? _____

What are we told in verse 3? _____

3. Keep in mind Abraham's conversation with the Lord in the previous chapter. Are Sodom and Gomorrah towns in which you would like to raise your children (Genesis 18:20-21)? Why? Why not? _____

Something just isn't right here. Stay on the alert as you continue your study.

Part 2

EXERCISE:

1. How did the two men respond to Lot's invitation to his home? _____

2. In verse 3 how do we know that Lot was uncomfortable with that idea? _____

3. Lot again appears to show hospitality toward the angels. What did he prepare for them?

4. There is a hint of something going on because we are told that the bread he served them was made without _____. One has the feeling that Lot is rushing around the house with a sense of urgency. Bread made without yeast does not require the time for rising that bread with yeast demands. Compare with the meal that Abraham had prepared for them in Genesis 18:6 and the following verses: _____
5. Verse 4: Before they had gone to bed who came for a visit? _____

6. What did they want with these men (verse 5)? "Bring _____."
In Genesis 13:13 we learned that the men of Sodom were "_____

_____."
In chapter 19 we are made aware of what their great sin and wickedness were.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. One has a sense that the actions of these men were part of the accepted culture of Sodom. Apparently the city of Gomorrah was no different. Describe the condition of these men with their sin. Was it something new? Was it imbedded in the family and social culture? _____

2. If you were Lot at this moment in the story, what would you do? These are your guests. They have come into your home to eat and spend the night. Outside you know that your home is surrounded with men who want to overtake your guests with their wickedness and sin. How are you going to answer them? _____

EXERCISE:

1. Lot goes out to meet these men. Verse 6 reveals two things that Lot does and says that cause us to question his own behavior and actions. Lot went out to meet them and "_____
_____."

2. What would that action indicate to you? _____
3. How does he address them? _____
4. In verse 7 what is the proposition Lot offers them? _____

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Lot chose to live in this land of Sodom and Gomorrah. When he and Abram separated their flocks Lot took his family and herds and moved to this land that was all lush and green, land that would provide abundant food for his animals. Obviously, from verses 6 and 7 we know that Lot has become acquainted with the people addressing them as friends. Furthermore, we can also surmise that he was well acquainted with their wicked ways for he closed the door behind himself as he went to speak to them which kept the conversation and negotiations from being overheard by his guests. What might be some of your thoughts and observations regarding Lot’s character?

2. What would it be like to have one’s father offer his virgin daughters to these men and telling them that they can “do what you like with them?” A father who does what is right provides protection for his daughters. Lot provided protection for the guests in his home at the expense of his daughters. At the same time one must consider the culture. The guest within one’s home was under the protection of that home and anything would be done to provide that protection. What might be some more of your thoughts and observations regarding Lot’s character in this situation?

Part 3

EXERCISE: Next comes the aggressive action of the men outside of Lot’s home. Pay careful attention to their tactic.

1. Verse 9 says, “Stand back,” they replied. And they said, ‘This fellow [Lot] came to _____, and he has become the _____! Now we’ll _____ worse with you than with them.’” Verse 9 goes on to say that they continued to press hard against Lot and “_____.”
2. What tactics do they use in verse 9 to get their way? _____
_____ They accuse Lot of acting as their judge and insinuate that he was displaying a “better than thou” attitude. The town people had received Lot and his family even though he was a foreigner to them. Now they saw him not accepting

their cultural milieu and by not responding to their directive to bring out his guests Lot communicated that what they were doing was wrong. Did they regard him as two-faced, saying one thing and doing another? _____

3. The men inside Lot's house now take charge (verses 10 and 11). What do they do?
 - a. _____ out
 - b. and _____ Lot _____ and
 - c. _____ the door
 - d. Then they _____
4. What do they ask Lot in verse 12? _____

5. What do they instruct Lot to do? _____
6. What do they tell Lot they are about to do? _____
7. Why are they going to destroy it (verse 13)? _____
8. So, Lot takes off to find his future sons-in-law. What does he tell them? _____

9. What is their response? _____
10. Dawn is approaching and the angels act with urgency (verse 15). What are their instructions to Lot? _____
11. How does Lot respond (verse 16)? _____
12. What do the angels finally do to get him and his family to respond? _____

13. The angels brought them out of the city safely and then gave them very clear, urgent instructions. What did they tell them?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
14. In verses 18-22 we are told that for whatever reason Lot appeals to the angels to permit them to find safety in the little town of _____. One gets the sense that his health or age will not allow him to get to the mountains before disaster strikes. What does the angel promise? _____

15. Verse 23: It is dawn. Lot has safely reached Zoar and then disaster strikes. What might be your immediate reaction? _____

16. In verse 24 God's judgment and wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. What rained down? _____
 Notice that it is very carefully stated that the *Lord* caused it. The *Lord* made it happen.
17. The destruction was total. The Lord overthrew those cities. Destruction was over the entire plain. All the people and vegetation in the land was destroyed. How had God kept His promise to Abraham in Genesis 18:32? _____
18. Then comes verse 26. What was the angel's instruction in verse 17? _____
 What did Lot's wife do and what happened? _____
19. In verses 27-28 we find Abraham at the place where he had bargained with the Lord for the righteous. What did he see as he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah? _____

20. Very simply, verse 29 summarizes the chapter:
- God _____ the cities of the plain.
 - God _____ Abraham.
 - God _____ Lot _____ of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Part 4

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD? Verse 16 ends with significant words: "the Lord _____
 _____." The word *merciful* holds profound meaning for us. As you may recall, *mercy* means not receiving what is deserved. Lot had become enmeshed in the culture where he lived with his family. We sense that although he may not have engaged in the wickedness of the people that he appears to have turned a deaf ear or looked with blind eyes on the accepted sexual practices of the community in which he lived. He accepted these practices though not for himself but for others. God intervenes with His mercy for Lot and his family lest Lot himself becomes involved and ultimately becomes an advocate and defender of this way of life. For further references read Romans 1:32 and Romans 2:16 and Digging Deeper in Part 5.

We see God's *justice* executed as His arm of wrath is brought down on wickedness. We see God's *grace*, His undeserved love. His grace is poured out on those who live in a relationship of love with Him. His grace is poured out even on those who have strayed far from an intimate relationship with Him. God remembers His promises. And, we see His *mercy* at work as He sets out to rescue mankind from death that is deserved and grants deliverance.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. God is merciful. When was a time when you experienced God’s mercy? _____

2. God brings His mercy to us oftentimes through others. What has been your experience?
Consider a time when you had the opportunity to bring God’s mercy to someone by withholding what that individual may have deserved and by granting to him/her what he/she did not deserve.

3. What are some of your thoughts and feelings as you recall the situation? _____

Part 5

DIGGING DEEPER: In Genesis 19:30-38 we can read the rest of the story of Lot and his two daughters. The story is not a pleasant commentary on Lot’s life. After getting their father drunk the daughters become pregnant and their offspring become the father of the Moabites and the Ammonites. Two tribes that become a nemesis to God’s people many years later when the Israelites traveled to the Promised Land.

Another Bible reading that addresses the wickedness of Genesis 19 is found in Romans 1:18 through Romans 2:16. This section is not positive, fun, exciting material either but it is insightful. It speaks to the people of Abraham and Lot’s time; it speaks to the first century person of St. Paul’s time; and, it speaks to us as well in this year of the 21st Century. Both the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 and the reading in Romans 1 and 2 talk specifically about sexual sins. The cycle of sin that Romans addresses is not limited to sexual sins, but all types of sin. Identify the pattern as the cycle moves from indifference and tolerance to acceptance and ultimately to advocacy regarding other moral matters? _____

Using Genesis 19 and Romans 1-2 reflect how you see both God’s justice and mercy at work in Biblical times and in the present day. Do you believe this is God’s Word of truth for you? _____

PRAYER: Lord God, You demonstrated Your love as You delivered Lot and his family from the catastrophe that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah. Sometimes I find myself vacillating between the powerful pull of wickedness and the stubborn love You demonstrate as You rescue me, taking me by the hand and

removing me from all that would seek to devour me. Thank You for Your mercy. Thank You for Your Word of Truth. Thank You for the privilege You give to me to pray for those who do not yet know You. Be merciful to them and help them. I especially think of _____

LESSON SIX

WHERE IS THE LAMB?

GENESIS 21-22 – THE SACRIFICE

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INTRODUCTION

Laughter is a wonderful expression of emotion that God has given to human beings. We laugh about many different things and we laugh in many different ways. The expression of humor is to laugh. Joy makes us laugh. Surprise, love, celebration, and good news all make us laugh. Laughter makes us feel good and brings health to our bodies.

The Bible teaches that there's a time for laughter and a time for tears (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Even God laughs. He laughs at those who scoff in unbelief against Him and His anointed (Psalm 2:4) and at those who plot against the righteous (Psalm 37:13). Laughter can convey a whole gamut of subtle and not so subtle messages.

It is interesting to observe laughter in the story of Isaac. Twice in Genesis 17 references are made to laughter. When God told Abraham that Sarah would be the mother of nations, Abraham fell facedown and laughed to himself. God said that Sarah would have a son and his name would be Isaac, which means *he laughs*. In chapter 18 we read that Sarah laughed to herself behind the tent door when the visitors said that she would have a son. She thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" After Isaac was born and his father had named him, Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

We all must admit that we laugh at the impossible, even when ordained by God. We laugh at the unbelievable because from the human perspective it is impossible for conception to occur between a husband and wife who are now 100 and 90 years old respectively. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed because they knew they could do nothing for this to be possible. We even laugh at our own helplessness and call it folly. A woman wants to become a mother. A man wants to become a father. A daughter wants a godly husband. A son wants the love of a godly woman.

In spite of our laughter in unbelief, what God had promised became a reality and Isaac is born at last! Of course, there was laughter and tears of joy! Isaac, as his name implies, brought laughter from the Lord to the home of these new parents. And, we are all invited to laugh with them. Throughout the years people have laughed with Sarah. Consider laughter in your life. God brings surprises to your life and mine, surprises that are unexpected, unusual, and even impossible to believe. Look around you and celebrate the reasons for your laughter as He comes to your through the lives of others. Remember, God laughs, too!

Part 1

INTRODUCTION: Now we move on with the story of Abraham and Sarah. The Lord has promised not only that they would have offspring but that within the year Sarah would conceive and have a son. The story resumes in Genesis 21. In this lesson we will focus on Genesis 21:1-7 and Genesis 22:1-19. Read these two sections in their entirety. Begin to ask some questions as you read. For example, who are the characters and what are they doing. Ask the who, what, where, when, and why questions. They help to make the story come alive.

EXERCISE: We've waited a long time with Abraham and Sarah to hear the words of Genesis 21:1-2. The Lord was gracious to fulfill His promise to Sarah.

1. What exactly did God do according to verse 2? _____
2. What did Abraham name him (verse 3)? _____
3. Abraham was obedient to the Lord's command for all who were to live under the covenant He made with Abraham. What was the command in Genesis 17:12? _____

Circumcision was not an option for the men who were a part of Abraham's household. So, when Isaac was eight days old he was _____ (verse 4).

4. God wanted to make sure that everyone who ever read this story would understand that Abraham was an old man. As Sarah mentioned in Genesis 18:12 she was _____ and Abraham was _____. In other words, from the human perspective God's promise was impossible. We are told in Genesis 21:5 that Abraham was _____ years old when Isaac was born! Sarah was _____ years old!
5. Isaac means _____. What meaning for Isaac does your Bible give in the footnotes? Consider the laughter that's gone on during these many years as they anticipate the promise fulfilled:
 - a. Genesis 17:17 – Who laughed? _____ What did he say? _____
 - b. Genesis 18:12 – Who laughed? _____ What did she say? _____
 - c. Genesis 21:6 – Who laughed? _____ What did she say? _____

6. It is interesting to look at two things:
 - a. What were the different types of laughter? In the Genesis 17 and 18 references the laughter was in unbelief. One senses their feeling of hopelessness.
 - b. In Genesis 21:6 one undoubtedly recognizes their laughter as celebration and thanksgiving. The promise once given has been fulfilled at last.
 7. What was their focus that caused them to laugh in unbelief? _____
 8. What was their focus as they celebrated the promise fulfilled? _____
 9. Initially they looked only at themselves. As we would say today, their “time clocks” had run out. Their bodies were old and worn out. When they were laughing in celebration they were looking at the Lord and what He had done in spite of their hopeless condition. Recall Genesis 18:14.
-

PERSONAL APPLICATION: The tendency of the human mind is to first look inward and weigh one’s own potential and capabilities. We set out to accomplish things on our own and often fail to look about us for the help and direction that God offers until we’ve accepted the fact that what we’re trying to do is impossible. Sometimes our help comes through other people.

When have you experienced something impossible, something that challenged you beyond your own capabilities? Was it from your perspective in an area of weakness? What was your response to the opportunity? Did you laugh? Did you say to yourself, “Who me? You have got to be kidding. I can’t do that?” Often these remarks are made because we only look to ourselves. Often others have seen in you the potential that you have yet to identify. List some of those things that you may have been asked to do and have found yourself laughing in unbelief but then turning to laugh as act of celebration and praise. Note some of your insights: _____

Part 2

TEACHING: Genesis 22 relates one of the most dramatic stories ever told. It seems unbelievable. Why would God do such a thing? Why the need to test Abraham? Wasn’t the long wait for a son enough for these folks? If You, Lord, are loving and kind toward those You created, why would You ever test them? Let’s take a look. It will be helpful to reread Genesis 22:1-19.

EXERCISE: Some time later God decided to test Abraham.

1. In verse 2 what was God’s directive to Abraham? _____
-

2. There was to be no mistake to whom God was referring when He said, “Take your _____, your only _____, _____, whom you love.”
3. They were to go to the region of Moriah. Mount Moriah was the mountain on which Jerusalem would be built and where much later the great _____ of King _____ would be constructed (2 Chronicles 3:1). Mount Moriah was later called Mount Zion.

TEACHING: The request that Abraham sacrifice his son as a burnt offering was not an unusual one. The people that occupied the land offered burnt sacrifices to their gods. Such sacrifices were believed to be honorable and what the gods demanded. What was unusual was that the God of Abraham would ask for human sacrifice. Remember, Adam and Eve were not slain by God because of their sin of disobedience. Cain was not killed by God because he murdered his brother. Noah, Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah were not destroyed for their sins either. The God of Abraham had told him that he would be the father of nations. This God had covenanted with Abraham to be his God and that Abraham and his descendants would be His people.

REFLECTIVE QUESTION: Why do you think Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac, the promised son? _____

REFLECTION:

1. Can you imagine what Abraham must have been enduring in his heart as he prepared to leave (verse 3)? Early the next morning he saddled up, chopped wood, packed up, and left with Isaac and two of his servants. Can you envision his good-bye to Sarah? Had he told her what the Lord had said? Did she know that she would never see her son again? Many things we don’t know as fact; we can only imagine. What might be some of the thoughts of your imagination? _____

2. The journey took three days and then Abraham knew that the time was drawing near for him to sacrifice Isaac (verse 4). In verse 5 they separate from the two servants explaining that they are going to go to the mountain to worship and then will return. Making altars for worship was not unusual for Abraham. We don’t know for certain and can only surmise that Isaac had experienced worship and the sacrifice of slain animals.
3. Verse 6 tells us that Abraham put the wood on Isaac for him to carry and he carried the fire (probably a bucket of hot coals) and the knife. Imagine the conversation that ensued on the way

to the place of sacrifice. Isaac was quick to realize that something was missing. They had the wood and the fire but they had no lamb for the burnt offering.

4. Imagine the two servants left behind. They may not have been in hearing distance so all they see are the father and his son walking off together to worship.

MEMORIZATION: The words that Abraham speaks to his son are ones to place in the memory library of your own heart and mind. What does he say in verse 8? Write out the words: “God will _____.”

Once again, you are encouraged to write these words on an index card. In addition to the verse, write on the card thoughts and even a prayer from your own heart. Then over the next days learn this verse so that these words can never be taken from you.

Part 3

EXERCISE:

1. Verses 9 and 10 appear to be written so matter-of-factly. What did Abraham do?
 - a. Built _____
 - b. Arranged _____
 - c. Bound _____
 - d. Laid _____
 - e. Reached _____
 - f. Took _____
2. One can't help but ask the question: What about Isaac? What did he do when he understood that he was to be the sacrifice? What do you think he learn about his father and the faith his father had in his God? _____
3. Could anything have been harder for a father than this moment? And, this is the moment God intercedes. Verse 11 begins with the big little word “but.” The angel of the Lord calls out to Abraham. What does he tell Abraham in verse 12a? _____

4. Why the test (verse 12b)? _____
God knew; Abraham knew; Isaac knew.

TEACHING: We know that Abraham feared God (Genesis 22:12).

- **DEFINITION:** *Fear* has different meanings. Fear in its use in this passage does not mean to be afraid of but rather means to have love and reverence for, respect, honor, to hold in awesome esteem. Abraham feared God even above the love he had for his son.

DIGGING DEEPER: At the end of verse 12, following the word son, is a cross-reference indicator. Note the letter and find the verse reference and the letter in the cross-reference at the center of the page. One of the references will be verse 2 of Genesis 22 where God carefully articulates that Abraham's one and only son was to be sacrificed. Another reference is John 3:16. Write out this verse: _____

1. In this passage who is the Father? _____
2. Who is the one and only Son? _____

From these references we learn that the story in Genesis 22 is a precursor to the event that would happen many years later, also on Mt. Moriah, Mt. Zion, when out of His great love for us all God would give His one and only Son, Jesus, as the ultimate sacrifice for all of our sins and for the sins of the whole world.

For a sacrifice for sin the Heavenly Father could not stop the sacrifice of His Son on the altar of the cross. He could not stop the sacrifice if humanity was to be saved from eternal death. No ram was found in the thicket. No other sacrifice could be found! Only the death of His perfect Son would do. So, He followed through and because of the shed blood of Jesus, all humanity's sin has been forgiven. All of humanity can claim the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus.

For the eager learner there is one more cross-reference. In addition to John 3:16 consider 1 John 4:9. Again we can see that both the Old and New Testaments are tied together with these cross-references. What insights do these verses add to your learning of the sacrifice God made for the sins of the world?

MEMORIZATION: Genesis 22:12 beginning with the words "Now I know..." and John 3:16 and also 1 John 4:9 are additional verses that you are encouraged to memorize. Placed on index cards they can accompany you and become your own treasured Word of God. You are also to look at the verses surrounding these references, especially the New Testament verses. They will give added wisdom and insights to your ongoing study. Enjoy your treasure hunt, your hunt for the treasured Word! And, don't forget to generously share the riches of your treasured library with others.

Part 4

EXERCISE: The emotional excitement for father and son must have been overwhelming. His son whom he was to sacrifice was spared death!

1. In verse 13, instead of the shedding of Isaac's blood what becomes the sacrificed burn offering to the Lord? _____ Once again we are reminded that the shed blood was the acceptable offering to God.
2. Abraham called the place Jehovah-jirah which means _____. As we consider John 3:16 once again we know that God provided His Son as Savior.
3. Verses 15-18 are beginning to sound very familiar. In your own words what does God say to Abraham: _____

4. And in verse 19 we are told that Abraham and Isaac lived in _____.

WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT GOD: Probably the one word that reminds us again of God's great love for humankind is the word gracious. The Lord was gracious to Sarah. He kept His promise to her. We see our God as a gracious God throughout this lesson. Gracious reminds us of God's grace poured out on us. Nothing is earned or deserved and no worthiness is found in us, only His grace given for us. He is gracious and keeps His promises. He is gracious and saves us from our sinful condition by giving His one and only Son. He is gracious and provides for our every need of body and soul.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

1. The more we learn about God the more we realize how little there is that we can do. We can glean application for this lesson as we observe Abraham. His immediate reaction to God's grace was to worship the Lord. He did worship as he and Isaac sacrificed the ram. What might be our sacrifice, our act of worship? Psalm 51:17 tells us what the sacrifices are that God receives. Write out the verse: "The sacrifices of God are _____
_____ You will not despise."
2. What is the sacrifice of your heart as you bring before Him a broken spirit, a broken and repentant heart confessing your sins of guilt and shame? Take time to honestly and openly share these things with the Lord. _____

3. God delights in our words and expressions of thanksgiving. Read Psalm 51:15. "...and my mouth will declare Your praise." So, how do we praise God? What does that mean? If we are to praise Him, what do we say? We praise Him by sharing with Him our words of thanksgiving.

Thank Him for who He is. Review some of the “What we learn about God” sections of previous lessons. Thank Him for what He has done. Thank Him for what He has provided. We all appreciate words of gratitude for something we have said or done. We are grateful when people acknowledge something about our character or personality that they recognize. Lavish on Him your words of praise and thanksgiving.

PRAYER: Let this be a time for you to enjoy offering your sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise:

Part 5

INTRODUCTION: We are about to wrap up the story of Abraham. In Genesis 23 we are told that Sarah lived to be _____ years old and then she died in _____. This chapter also relates how Abraham acquired the land deeded to him for her burial site. For now, skip over to Genesis 25.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Genesis 25:7-11.

EXERCISE:

1. How long did Abraham live (verse 7)? _____
2. What does verse 8 tell us about Abraham when he died? _____

3. Who buried him (verse 9)? _____
4. Where was he buried (verses 9-10)? _____
5. With whom was Abraham buried? _____
6. God blessed Isaac after his father’s death. Where did Isaac live? _____

Note: The next aspect of this lesson is designed to give you practice with cross-references. If no cross-reference is indicated in the Bible that you are using simply follow the references provided in the exercise.

7. Notice the cross-reference after Roi. Find the verse and the referenced indicated in the column. Look up and read Genesis 16:7-14. Isaac, the son of Abraham, chose to live near Beer Lahai Roi. Recall a different experience Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, Abraham’s other son, had at Beer Lahai Roi before Ishmael was born when she ran away from Sarai.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Death isn't something that we think about very often, especially when we're young. But, maybe this is an appropriate time to consider your own aging process and the fact that someday, like Abraham and Sarah, you, too, will grow old and die.

1. Have you considered where you would like to be buried?
2. With whom would you like to be buried?
3. Who will possess the things that you own?
4. Are you giving gifts to those who will live after you?
5. What would you like to have others say about you when you die?
6. What do you want to leave as a legacy for your children and descendants?
7. What steps are you taking now to make these things happen?

PRAYER: O Lord God, You blessed Abraham and Sarah with a long life. You were faithful and kept Your promise giving to them land and a son. You established them as the father and mother of nations and yet they knew only their promised son Isaac. As You were faithful to them You have been faithful to me. Thank You for Your great love poured out on me and on all those I love. As I consider that my life, too, will end in death I pray that _____

TEACHING: Characters such as Abel and Noah are mentioned in *God's Plan, Our Choice*. In this study reference was made to the faith chapter Hebrews 11. As we close out the story of Abraham we turn to Hebrews again. Four references are made to Abraham in this chapter and they all begin with the words, "By faith..." Read Hebrews 11:8-19 and using your highlighter mark these references. Now this entire section in Hebrews 11 is familiar to you because of your study of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 12-25.

EXERCISE:

1. In Hebrews 11:8 two cross-references are given. You will be able to quickly locate where this story of Abraham is told from these cross-references.
 - a. What is the story? _____
 - b. What cross-references are given? _____
 - c. What is the chapter in Genesis where Abraham was called, given a promise, and obediently left even though he didn't know where he was going? Genesis _____

Note: Those of you who do not have a cross-reference column the cross-references are Genesis 12:1-4, 7.

2. In Hebrews 11:9 we are told that “by faith” Abraham made his home in the Promised Land. He lived like a stranger in this foreign land and lived in tents.

a. What are the cross-references that are given after the word “tents”? _____

b. What are the chapters in Genesis where this is found? Genesis _____ & _____

Note: If no cross-references are given in the Bible you are using, locate Genesis 12:8 and Genesis 18:1, 9.

3. In Hebrews 11:11 several cross-references are given.

a. What is the story? _____

b. What is the cross-reference following the word “father”? _____

c. What chapter in Genesis is where God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled? Genesis _____

Note: If the Bible you are using gives no cross-reference, locate Genesis 21:2.

4. In Hebrews 11:12...

a. What is the cross-reference following the word “seashore”? _____

b. What chapter in Genesis tells of God renewing the covenant promise that He made to Abraham? Genesis _____

c. What is the covenant promise? _____

Note: If the Bible you are using gives no cross-reference, locate Genesis 22:17.

5. In Hebrews 11:17-19 another story is mentioned that will be familiar.

a. What is the story? _____

b. What is the cross-reference that you would use to determine where this story is found? _____ The cross-reference would probably be the one following the word “sacrifice”.

c. What is the chapter in Genesis where God tested Abraham who then obediently went to sacrifice Isaac? Genesis _____

Note: If no cross-reference is given in the Bible you are using, locate Genesis 22:1-10.

Several chapters in Genesis tell stories about Abraham. Several verses in Hebrews 11 remind us of these stories and encourage us to act in faith as stories are added to our life’s journey. Abraham’s stories communicate to us God’s grace, His unconditional love, for those who live in a relationship with Him. At the same time, Abraham’s life stories also remind us that God is just. He acts in mercy toward those who believe in Him. His justice demands punishment for sin and yet He listens as His Spirit intercedes for us. God’s promise to be our God is truly our blessing!

UNIT REVIEW

**GOD'S PROMISE,
OUR BLESSING**

REVIEW

This particular exercise was designed for the purpose of affirming your growth and knowledge of the Old Testament characters named Abraham and Sarah. Let's take time to review the steps we took:

1. We read the individual story and noted the *facts* associated with the event. What were the four stories we studied in Lessons 3-6?
 - a. Lesson 3 _____
 - b. Lesson 4 _____
 - c. Lesson 5 _____
 - d. Lesson 6 _____

2. We learned different things about God and humanity. What were the different *truths* that we learned under the section of each part entitled "What We Learned about God?"
 - a. Lesson 3 _____
 - b. Lesson 4 _____
 - c. Lesson 5 _____
 - d. Lesson 6 _____

3. We looked for ways to apply the lesson of a story that took place a long time ago and find meaning and personal application for our lives today. What was an *application* we learned in each part?
 - a. Lesson 3 _____
 - b. Lesson 4 _____
 - c. Lesson 5 _____
 - d. Lesson 6 _____

4. Finally, we looked at Hebrews 11. In this chapter several of the stories were noted that revealed Abraham's faith. We learned that by using the cross-references we are able to quickly locate the Old Testament story from a New Testament reference. We experienced moving in reverse from the New to the Old Testament. If you were doing an intense study of Hebrews 11 and wanted to review one of these stories but didn't know where it was written, the cross-reference would be extremely helpful.

CLOSURE TO GOD’S PROMISE, OUR BLESSING: You are encouraged to press on with your study. You are learning much. You are navigating more comfortably through the Bible. You are developing a degree of comfort as you pursue your study of what God’s Word say to you.

PRAYER: O Lord, thank You for Your Word that tells me about such men of faith as Abraham. Even though he never experienced all that You promised, You enabled him to see with eyes of faith into the future. He saw what was promised. Give me such a faith, a faith that believes You are gracious and merciful to me, a faith that believes Jesus is my Hope. And grant me the eyes of faith to know that I have the promise of life everlasting with You in heaven. _____

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