

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH!

Welcome to Guidebook 2 of our series on the Journey of Faith. We've been following Abraham and Sarah's travels and encounters with God, and the promises that shape their lives. But the promises of land, people and blessing are still yet to be realised. There are hints of the blessing that's been bestowed on Abraham but the land remains occupied, there is still no true heir of the promise (despite Sarah's best efforts to find a shortcut) and Abraham and Sarah are ageing.



Will these promises ever be fulfilled? Will God be faithful? Will Abraham and Sarah ultimately trust God or will they finally give in to despair and unbelief? These questions remain unanswered as we turn toward the latter years of Abraham's life. Indeed, we'll track the story beyond Abraham's life to the next two generations and ask some of the same questions of them!

This is a good point for us to stop and reflect on what we've learnt so far from Abraham's journey of faith. Take a moment to write some reflections here.

What have you learnt about the life of faith?

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How has Abraham's story helped to shed light on Christ and the promises wrought on the cross?

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Why should we continue to persevere in faith when those promises sometimes seem so far away?

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Study 6

A SURPRISING MODEL IN THE JOURNEY OF FAITH!

Genesis 20-21

Bible Talk Discussion

What insights or observations from Sunday's talk did you find helpful, interesting or confusing? Note down any questions and see if you can answer them along the way.

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Is there anyone in your life that you've particularly looked up to for their integrity and just general way they conduct themselves – in life, family, leadership or work?

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Growth Group Discussion

1. Scanning back through Genesis 12-19 which contains Abraham's Journey of Faith so far, what have been some of his particularly 'faith-full' moments?

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As you've discussed, Abraham has some notable moments where his faith in God shines through. But that's what makes moments like we see in Genesis 20 all the more significant. Abraham is a real follower of God, in that in the midst of his faith, his weakness and sin is a reality for him as well.

Read Genesis 20:1-18

After the events surrounding the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham and his wife once again pull up stakes and are on the move (Genesis 20:1).



Have a look at the map on the following page. In this part of their journey they arrive in the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur before heading into the region of Gerar where they meet the king, Abimelech.

2. What do you think is motivating Abraham to come up with this on-going strategy (v13) he's devised with his wife?

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In fact it's not the only time Abraham has done this. Do you remember what happened when they went out to Egypt? To jog your memory, you might like to have a look at Genesis 12:10-20.

Leaving aside the fact that Abraham is purposely putting someone in the position where they would commit adultery, how does Abraham's actions potentially put in jeopardy the clear fulfillment of God's promises to him?

3. From the moment of God's intervention (v3-7), and then Abimelech's response (v8-18), what would you say about Abimelech's character?

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4. How does God's special favour upon Abraham come through in the events of chapter 20?

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5. Besides messing up and giving his wife away, what's the role that Abraham is called to take towards Abimelech? What do you think about that?

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In fact the word 'prophet' appears in Genesis 20v7 for the first time in the bible. As God's prophet, Abraham represents God, and intercedes for others.

There is some rich irony going on throughout the events here. Abraham's role is to intercede for Abimelech and his household, despite the fact that God's judgement is a result of Abraham's own actions. But also, Abraham is called on to pray for the removal of infertility with Abimelech's household which would bring an immediate result, all the while Abraham, we would presume, would have been praying for his wife's own infertility, without any result. This goes to show, what has inhibited the arrival a child for Abraham and Sarah is not their lack of faith or a faulty prayer life. The arrival of their own child is because of God's sovereign timing.



Thinking back over the course of Abraham's journey of faith, Abraham took God at his word and along with his wife, travelled from Haran into Canaan. And ever since they've been travelling tent-dwellers within the land that God said would one day be theirs. At certain points, fear seems to take over Abraham but God never relents in his commitment (his covenant) that Abraham is his chosen one to receive - land, people, blessing and be a blessing to others. And then finally, the promise that through Abraham and Sarah there would be a people, a great nation, starts to come true. Read Genesis 21:1-7

6. There's been a lot of laughter in the past over God's promise that Abraham and Sarah could ever have a child (see Genesis 17:16-17; 18:11-15), but now Sarah laughs again. What's the difference between those past moments of laughter, and the moment of laughter that Sarah now experiences?

At Journey's End



If you compare Abimelech and Abraham in this moment, Abimelech looks by far and away more righteous. And yet God has chosen Abraham to be the recipient of incredible promises that would ultimately lead to Jesus. And it's through Jesus, that God's promises flow to us. In the journey of faith of Abraham we learn that what counts for salvation is not what we do, but what God does for us.

Ephesians 1:1-6

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

7. How does this passage in Ephesians speak of the blessings that come to those who are in Jesus?

8. God does not wait for people to show signs of righteous living. As with Abraham, he chooses a people to belong to himself, or as Ephesians says, 'in love he predestines us for adoption..'. Predestination is a topic that can bring a lot of debate, but according to Ephesians, what should it bring about in his people?

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9. At the start of this study, we thought about people in our lives who we see as having admirable character. What do you think of the possibility that those who are not part of God's covenant chosen people, can be more admirable than the people of God?

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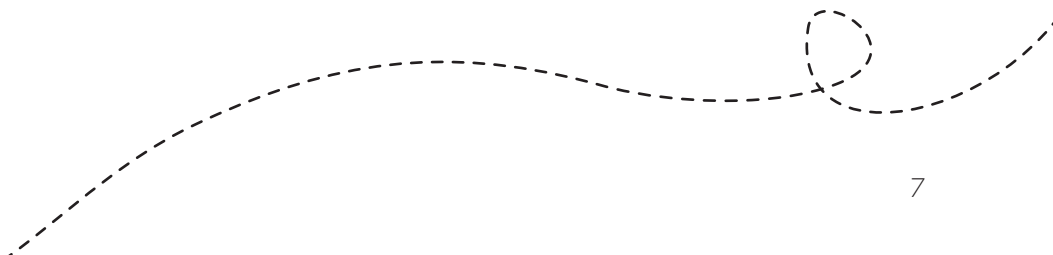
10. In your life, are you full of praise and thankfulness for the reality that salvation does not depend on what you do, but on God's own grace?

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Pray

In the light of Abraham's moment of weakness and sin, and yet God's unrelenting gracious choosing of him, there are things we can pray for.

- Spend time in prayer, praising God for his glorious grace which he has freely given us in Jesus.
- Praise God that it never depends on what we do, but on God's own choice and that Jesus is the one brings blessing to us as he dealt with our sin on the cross.

Upcoming Event

