

Study 3

ASSURANCE IN THE JOURNEY OF FAITH!

Genesis 15

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.

Growth Group Discussion

In Genesis chapter 15 we read about a two part encounter between the LORD and Abraham that contains some powerful, and at times strange, images symbolising God's presence and promises. It's also the first time we read of Abraham speaking to God during their encounters. However, in these first moments of return dialog with God, Abraham doesn't exactly shower himself in glory. And it's probably not what we'd expect to see from a man who is later rewarded for his faith in God's promises.

As a group discuss some of the characteristics you perceive in people you'd consider as having great or strong faith?

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Faith and Righteousness

Read Genesis 15:1-6

In both parts of this encounter we're going to see a similar pattern occur in the way God and Abraham interact.

1. Using the table below fill in the blanks of part one of the encounter...



God's Promises
to Abraham



Abraham's
Response



How God reassures
Abraham

2. What stands out for you in the first part of this encounter between God and Abraham?

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Even though we're only a few chapters into Abraham's faith journey it's already been a pretty topsy-turvy expedition. He's been chosen by God (somewhat at random it would seem) and God has made some incredible promises to him. Sometimes he's shown great trust in God's promises and at other times he's seemingly put the promises in extraordinary jeopardy. Now, as Abraham is given reassurance by God that the promises are still going to be fulfilled, his response is to seemingly question whether God's promises are even possible.

Yet, despite all that has gone on for Abraham and despite his apparent hesitancy to trust God, we read in verse 6 that Abraham does believe God. In the good the bad and the ugly of Abraham's journey we discover that Abraham considers God to be true, reliable and trustworthy.

3. What does this tell us about the nature of 'belief' or 'faith' and how God responds to Abraham's belief?

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4. What do you think it means in verse 6 that God credited Abraham with righteousness?

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The fact that Abraham is declared righteous by God is remarkable and we're going to explore that further in a moment, but for now let's have a look at the second part of this encounter between God and Abraham in Genesis 15.



A Covenant Made

Read Genesis 15:7-21

5. Using the table below fill in the blanks of this encounter...



God's Promises
to Abraham



Abraham's
Response



How God reassures
Abraham

6. What stands out for you in this encounter between God and Abraham? Did you notice any similarities or differences between the first and second parts here in Genesis 15?

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7. Can you connect any parts of God's prophesy in verses 13-16 with parts of the bible's story regarding Abraham's descendants?

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Abraham and His World

The second part of God's interaction with Abraham comes in the form of a covenant ceremony that appears to be a pretty strange ritual. This whole covenant making process seems to follow the pattern of ancient Near Eastern land grant treaties. In these treaties the two parties would come together and;

1. Seek out Divine Witness
2. Make promises to each other
3. Establish the terms and conditions
4. Determine curses and blessings for breaking or keeping the covenant

The act of killing and dividing animals also appears to be a form of ancient contractual agreement. It is thought that the two parties would divide the animals in half and then walk together between the halves indicating that if anyone broke the covenant they would share the fate of the animals surrounding them.

This however, is no ordinary land treaty. As Abraham seemingly goes into a trance like state, the somewhat pyrotechnic display of the flaming torch and smoking fire pot seem to represent the reality that God has moved between the animals on his own. Imagine the wonder and delight Abraham must have felt as he was not asked to join God in this act. This was an unconditional, single sided covenant.

God was indicating that if he were to break his word he would be destroyed like the animals, guaranteeing Abraham's descendants would get the land or God would die. And God cannot die.



8. In this covenant between God and Abraham what are the actions promised and blessings received by each party. Fill in the tables below and discuss what you discover.

God



Actions
Promised



Blessings
Received

Abraham



Actions
Promised



Blessings
Received

At Journey's End



There's still a long way to go in our exploration of Abraham's journey throughout this series, but looking into the distance, we see that the journey finds its completion far into the future. In fact what we read here in Genesis 15 will be picked up particularly by Paul and other writers in the New Testament as they seek to demonstrate the role of faith in God's redemption plan through Jesus.

Read Romans 4:3-5, 20-25 & Galatians 3:1-14

³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...

²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our LORD, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Romans 4:3-5, 20-25

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? ⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham...

¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:1-7,11-14

9. What do we learn about faith and righteousness through Jesus in light of Abraham’s faith in Genesis 15?



God’s Worldwide Redemption Plan

God’s covenant with Abraham was completely one-sided. All the cost was incurred by God and all the blessings were received by Abraham.

10. What similarities are there between God’s covenant of salvation with us and his covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15?

11. What are we called to believe in, to be justified by faith?

The joy of knowing that God’s covenant of salvation is entirely based on grace, is a remarkable comfort and immense privilege.

12. How can you share the joy, peace, and conviction you’ve been given by God with others? Identify a specific person you might connect with in the next week, and think about a time you could bring the truth of salvation by faith alone up with them. It might be a brother or sister in Christ or it might be someone who is yet to discover the wonder of this gospel truth.

Name:

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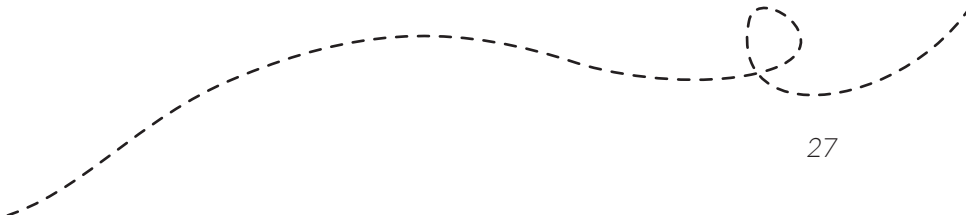
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Pray

In light of God’s covenant of salvation:

- Give thanks that God is a mighty God who keeps all his promises and for Jesus who gave himself for our sins to rescue us just as God promised he would. Praise him for bearing all of the cost and imparting all of the blessings to us through his Spirit by faith in Jesus.
- Ask God to strengthen you by his Spirit to know and to believe just how wonderful God’s love for you is, that you might grow as a followers of Jesus and together proclaim the wonder of gospel.
- Pray for the people you identified as those you could connect with to encourage and speak to them about the truth of God’s plan for salvation in Jesus.



Upcoming Events

MAY 20

Sticky Date & Stories



JUNE 3

Working Bee

