

## **The Abraham Saga - Genesis 12-21**

When was a time you made a promise to someone? Was it hard to keep that promise?

- Why are our promises so hard to keep sometimes?

### **Section 1: Abraham at 75 years-old**

#### **Genesis 12:1 - 8 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

<sup>2</sup> “I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”

<sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. <sup>5</sup> He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

<sup>6</sup> Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup> The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

<sup>8</sup> From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

What are the promises given to Abraham in this passage?

What do you notice about how Abraham responds?

Is there a time in your life when God asked to you make an unexpected change and you followed His command? What was the outcome of following His command?

Is there something God is calling you to right now? How are you responding to that call?

#### **Genesis 12:9-20**

<sup>9</sup> Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. <sup>11</sup> As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let

you live. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

<sup>14</sup> When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. <sup>15</sup> And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. <sup>16</sup> He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

<sup>17</sup> But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram’s wife Sarai. <sup>18</sup> So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!” <sup>20</sup> Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Abraham had already received a command and specific promises (verses 1-8) from God. Even though he had those promises, why do you think he made the decisions he did in Egypt?

Is there a time when you wavered in your belief in God’s promises in a way that caused you to take matters into your own hands? What was the result of that choice?

In general, when do you find it most difficult to trust God or to wait on Him?

Can you think of a time when you experienced God’s faithfulness in spite of your own poor decision making?

## **Section 2: Abraham is Getting Older (Somewhere between 75 & 86)**

### **Genesis 15:1-18**

<sup>1</sup> After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,  
your very great reward.”

<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” <sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

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

<sup>7</sup> He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

<sup>8</sup> But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

<sup>9</sup> So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

<sup>10</sup> Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. <sup>11</sup> Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. <sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

<sup>17</sup> When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates."

Why do you think Abraham, while still being a man of faith, expresses doubt at two points in this passage?

What is your typical reaction when you waiver in unbelief?

### **Section 3: A New Testament Example**

#### **Matthew 26:31-35**

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

<sup>32</sup> But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

<sup>33</sup> Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

<sup>34</sup> "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

<sup>35</sup> But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

#### **Matthew 26:69-75**

<sup>69</sup> Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.

<sup>70</sup> But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

<sup>71</sup> Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

<sup>72</sup> He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

<sup>73</sup> After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away."

<sup>74</sup> Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup> Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

#### **John 21:15-19**

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

<sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

<sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

What significance does it have that Jesus always knew that His disciples would fall away?

Just a matter of hours before his denial Peter stated, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." Do you find it surprising that he overestimates his faithfulness?

- What insight does this give each of us into how we see our own capabilities?

Despite Peter's good intentions, he didn't follow through with them. How do we see this played out in our lives?

- Despite Peter's failure, Jesus welcomes and redeems him, and establishes him as a leader of all those who will trust in Him. How have you seen God redeem your circumstances after failure or a time a wavering?

Can you think of other Biblical examples of people who still had belief, yet doubted God's work or promises?

What do we learn about God's character in His responses to Abraham & Peter's doubts?

When have you seen God respond lovingly to your own doubts or the doubts of other people in your life?

## Section 4: Abraham is Still Getting Older

We all have ideas about what our lives should look like. What desires and hopes do you have that are yet to be fulfilled?

### Genesis 16:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; <sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

...When she [Hagar] knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

<sup>6</sup> "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

How did the decision get made to have a son? Whose decision was it?

- Abraham and Sarah didn't consult God before choosing to have Ishmael. Have you ever made a decision without consulting God? What were the consequences?

This part of the story parallels elements of the Garden of Eden story. How are these stories similar?

- What do their similarities tell us about mankind?

Despite Abraham and Sarah's doubt and attempts to take control of their situation, God still remained faithful and extended his blessing to Ishmael. How have you experienced God's redemption when you've relinquished control?

- How can we help one another keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we wait instead of taking control ourselves?

### **Genesis 17:1-8, 17-21**

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

<sup>3</sup> Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup> 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 and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

<sup>17</sup> Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" <sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

<sup>19</sup> Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. <sup>20</sup> And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."

We see in the passage that God specifically confirms all of His promises to Abraham. While we may not often (or ever) hear God's audible voice, He confirms His promises to us all the time and in many ways. What are ways you have experienced assurance or confirmation of God's promises?

Consider the amount of time between when God called Abraham in Genesis 12 and the other times He appeared to Him. How can Abraham's experience encourage us as we wait on God?

When have you intentionally waited on God's timing in a difficult situation? What was the result of that waiting?

We saw Abraham sometimes make decisions out of fear or take matters into his own hands during his 25-year waiting period. What are your own tendencies when trusting God is hard?

## Section 5: Abraham talks with God

What are some ways God invites you into conversation with Him?

### Genesis 18:16-21

<sup>16</sup> When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. <sup>17</sup> Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? <sup>18</sup> Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. <sup>19</sup> For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." <sup>20</sup> Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous <sup>21</sup> that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

Why does God share His plan to weigh or judge Sodom and Gomorrah with Abraham?

### Genesis 18:22-33

<sup>22</sup> The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. <sup>23</sup> Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup> What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" <sup>26</sup> The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." <sup>27</sup> Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, <sup>28</sup> what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?" "If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it." <sup>29</sup> Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?" He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it." <sup>30</sup> Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." <sup>31</sup> Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?" He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it." <sup>32</sup> Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." <sup>33</sup> When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

What are Abraham's prayers like? How does he approach God?

- What do we learn about God and the relationship He offers us from this exchange with Abraham?

Do you feel the freedom to wrestle through honest questions with God?

In light of Abraham's relationship with Lot (Gen. 14:11-16; Gen. 19), what can you infer is a motivating factor in Abraham's questions to God?

- What do you often pray for?

- What are frequent motivators for your prayers?

### **Genesis 18:23-25**

<sup>23</sup> Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup> What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Looking at Abraham’s first (and subsequent) question(s), what does he think God is going to do? How is that different from what God actually told Abraham He was going to do in vv. 20-21?

What does Abraham’s question reveal about his view of God? Why does this matter?

- What does the way you pray reveal about what you believe is true of God’s character?

Look ahead to Genesis 19. What is God’s eventual response to Abraham’s prayer and Sodom and Gomorrah’s wickedness?

How does the Gospel inform our understanding of the answer to Abraham’s question, “Will God sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

- Because of this freedom through the Gospel, how do you think God is inviting you to engage with Him?

## **Section 6: Abraham at 99+**

If someone wanted to make you laugh, what should they do?

When we normally think about laughing, we think about responding to something we find humorous or funny. What other types of laughter are there?

Read Genesis 17:17. Abraham responded to God by laughing to himself. If you were Abraham, how do you think you would have responded to God and why?

- Which promises of God do you feel are “too good to be true”? How do you respond to them any why?

### **Genesis 18:9-15**

<sup>9</sup> “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

<sup>10</sup> Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup> Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’

<sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

<sup>15</sup> Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Sarah lied when her disbelief became known. Does she have good reasons for her disbelief?

Verse 14 declares that nothing is too hard for God. Think back over the past few days. Is there an area of your life where you have acted like something is too hard for God?

### **Genesis 21:1-7**

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” <sup>7</sup> And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

If you were Sarah, how would you have felt when this promise was fulfilled?

How can Sarah’s experience inform us about who God is and empower us to trust Him more?

## **Section 6: Jesus. The Ultimate Fulfillment of the Promise to Abraham**

### **Matthew 1:17**

Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

### **Luke 1:46-55**

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.



<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
<sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
even as he said to our fathers.”

### **John 8:52-58**

<sup>52</sup> At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. <sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

<sup>54</sup> Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. <sup>55</sup> Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

<sup>57</sup> “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

<sup>58</sup> “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” <sup>59</sup> At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

### **Acts 3:24-26**

<sup>24</sup> “Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. <sup>25</sup> And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ <sup>26</sup> When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

### **Galatians 3:6-16**

<sup>6</sup> Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” <sup>9</sup> So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

<sup>10</sup> All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” <sup>11</sup> Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” <sup>12</sup> The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.” <sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” <sup>14</sup> He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

<sup>15</sup> Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. <sup>16</sup> The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

God’s promises to Abraham came true—in greater ways than he could have imagined! What does this tell us about God’s promises?

Through Christ, you are now a part of Abraham’s promise. How can you live out being a child of that promise?

What is your first step in trusting God with the direction of your life?