



# **The *Life* God Blesses**

**An in depth small group study on the life of Abraham  
By Kerry Shook**

## Introduction

The book of Genesis is about beginnings. The beginning of creation is recorded here. The beginning of the human race is also recorded here. It is also a book about generations, the generations of the first people to walk the earth from Adam to Jacob and promises God made concerning the generations to come. We also see the history of God establishing his covenant of blessing with his people. The amazing thing is that God chose to establish the covenant he made with His people through one ordinary man. Abraham may have been ordinary but he lived an extraordinary life and had an extraordinary faith in God. As we study his life and his faith we can be encouraged by what God accomplished through him. Through one man God established a relationship with His people that would ultimately bless the many generations to come.

To get the absolute most out of this study we suggest you begin by reading Genesis in its entirety. If you run short on time, Abraham's life is captured in Genesis 11:27 through 25:11 so at a minimum please read the first eleven chapters so you understand the context of his life. Your understanding of the material and your small group discussion will be much more valuable if you have taken the time to read through this important section of Scripture.

There are four sections for each session:

- Breaking Ground
- Laying the Foundation
- Finishing the Structure
- The Final Walk-Through.

The first three sections are meant to be completed and discussed during your group time even though you won't have enough time to discuss every question. Feel the freedom to focus on some questions more than you do others. The last section is designed for those who want to pursue the lessons at a deeper level. You can do this section as private study or if your group chooses to this section can be discussed within the group setting.

Enjoy discovering the life God blesses!

## Session 1: A Life of Faith

### Genesis 11:27 - 15:21

I rely on the LORD, I rely on him with my whole being, I wait for his assuring word. Psalm 130:5 (NET)

*“Faith is not belief without proof but trust without reservation.” – Elton Trueblood*

#### Breaking Ground

1. What makes a person trustworthy?
2. Have you ever made a big decision not knowing what the result would be? How did you decide what to do? How secure in your decision were you? Why?

#### Laying the Foundation

3. In Genesis 12 God called Abram to make a great sacrifice in leaving his country, his home and his relatives. What did God promise in return?

Verse 12:4 says, “So Abram left, as the LORD had told him...” It could not have been easy for Abram to leave everything he knew and move 1,500 miles to a strange land. In addition, his response was immediate; there was no debate or hesitation. If you were Abram, what would you do?

*The name Abram means “Exalted Father”*

Why do you think Abram responded in the way he did? (See Hebrews 11:8).

4. When Abram arrived in the land God promised him, his faith was tested by a famine. This time Abram did not respond out of faith because he left the Promised Land for Egypt without receiving direction from God. He also conspired to tell a “half truth” regarding his relationship to Sarai. Abram was not at his best yet God protected him. What does this tell you about the character of God? What does this say about plans that God makes?
  
5. Read Genesis 13. God had blessed Abram and Lot with material blessings. Sometimes material blessings can create problems in our relationships because we put possessions in front of people. As they started to experience a pasture land problem, Abram and Lot worked out a solution. One of the men chose to be gracious and one greedy. Who was who? Why?

Read verses 13:10, 13. Lot’s prosperity put his spiritual health in jeopardy. What does Lot’s selfish decision foreshadow?

6. In chapter 14, we see that Abram never rejected his nephew. When Lot is captured in a battle between kings, Abram sets out right away to rescue him (14:14). What does this say about Abram’s character?
  
7. Genesis 15 describes the covenant God made with Abram. All of the material wealth in the world seemed insignificant to Abram because he did not have any children and more important, an heir. In a vision, God promised that Abram’s descendants would outnumber the stars. Verse 15:6 is one of the most important Scriptures in the Bible.

“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” Genesis 15:6 (NIV) What does this verse mean? Discuss.

Look at the same verse in two more translations to help shed some light on the significance of this thought,

“And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord declared him righteous because of his faith.”  
Genesis 15:6 (NET)

“Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD considered his response of faith as proof of genuine loyalty.” Genesis 15:6 (NET)

The Apostle Paul uses this verse in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 to help build his argument that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. We are not justified by our works. In other words, we cannot earn our salvation; it is a free gift from God (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). Being justified means we are declared not guilty because Christ's righteousness is credited to us.

We see this principle demonstrated in the covenant God makes with Abram. This covenant is unconditional; by passing along through the pieces of animals God placed the fulfillment of the promises on Himself alone. Although Abram was not perfect, God accepted him as righteous because he believed God would fulfill His promises.

8. Read Genesis 2:7; 1 Chronicles 29:10-14; James 1:17  
In addition to the gift of eternal life, what else can we thank God for providing?

### **Finishing the Structure**

When God calls we obey. What is God calling you to today?

### **The Final Walk-Through**

*Faith is being certain in a sea of uncertainties.* God called Abram to make a great sacrifice in leaving his country, his home and his relatives. And God didn't even tell Abram where he was sending him! Abram was faced with a seemingly difficult decision: Should I trust God or not? Every day each of us is faced with that very same question. The truth is that we all have faith. So the question is not are we going to have faith but rather who we are going to have faith in.

**Reflection:** Have you ever felt God calling you to do something and were unsure how it would turn out? How did you respond? What did you learn from that experience?

**Further Study:** Read Hebrews 11:1

What does it mean to be sure of what we hope for?  
How does this relate to Romans 5:5?

How can we be certain of what we do not see?  
How does this relate to 1 Peter 1:8-9?

*Faith is not about what you are giving as much as it is about what you are giving yourself to.* While Abram was asked by God to leave his country, his home and his relatives, his faith allowed him to see past his temporary loss and be assured that God had more in store for him. Ultimately, Abram gave up a lot, but the life of Abram is more about a man who gave himself over to the promises of God than it is about a man who left a lot behind.

**Reflection:** Has God ever called you to sacrifice something?  
How did you respond? Looking back, can you see how God had better things in store for you?

**Further Study:** Read Genesis 12:1–3.  
Note God’s repeated use of the phrase “I will”.  
What is the significance behind this statement?

What tense is this verb in? Why is recognizing this important?

*Faith is the understanding that what is impossible with man is possible with God.* God’s covenant with Abram to bless him and Sarai, both of whom were well beyond their natural child bearing years, seemed impossible. The Bible even says that both Abram and Sarai laughed when God told them what he was going to do (Genesis 17:17, 18:12–15). However, Abram ultimately believed God and was blessed by Isaac’s birth. God supernaturally did what the natural was incapable of.

**Reflection:** Have you ever faced a situation in life that seemed impossible to get through? How did you respond? How did God supernaturally work in that situation?

**Further Study:** Read Romans 4:18-22.

Pay close attention to these statements: believed...and so become; without weakening...he faced; did not waver...was strengthened.

Why are these statements about Abram so significant?

What other significant person in the bible could these statements be made about?

## Session 2: A Life of Generosity

### Genesis 16:1 – 20:18

“Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.” Isaiah 40:31 (NASB)

*“Abraham was chosen to be a blessing to the whole earth, but his vocation was to begin to take effect in the simplest way. He was called to teach his own household, who again would hand down the truth to their households. His being a blessing to the world depended on his being a blessing to his own home.” – James Strachan*

#### Breaking Ground

1. Would you describe yourself as a generous person? Why or why not? Give an example.
2. There are times when we know what the right decision is and yet we feel pressure to do what is culturally acceptable. Describe a decision you made in which you followed what your culture said is acceptable. How did it work out?

#### Laying the Foundation

3. As Abram returns with the spoils of his victory, two kings come out to meet him; the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. What does each king represent? *Hint: see Genesis 13:13 and Hebrews 7:1-3.*

How does Abram respond to each king?

*Melchizedek is a type of Christ in that he prefigured and resembles Christ. Both hold the office of priest and king. See Psalm 111:4 and Hebrews 7:15-18.*

What can we learn from Abram’s response?

4. Read Genesis 16. In our last session we learned that God promised Abram land (12:1), descendants (12:2) and blessing (12:3). But, waiting can be frustrating. Ten years have passed since God made the original promise and yet no child has been born so Sarai and Abram take things into their own hands.

In verse 2, we see three poor choices. What are they?

Having children was viewed as a mark of success in that culture while couples who did not have children were seen as failures. Even though it seems shocking to us today, the practice of polygamy and surrogate motherhood was common in Abram's day because people would go to great lengths to show they were successful. In what situations might it be ok to follow our culture to achieve "success" rather than trust God? Explain your answer.

*Hagar the Egyptian and Sarai's conflict foreshadow Israel's Egyptian captivity. See Genesis 15:12-14.*

5. Hagar was sent into the wilderness because she despised Sarai. Her condition was not permanent however; the angel of the LORD met her as she was heading back to Egypt and made her a promise if she met a requirement. What requirement did she have to meet and what would she receive in return?

What principle can you extract from this passage?

*Ishmael's name means "God hears."*

6. Chapter 17 begins with Abram at ninety-nine years of age. Another thirteen years of silence have passed and Abram still does not have a son. God now appears for the fourth time and He confirms and expands His covenant with Abram. He also gives Abram a command.

How do we walk blamelessly before (with) God?

God also gave Abram confirmation of his covenant through two signs. He changed his name to Abraham, which means father of a multitude. This sign looked forward to Abraham's many

descendants. The other sign was circumcision which would remind Abraham and his descendants of the covenant God made with them.

In the opening verses of chapter 18, the LORD confirmed His promise of an heir to Abraham. How did Sarah respond? Why did she respond that way?

How should we respond to the promises God make in His Word even though they seem impossible?

7. We see an amazing interchange and negotiation between God and Abraham in Genesis 18:16-33 concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. How did Abraham feel about his relationship with God?

How did God characterize His relationship with Abraham?

Hint: see 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:89 and James 2:23.

8. Verses 19:1-29 describe a twelve hour period in which the wicked city of Sodom is destroyed. In verse 19:1 when the two angels arrive, we are told that Lot was "sitting in the gate of Sodom." What is the significance of this statement?

Lot and his family hesitate and fail to act upon the angels warning to flee Sodom. It is by God's grace that they are saved from the destruction (v. 16). Lot's wife did not fare so well. Even though they were told not to look back, Lot's wife disobeyed and she became a pillar of salt. Why do you think she turned back to Sodom?

Verses 19:30-38 shows the influence Sodom had on Lot's daughters. In effect, the debauchery of Sodom was reborn in that cave. Did the environment in which they were raised contribute to their sin? Explain your answer.

*Ishmael, Moab and Ben Ammi were children born out of improper relationships.  
The descendants of these children would all become enemies of Israel.*

9. In chapter 20, Abraham tells the same lie he told Pharaoh in Egypt. Abraham struggles with this sin when he believes he is in danger. What three reasons did he give for lying?

Verse 11:

Verse 12:

Verse 13:

### **Finishing the Structure**

When God promises we believe. What promise does God want you to believe in today?

### **The Final Walk-Through**

*A generous heart uses the blessings of God to be a blessing to others.* God made many promises to Abraham, but none of those promises were meant exclusively for Abraham. God's plan was to use one man for many purposes. Those purposes would outlive Abraham and effect many generations to come (see 12:3; 17:7-9). God ordained that He would uniquely bless Abraham so that in turn Abraham could be a blessing to others for generations to come.

**Reflection:** How has God uniquely blessed you? In what ways do you see God wanting you to use those blessing to bless others?

**Further Study:** Read Genesis 22:16-18 and Galatians 3:8-9.

How are we today as believers blessed through Abraham's obedience?

How is the truth that salvation is by "faith alone" seen through both these Old Testament and New Testament passages?

*A generous heart moves from selfishness to selflessness.* While traveling to Bethel quarreling arose between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. The possessions of both camps had become too numerous to continue traveling together. Abraham sought to resolve the conflict. Selflessness ruled Abraham's decision to let Lot choose which land he would inhabit while selfishness led Lot to choose for himself an attractive land which led to devastating consequences.

**Reflection:** Where in your life do you see God wanting to move you from selfishness to selflessness? How are you responding?

**Further Study:** Read Genesis 13:5-17; 19:1-38.

Note the contrast between the effects of Abraham's selflessness and Lot's selfishness in these passages.

What effects do you see of Abraham's selflessness in his decision making? What blessings does he receive (see 13:14-17)?

What effects do you see of Lot's selfishness in his decision making? Where does it lead him? What environment does it place him in?

*A generous heart gives graciously and receives abundantly.* Abraham left his herds and family and put his own life on the line to rescue his nephew from the hands of pagan kings. After he succeeds Abraham is approached by two kings. Mechizedek, a righteous king, brings blessings to Abraham and his troops. Abraham responds by giving him a tenth of everything he had. Bera, Sodom's king, is ungrateful for what Abraham has done. Abraham's generosity was rewarded by the righteous king.

**Reflection:** Describe a time in your life when you gave something only to receive something unexpected in return. How did it make you feel? Describe a time in your life when you were forced to choose between serving a "pagan king" and serving a "righteous king". Which "king" did you choose to follow?

**Further Study:** Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-13.

How does our generosity result in praise to God (see v. 11-13)?

How does Matthew 6:24 relate to Abraham choosing to serve King Melchizedek rather than King Bera in Genesis 14:17-24?

## Session 3: A Life of Sacrifice

### Genesis 21:1 – 25:11

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.” Romans 12:1-2(NLT)

*“The church should be a community of dates instead of pumpkins. Pumpkins you can harvest in six months. Dates have to be planted and tended by people who will not live to harvest them. Dates are for future generations.”*  
— George Chauncey

### Breaking Ground

1. Have you made an investment in someone’s life? Share your story?
2. Describe a situation when your faith was tested. What were the circumstances and how did you react? What was the end result?

### Laying the Foundation

3. In chapter 21, God fulfills His promise to Abraham and Sarah and they bear a son, after waiting twenty-five years. Take note of verse 21:1. “...and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised”. What comfort does this verse give you for everyday living?

*Isaac’s name means “He Laughs”.*

After Isaac is born Sarah turns against Hagar again and tells Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. What does Abraham do differently this time?

4. Abraham finally had the child he was promised. He waited twenty-five years for his heir and encountered various trials that tested and refined his faith along the way. In chapter 22 Abraham would face the toughest faith testing trial of his life. In verses 1-2, God tells Abraham to give Isaac back. What does this say about what God asks from believers?

How did Abraham respond?

5. The agonizing journey to Moriah was about three days, or fifty miles. Abraham had plenty of time to think about what God asked him to do. What do you think was going through his mind?

In verse 22:5, as Abraham is preparing to offer Isaac, he tells his servants that he and the lad (Isaac) will return to them. If he is going to sacrifice his son how can his son return? (See Hebrews 11:17-19)

What did Abraham mean when he said "God will provide the lamb" in verse 22:8? Did God provide the lamb?

*The sacrifice of Isaac foreshadows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

6. As a result of passing the test, God again confirmed his covenant with Abraham and added another element: Abraham's descendants would be victorious over the people of Canaan. What do we learn about true worship from this chapter?
7. Chapter 23 covers the death and burial of Sarah. Abraham had lived in the Promised Land for sixty years as a nomad. Why didn't he bury Sarah in their homeland or Ur? Why did Abraham insist on buying a piece of land and the cave as a burial site rather than accept the free offer to bury Sarah in the cave?
8. After Sarah died, Abraham invested his time, resources and influence in Isaac. In chapter 24, he commissions his servant Eliezer to find Isaac a wife. How would you describe Eliezer and to what do you attribute his success?

Rebekah is a great example of character as well. What did you notice about her?

9. Chapter 25 brings Abraham's life to a close. After Sarah died he married again and fathered many more children which led to a fulfillment of one of God's promises that Abraham would be the father of many nations. In the end however, Abraham invested himself and his resources in Isaac (v. 25:5) because God's covenant would be fulfilled through him. What are you giving "everything you have" to?

### **Finishing the Structure**

When God calls on you to do something significant with your life, how will you respond? Will you say, "Here I am", like Abraham did? Share your thoughts.

### **The Final Walk-Through**

*Sacrifices demonstrate the authenticity of our faith.* God wants to test the character of Abraham's faith. He calls him to offer up his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice. In a monumental moment of faith, Abraham acts in obedience to what God called him to do. Abraham remembers the promises of God and trusts in the provision of God. His response to God's call was immediate and his faith was proved legitimate by his actions. The life of Isaac was spared while the life of Abraham was blessed.

**Reflection:** Have you ever had to sacrifice something of value in your life? How did you respond? What did it reveal about your faith?

**Further Study:** Read 1 Peter 1:1-7.

What does this passage say about the purpose of tests in our lives?

What significance does the phrase "Now I know that you fear God..." have in Genesis 22:12?

*Sacrifices develop the growth of our faith.* Abraham approached this test from God not as an obstacle but rather an opportunity to deepen his faith in God. After his faith was confirmed and the Lord provided a ram to be sacrificed, Abraham was blessed with a deeper understanding of God as Jehovah-Jireh, which means "The Lord will provide". Abraham's willingness to sacrifice what he held onto most dearly allowed him to receive greater blessings from God in the end.

**Reflection:** Describe a difficult situation you have faced that ultimately caused your faith to be strengthened. In what ways have you seen your faith grow?

**Further Study:** Read James 1:2-8; 12.

Why does this passage say we should consider trials as “pure joy”?

What is the result of our perseverance through tests? (See verses 4, 12)  
What significance does the word “receive” have in verse 12?

*Sacrifice defines the value of our faith.* God is more concerned with the heart condition in which we sacrifice than He is with the size of our sacrifice. Abraham’s heart for God manifested itself in his obedient giving to God. God rewarded the obedience of Abraham and multiplied blessings upon him (22:15-17). The value of Abraham’s relationship with God was evidenced by his willingness to surrender his precious son to Him.

**Reflection:** What is the most valuable thing you have in your life? How would you respond if God asked you to give it up for Him?

**Further Study:** Read Matthew 6:19-21.

What does the phrase “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (v.21) mean? What significance does this have in our relationship with God?

Compare the differences between worry and faith in chapter 6:25-34. Which do you most frequently relate to? What is the result of our seeking God before all other things (see v.33)?

### **Leadership Notes**

## *Session 1- A Life of Faith*

1. *No right answer. Enjoy the discussion.*
2. *Be serious on this one.*
3. Land, descendants, blessing. Abram responded out of faith.
4. God is full of grace and mercy. Also, his plans will not be thwarted.
5. Abram was gracious. The land had been promised to him yet he gave Lot the first choice. Lot did not have any concern for Abram. He saw the best land and greedily chose it for himself.

Eventually Lot would get tied up in the wickedness of Sodom and lose almost everything he selfishly tried to grab.

6. Abraham did not turn his back on his nephew, Lot. He acted out of unselfish concern even though Lot had not shown any concern for him.
7. Genesis 15:6 demonstrates salvation by grace through faith. People of all times and ages are saved the same way: God's grace through faith.
8. There is no good thing we should not thank God for.

**Leadership Notes**  
*Session 2 – A Life of Generosity*

1. *No right answer. Enjoy the discussion.*
2. *Be serious on this one.*
3. The king of Sodom represents the worldly kingdom and wickedness while Melchizedek is the king of peace or righteousness.

Abram received a blessing from Melchizedek and paid tithes to him. He would not take anything from the king of Sodom because he did not want the king to get any credit for Abram's blessing. He wanted God to get all the credit.

We can learn to trust God for what we need.

4. Sarai blames God, she suggests taking things into their own hands and Abram listens to her and not God. - See Proverbs 14:12.
5. If she returned and submitted she would receive a blessing. The principle is that obedience brings blessing (cf. Deuteronomy 28).
6. Conduct life openly and faithfully with integrity to the Lord.  
Sarai laughed. She could not believe a woman her age could bear children. It was absolutely impossible; so much so that she found humor in it.

We should respond positively to God's promises. It may be difficult to understand at first but as God fulfills His promises in our lives, our faith is strengthened. This is a process not an overnight, one time event.

7. Abraham was obviously confident he had a solid relationship with God. This can only be built by having spent honest time together. God called Abraham His friend. No other person has this title in the Bible.
8. The gate of a city was where the elders met to discuss matters of significance so Lot must have been an elder. This group of men was similar to a city council in that they decided political and other issues. Lot was closely attached to a wicked city even though he did not practice what they practiced.

We don't know the reason she turned back. We do know she disobeyed a command. The point is that we should not turn back no matter how tempting worldly things are.

The question is debatable but Lot knew full well how wicked the city was and yet he chose to raise his daughters in that environment.

9. Verse 11: I was afraid - Verse 12: It was a half truth - Verse 13: We do this often.

**Leadership Notes**  
*Session 3 – A Life of Sacrifice*

1. *Share your story.*
2. *Share how your faith was tested.*
3. We should have confidence and great hope that God will fulfill His promises in spite of our doubts and fears.

He seeks God's will (cf. v. 12).

4. God asks for complete trust, obedience and surrender of all that we have, including our lives. Abraham responded immediately. He did not ask questions or doubt.
5. Human sacrifice was practiced in the pagan world of that day and Abraham did not have any contrary revelation from God about human sacrifice. At the same time, God had promised to fulfill the covenant he made through Isaac so how could He allow Abraham to kill him? At the very least Abraham must have been confused but probably heartbroken and scared as well.

The writer to the Hebrews believed that Abraham probably believed God would resurrect Isaac if he were killed.

When Abraham said, "God would provide the lamb", it was statement of faith. Abraham knew God planned a future for Isaac and God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham probably could not reconcile those two things but he obeyed. He trusted God would provide the lamb. Ultimately he did, in the person of Jesus Christ.

6. Faith obeys completely the word of God. (2) Faith surrenders the best to God, holding nothing back. (3) Faith waits on the Lord to provide all one's needs. But God does not provide until personal sacrifice has been made. True worship is costly. This was always so for Israel when they brought sacrifices. Those offerings were supposed to be given in faith so God would provide all the needs of each willing worshiper.<sup>1</sup>
7. If Abraham would have accepted the free offer he would not have owned a square inch in Canaan. Abraham bought the land as an expression of faith in God's promises that the land would be given to his descendants one day.
8. Eliezer was obedient, he kept his commitment and he was loyal to Abraham. His success can be attributed to prayer, his obedience and commitment to God's will.

Rebekah treated Eliezer kindly even though he was a stranger, she humbled herself to take care of dirty animals and she discerned God's will for her life and was obedient.

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<sup>1</sup>. Walvoord, J.F., zuck, R.B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The bible Knowledge commentaryL An Exposition of the Scriptures. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL.