



**RELATE**

# ADULT CONNECT CLASS CURRICULUM

DONALD J. WILLS  
SENIOR PASTOR



**JUNE**  
**2020**

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

As we begin to meet in person again for worship this month, we may find that many things have changed in our world. We may have even had to change how some of our relationships function in terms of how we interact physically and personally. Yet, God has created us to have relationships and not live in isolation. We need a personal relationship with the Him first and foremost! And we need healthy relationships with each other too. This month, we will study the life of Abram and how he related to the Lord, his family, and others. Although he wasn't perfect in his relationships, he did grow in His relationship with the Lord which ultimately helped him to become a blessing to others despite his personal flaws.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

During our study, let's follow the example that Abram set by placing his trust in the Lord. But let us also learn from his mistakes when he deviated in his walk and tried to venture on his own without direction from the Lord. When we walk consistently with such faith and live in obedience though we may err from time to time, we will become a blessing to those around us! As God gives us opportunity, let's not forsake meeting together in worship as a community (Heb 10:25), cultivating our relationship with Him, and proclaiming the good news of the gospel! Let's relate in faithfulness to the Lord without fear or fault; and relate to the world with love so that we can point them to a relationship with Christ.

-Blessings

Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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June 7, 2020

Relate Faithfully

[Genesis 12:1-9](#)

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June 14, 2020

Relate Fearlessly

[Genesis 12:10-20](#)

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June 21, 2020

Relate with Forbearance

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June 28, 2020

Relate Faultlessly

[Genesis 17:1-27](#)



# CONNECT CLASS BIBLE STUDIES ADULTS OF ALL AGES

RELATE



[CLICK HERE TO FIND A CLASS](#)

WORSHIP SERVICE RESUMES  
IN SANCTUARY JUNE 7  
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5 PM - 10 PM / 10 PM - MIDNIGHT

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# MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT WORTH

### WHY SHOULD I VOLUNTEER AT FBCFW?

As a believer, God has given you a spiritual gift to be used to serve Him and others. Many volunteers are needed each week to accomplish all God has placed before us as a church. Get involved to discover how you can be part of what God is doing at First Baptist Church of Fort Worth!

### GET INVOLVED & START SERVING! IT'S AS EASY AS 1-2-3!

- 1) View available ministry opportunities at [opportunities.fbcfw.org](http://opportunities.fbcfw.org), or pick up a flyer at the Info Center.
- 2) Select those where you would consider volunteering.
- 3) Submit online, or drop off the completed card off at the Information Center, Church Office, or in the offering plate.

**It's that easy!** The ministries you select on the back will contact you soon.

#### SOME OF THE MOST IMMEDIATE NEEDS ARE:

- PRESCHOOL TEACHERS & HELPERS • WEEKLY ON SUNDAYS AT 9:15AM
- PRESCHOOL EXTENDED CARE VOLUNTEERS
  - Serve only one Sunday a month (10:45am-12:15pm)
- AWANA LEADERS FOR 2020-21 CLUB YEAR (NO TEACHING, TRAINING PROVIDED)
- MEALS FOR MISSION COORDINATOR
  - The Coordinator / Cook would oversee and prepare the meal (plan, budget, & purchase food) as well as recruit people to help cook, set-up, clean-up, and serve each month.
- FIRST WORSHIP TUESDAYS KITCHEN TEAM MEMBERS
  - At least a six-person clean-up crew whose ministry is to stay approximately 30 minutes afterward to assist an already dedicated crew who sets up and prepares weekly meals.
- VBS DECORATION & VIDEO ROOM TEAM LEADERS



TO VIEW ALL MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES [CLICK HERE](http://opportunities.fbcfw.org) TO GO TO  
[OPPORTUNITIES.FBCFW.ORG](http://opportunities.fbcfw.org)

*June 7, 2020*



# *Relate Faithfully*

*Genesis 12:1-9*

Focal Verse:

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.’”

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Genesis 12:1



## Introduce

While Frederick loaded his wagon with the supplies that he had purchased from the general store, a complete stranger walked over and introduced himself. Abruptly stating his purpose, the stranger explained, "I'm Phineas T. Arbuckle and I want to give you land on the Western frontier which will make you and your family prosper for years to come." Although Frederick had never seen him before, he somehow seemed to know about him and his family. As Frederick secured the crates of supplies with twine, Phineas showed him a roughly sketched map on faded and worn parchment that had a large X



scrawled with red ink. To Frederick's eye, the map contained very little detail other than the red X which signaled the ultimate destination and their current location in Boston along with a few major landmarks along the way. With little warning, Phineas continued, "Go home, gather your things, and assemble any in your extended family whom you'd like to take with you. Then, meet me in the Commons at 8:00 am sharp." Frederick didn't know quite what to think about all this, but he was intrigued by the opportunity and went home to share the news with his wife Faith. Immediately, he began to pack all their possessions onto the wagon. The next morning, he hitched all his horses into one stout team that could pull them over the Rocky Mountains and met his nephew to caravan to the Commons. Arriving just before 8:00 am, he found Phineas already waiting with the map. Instead of handing Frederick the map, Phineas shockingly announced that he would lead them himself and show them the land since he had already traveled that path many times. That day, they set off to make the arduous cross-country journey before the seasonal rains intensified and the Winter snows began to impede their progress.

Their journey started smoothly, but they quickly began to experience challenges along the way. They experienced hardships as their supplies dwindled and the frontier became sparsely populated, forcing them to depend upon the produce of the land. They had to deal with slow progress from broken wagon parts, unexpected weather,

## Introduce

obstacles in nature from swollen rivers to rocky trails, and the health of individuals in the family. At times, they also encountered opposition from other settlers already in the area. These were things which no map could detail or have properly prepared them! Nonetheless, they pressed forward and finally arrived at the Columbia River which they used to float safely to the beautiful Willamette Valley. Arriving in the valley, they found it filled with lush vegetation and suitable for building a homestead, so they began to show gratitude toward Phineas T. Arbuckle and thank him many times for his unparalleled generosity!

As they talked one day, Frederick asked Phineas, "You said that you'd come this way many times before which means that you knew the dangers and hardships we'd face. Why didn't you tell us to prepare us?" With a smile, Phineas patiently asked a question in response, "Would you have come if I had told you *everything* that would happen?" Sheepishly, Frederick replied, "Probably not." With great wisdom, Phineas asserted, "I wanted you to learn to trust me along the way, knowing that in the end I had your best interests at heart." In life, God has shown us the ultimate destination, but He hasn't revealed all the details about our experiences along the way. He wants us to learn to trust Him day by day and exercise faithful obedience according to His plan. As we study the life of Abram, we will see the faith it requires to follow the Lord as well as the need to trust Him daily as obstacles in life arise. When we do, God will bless us beyond measure, not just with material possessions, but with an intimate relationship with Him!

Key  
Question

How has the Lord asked you at times in your life to respond and exercise faith like Abram's?

### Genesis 12:1

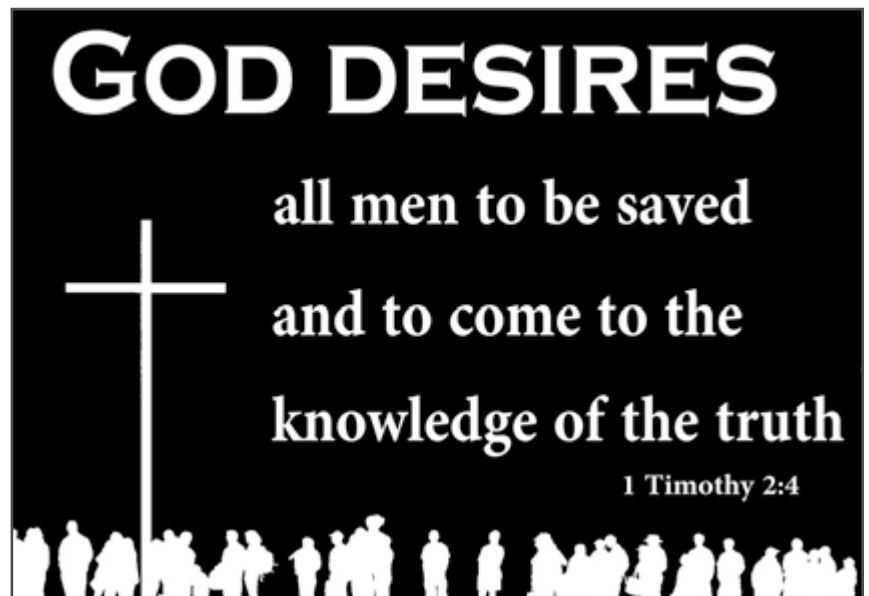
#### **RELY UPON THE LORD:**

Skipping ahead a few generations from Noah whom we studied last month, we meet Abram—another man who responded to the Lord in faith in a culture that worshiped many gods ([Josh 24:2](#)). In [Genesis 11:27-32](#), we learn some important details about his life and family which set the stage for his future covenant with the Lord. Born in “Ur of the Chaldeans” (probably modern Iraq), he migrated with his father, Terah, and brothers to Haran (probably modern Turkey). His brother, Haran, had already died prior to the move, leaving Abram’s nephew Lot as the only male grandchild since Abram’s wife “Sarai was barren” and his other brother, Nahor, had two daughters. With this, the stage is set for God’s revelation of Himself to Abram and the announcement of the covenant that He will establish with him.

[Chapter 12](#) opens with the Lord speaking to Abram and calling Him into an intimate relationship. For this reason, the first word of God’s speech is the command to go or **get out** of his **country** and leave his **family** and his **father’s house** (v. 1). God literally calls Abram to leave everything with which he is familiar and to trust in Him alone ([Gen 15:6](#)). Through this one command, we can identify three important principles

about what it means to have a relationship with the Lord. First, God extends a personal invitation for Abram to join Him. This doesn’t mean that God only offered Abram a chance to have a relationship with Him and not anyone else in the world, but that we only have a record of how he accepted and obeyed. Although God may not have offered such a covenant to

others, He did extend an invitation for all to have a relationship with Him since we see others like Melchizedek serving Him as well ([Gen 14:18](#); [1 Tim 2:4](#)). Because of Abram’s faithfulness, God then blessed him and used him as the basis to fulfill His plan to save the world through the coming Messiah.



## Instruct

Second, the command to “go” paired with God’s promise to “**show**” implies that Abram must follow. He can’t remain where he is and “go.” This is the hallmark of a relationship with the Lord. God bids us to turn and come to follow Him! We see this in every case throughout both the Old and New Testaments. For example, Isaiah had to remove himself from a culture stained by sin and allow the Lord to cleanse his “unclean lips” ([Isa 6:5](#)). Jeremiah had to turn from youthful doubts and self-loathing to trust wholly in the Lord ([Jer 1:6-7](#); [Jer 20:7-18](#)). Thomas ([John 20:24-25](#)) and James ([John 7:5](#)) had to dispense with doubt and disbelief that Jesus was the Christ and had risen from the dead. Paul had to turn from worshiping religion and ritual to serving in the truth of the Lord ([Phil 3:3-7](#)) just like the Thessalonians turned from idolatry ([1 Thess 1:9-10](#)). It comes full circle! God still asks us to do the same in our own walk with Him today!

From what has God asked you to turn? How can you use this to encourage others and share the gospel?

Question  
# 1

Third, Abram’s obedience would entail that he leave his past behind by turning from the idolatrous ways of his family and removing such influence from his life. This doesn’t mean that he should forget the past, but rather he should learn from it and mature in the Lord. It also doesn’t mean that he severed relationships with his extended family in a way that caused dysfunction, but instead he now stood as an example of what it looks like to serve the Lord. Likewise, we must remember our past and learn from it, but we cannot dwell upon it. When we get stuck in our past, it hinders our relationship with the Lord because we continually look behind rather than forward ([Luke 9:61-62](#)). The danger of living in the past is three-fold: we become stuck in our ways, we stop growing in our faith, and we fail to respond obediently to His call. Thus, we tend to do things with which we are most familiar and offer us the most comfort rather than allowing the Lord to lead!

How does living in the past hinder our relationship with the Lord? To what instances can you point in your own life?

Question  
# 2

After issuing the command to go, God makes a generous promise to **give him a land** that He **will show** him. With this promise, the Lord initiates a covenant with Abram. Abram had done nothing worthy of receiving such benevolence from the Lord; he only

had to accept it and follow Him! In fact, as we've seen, Abram once worshiped many gods in the tradition of his family, but God, as He always does, acted according to His grace and out of the abundance of His love. The same holds true for us today. We don't earn favor or blessing from the Lord; He graciously blesses us when we accept His call and follow Him. This doesn't mean that we'll have a trouble or stress-free life. Abram didn't. But it does mean that God will walk with us daily and see us through life's difficult circumstances as well as the triumphs! Moreover, God's offer to **show** Abram



the **land** signifies that He will guide and lead. He was with Abram every step of the way! God doesn't behave like a general who might bark orders at his troops and then sit back and watch the battle from afar. He leads us into battle and stays with us to the end! God also doesn't behave like some CEOs who sit in boardrooms and know very little about the day-to-day operations of the company—having few, if any, personal relationships with the employees. He is intimately involved to the last detail! He cares so much for us that He wants to meet with us every day; although He already knows our needs, He wants us to declare them so that He can respond according to His perfect plan! God will lead us and walk with us if only we would turn to Him for guidance; He will never abandon us or leave us to fend for ourselves!

How has God walked with you and shown you the way in life?

Question  
# 3

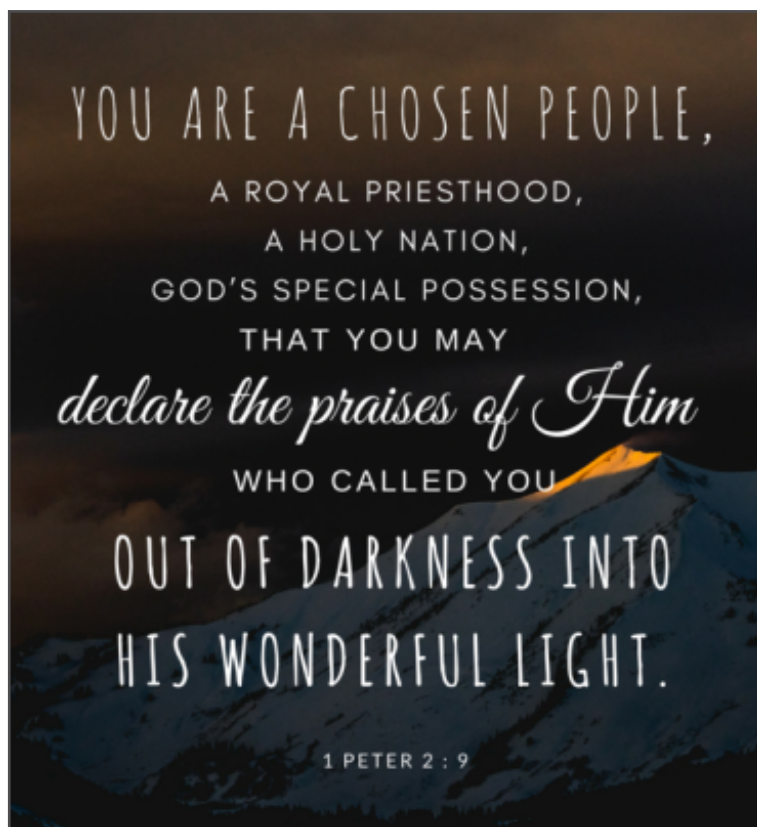
## **Genesis 12:2-3**

### **REFLECT UPON THE PROMISES:**

Having called Abram into a relationship, the Lord now details His covenant with him. Although God doesn't use the term covenant in this text, He makes seven promises in total with Him bearing the primary responsibility to fulfill each of them. Six of the promises are directly fulfilled by God Himself to Abram and his descendants while one is fulfilled through Abram's faithful obedience. Even though the covenant is initiated by

## Instruct

God and established by grace, Abram however still has one responsibility; he is to serve the Lord faithfully and in so doing become a blessing to the entire world! We'll now examine each of these promises individually. Some apply specifically to Abram and his descendants (Israel) while others have a universal application for the entire world. First, the Lord promises to **make** Abram a **great nation** (v. 2). To accomplish this, he needs an heir, for we've already learned that his wife "Sarai was barren" ([Gen 11:30](#)).



All this serves to highlight God's role in bringing these promises to fruition; although Abram obeyed, the Lord orchestrated and fulfilled the plan! Through this promise, therefore, God desires to call a people who will serve Him faithfully and stand apart from other nations to point them into a relationship with Him! To Moses a few centuries later, God makes the goal of this promise clearer: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of

priests (i.e. My representatives) and a holy nation" ([Exod 19:5-6](#)). Although this promise applies specifically to Abram as fulfilled through the nation of Israel, we can learn from the application behind it. As God's people who have a relationship with Him through Christ, we must also be set apart and live obediently so that God can use us to point the secular world to Him ([1 Peter 2:9](#))!

How has God called us as the church to be His royal priesthood or His ambassadors?

Question  
# 4

Second, the Lord makes a general promise to **bless** Abram. Certainly, this did include material possessions and wealth ([Gen 13:2](#)), but it included so much more. God forgave Abram and rescued him from his poor decisions ([Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18](#)), He protected him and his nephew from foreign enemies ([Gen 14:1-17](#)), and He provided him with an

heir and many descendants ([Gen 15:5; 21:2-3](#)). God blessed Abram, and blesses us, in manifold ways that we can't even count! Third, God promises to **make his name great**. This stands in stark contrast to the people of Babel who intentionally set out to **make a great name** for themselves ([Gen 11:4](#)). Abram doesn't have a **great name** because of who he is or what he has done; he has a **great name** because of whom he serves and how he has served Him! His faithfulness and obedience in service produced his good reputation ([Prov 22:1](#)). Likewise, service exercised in humility in the New Testament era has also led certain people to be remembered widely for their acts which honored the Lord—namely the widow and her two mites ([Mark 12:41-44](#)) and the woman who anointed Jesus from ointment in an alabaster box ([Matt 26:13](#)). To have a good name, therefore, means to live in righteousness and honor the Lord with our lives!

How do you want people to remember your legacy?

Question  
# 5

Fourth, we come to a promise fulfilled through Abram's obedience which highlights his one responsibility in the covenant. He is to **be a blessing** to others. In the seventh promise, God identifies the recipients who **will be blessed through Abram: all the families of the earth** (v. 3). When both promises are examined together, they have universal implications! Abram had to mature in his own faith and learn how to **be a blessing** to others as the Lord's representative. Rather than act as **a blessing** at first, he brought trouble upon the nations by lying to Pharaoh and Abimelech about his relationship to Sarai. To them, he doesn't show faith and trust in the Lord, but only concern for himself that he might be killed! By the time we reach God's punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, however, we begin to see Abram acting benevolently and interceding for the people if God could only find ten righteous among the residents—which He couldn't.

As Abram grew in his faith, he began to share God's perspective and look benevolently at the world around him; therefore, God began to fulfill more of the promises that He had made, particularly of providing an heir through Sarai—a son named Isaac. God used Abram despite his imperfections at times; still, Abram matured to live a life of obedience and trust in the Lord fully—even to the point that he would selflessly sacrifice his promised son ([Gen 22:1-19](#)). God, however, would make an even greater sacrifice by sending His own Son through the faithful remnant of Abram's descendants to die for the world. Through the advent of this promised Messiah, God ultimately

## Instruct

used Abram to **be a blessing** to every person upon the earth! This Messiah who came through the lineage of Abram would save him, his descendants, and the whole world through a two-part act: the crucifixion and resurrection!

How has God called us to be a blessing? How do you use these opportunities to share the gospel?

Question  
# 6

Finally, the fifth and sixth blessings deal with how people respond to Abram and the relationships that he has here on earth. God states that He **will bless those who bless** Abram and **curse those who curse** him (v. 3). This is as much a learning experience for Abram as it is a promise from God! He doesn't have to worry about anything if he would only follow the Lord; God Himself will exercise justice by dispensing either benevolence or judgment as needed. Abram doesn't need to! God will take care of it. In Proverbs 20:22, Solomon writes, "Do not say, 'I will recompense evil'; wait for the Lord, and He will save you." Abram should focus on His relationship with the Lord and being **a blessing** to others; God will take care of the rest. Even though this specifically applies to Abram, we can once again learn from the principle. As believers, let us serve the Lord faithfully, **be a blessing** to others, and allow the Lord to exercise justice on our behalf—in so doing, we'll point others to Him in how we conduct ourselves.

Why should we let God dispense justice rather than concerning ourselves with it?

Question  
# 7

## Genesis 12:4-7a

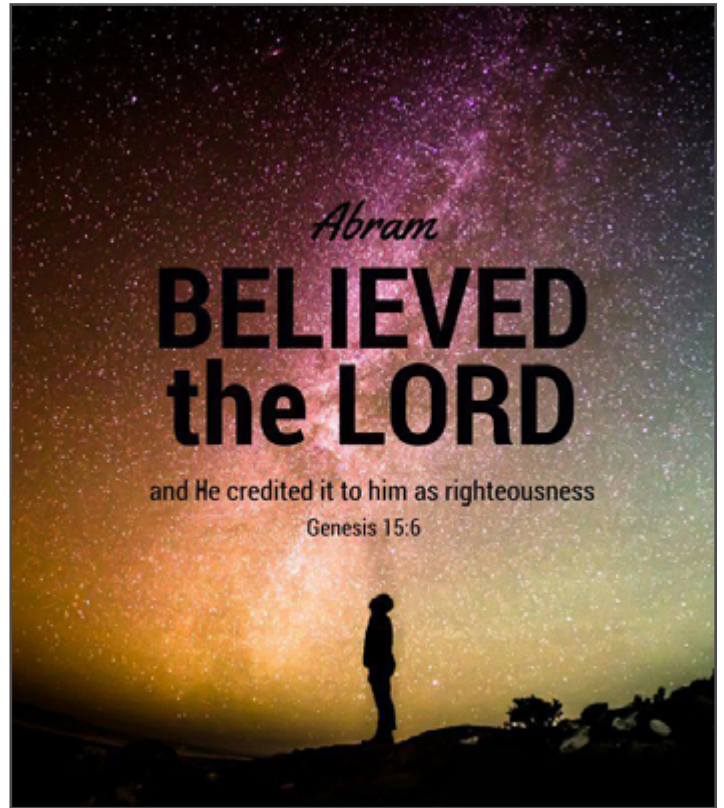
### RESPOND FAITHFULLY:

Having received this gracious covenant from the Lord, Abram responded faithfully. Although the text doesn't give an actual timeframe for their departure, it appears that he began making preparations immediately. Verse 4 simply notes that he **departed as the Lord had spoken to him**. At that time, he **was seventy-five years old**. This may seem insignificant to us, but it demonstrates how the Lord works on His own timetable to bring things to fruition at the perfect time. It would be another twenty-five years before God would begin fulfilling His promise to make Abram into a **great nation** through the birth of Isaac ([Gen 17:17](#)). Still, Abram obeyed and walked faithfully with the Lord even if he did encounter some hurdles in life along the way and became



impatient at times, taking matters into his own hands!

As he **departed** for **Canaan**, Abram **took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all their possessions**, and the servants who worked for them in Haran (v. 5). The group traveled to **Shechem as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh** where there were **Canaanites** residing (v. 6). Located in Northern Israel near the modern town of Nablus in a valley about forty miles north of Jerusalem, Abram set up camp. There **the Lord appeared to** him again to confirm that He would indeed **give his descendants** this very **land** (v. 7a). Technically, Abram would reside in the **land**, but neither he nor his immediate **descendants** (Isaac and Jacob) would see the complete fulfillment of this promise. It would be many centuries later



before the **land** would be fully given unto Abram's **descendants** during the time of the conquest under the leadership of Joshua after the people had spent 400 years enslaved in Egypt ([Gen 15:13](#)). Once again, we must realize that God fulfills His promises according to His perfect timing!

Through Abram's example, we learn how we should respond immediately in faith as we wait upon the Lord for direction! We must walk in step with the Lord on His timetable. We can't afford to get in a hurry or get ahead of Him nor can we delay and fall behind. We must seek the Lord diligently and follow His perfect timing! A simple illustration from music can help us understand this principle. The greatest challenge of marching band is to play on time to produce a beautiful symphony of sound. One can easily become distracted by the time it takes sound to travel from various parts of the football field as well as the reverberation of the echo from the cavernous outdoor concert hall. If the individual instruments didn't play on cue and only reacted to the sound around them, then the music would turn into a jumbled, incoherent mess. The key to avoiding this is to focus on the drum major who keeps perfect time and block all the other elements of the environment out. The individual instruments must follow the drum major's conducting explicitly.

God conducts the symphonies of our lives perfectly. He never gets out of rhythm, but

## Instruct

keeps perfect timing! Consequently, we must follow His lead so that we don't make a mess out of our lives. Abram and the Old Testament patriarchs looked forward to the fulfillment of God's promises and had to learn to wait upon Him as they matured in their relationships. Yet, none of them saw the fulfillment of the promised Messiah. Nearly 2000 years would pass from the time of Abram before the Messiah would enter into the world as the ultimate **blessing to all families of the earth!** Peter aptly explains, "The Lord is not slack [i.e. slow] concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). We should walk in such faith as Abram and the people of the Old Testament, knowing that God does not delay in fulfilling His promises, but He delivers at just the right time! Therefore, let us respond immediately to the Lord as He directs and wait upon Him when He pulls back the reins so that we can clearly hear Him speak and know what He wants us to do.

What are some instances in which you did not wait upon the Lord and follow His timing? How does that compare to the times you waited upon Him?

Question  
# 8

## Genesis 12:7b-9

### RENDER WORSHIP:

After being reminded of God's promises, Abram **built an altar** there in **Shechem** and worshiped the Lord (v. 7b). From there, **he moved** near a **mountain east of Bethel** in between **Bethel on the west** and **Ai** (pronounced eye) **on the east** before he



*Depiction of what Abram's altar could have looked like.*

continued his journey southward (vv. 8-9). After erecting his camp, he once again **built an altar to the Lord** and worshiped Him, calling upon His **name**. With these promises yet to be fulfilled—with some in the distant future

beyond Abram's time—this act of worship shows his trust and devotion to the Lord! He's worshipping the Lord for who He is and what He has promised He will do. How many times do we worship the Lord *only* after He has done something great in our lives? If we're honest, we're probably all guilty of this. I know I am. Certainly, we should worship Him for the things that He has done, but let's worship Him now for the who He is and the things He will do in addition to the things that He's already done!

For what promises in Scripture can you worship the Lord even though they may not yet be fulfilled?

Question  
# 9

God deserves our praise and worship for the things that He has benevolently done for us individually and collectively in the past, but let's celebrate the future and what He will do! Let's look forward with anticipation and excitement just as Abram did while he responded in faithful obedience to the Lord's call on his life. Let's trust in the Lord and respond in faith too. Let us praise God for what He promises to do through FBCFW when we are faithful. Let's praise Him for what He will do through camps this summer, mission trips, VBS, and outreach. Let's worship Him for the opportunities that He will grant us to see lives changed through the gospel of Christ and salvation in Him. We certainly will rejoice when God brings these things to fruition, but why wait to celebrate until then? Let's praise God now and respond in faith so that He can work through us! When we worship the Lord and are excited about what He will do through us, then great things will happen when we make ourselves available and follow Him in faith according to His timing.

Phineas T. Arbuckle was a generous man who led Frederick and his family to fertile land during the nineteenth-century Westward expansion of America. Phineas knew the way as well as the risks and challenges they would face on their journey. Although he had a map marked with a red X revealing the final destination along with significant landmarks along the route, he just didn't hand it to Frederick and send him on his way; he accompanied him throughout the entire journey—never once leaving his side. In this lesson, we've seen the Lord do the same for Abram. God didn't ask him to leave his homeland and figure things out by trial and error on his own. He would show him! He accompanied him on every leg of the journey, showing Abram the way and helping him to learn to trust in Him as he matured in his faith!

God has done the same for us today. He has given us a map marked with a red X that shows us the final destination. The Bible contains that roadmap. That red X isn't penned in ink, but in the blood of Jesus shed upon the cross! Although it doesn't detail everything that will *specifically* happen to us in life, it does show us how God worked through the lives of others and the significant challenges that we may face in life in general. Yet, God hasn't just left us alone to figure things out according to our own logic and wisdom, but He came for us! He sent His Son to show us the way and now has given His Holy Spirit to those who have a relationship with Him to guide us! We have a choice like Abram: do we trust the Lord and follow Him or do we continue on our own path in life? God has shown us the way and through His Spirit He will guide us daily if only we would trust in Him and follow Him faithfully in obedience!

## ***Incorporate***

How would you evaluate your faithfulness to the Lord in the following areas: Bible study, prayer, worship, serving, and giving? Prayerfully ask the Lord to give you guidance if you need to improve upon any of these areas.

How has God faithfully fulfilled His promises through FBCFW (as well as you individually) over the years?

In what ways do you expect the Lord to work through FBCFW in the coming years?  
How are you a part of that now?

*June 14, 2020*



# *Relate Fearlessly*

*Genesis 12:10-20*

Focal Verse:

“Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.”

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Genesis 12:12

## Introduce

In life, we all undoubtedly have many phobias even though many of them probably don't paralyze our lives to the extent that we can't function. Yet, on some level, they still cause anxiety and worry to become manifest at times. As we grow older and become endowed with more responsibility, our fears likely increase rather than decrease. Knowledge, life experiences, and our environment can all contribute to our fears if we allow them. In many ways, we must re-learn how to overcome fear and anxiety to live courageously. Courage, however, doesn't mean that we act with reckless abandon by throwing caution to the wind; this actually equates to ignorance and foolishness since God has given us wisdom and discernment which we should employ! Moreover, courage doesn't necessarily mean the absence of fear either, but it does necessitate correctly placed trust and faith. A simple illustration can help us relate.

Whether from our own experiences as a child or from raising children or grandchildren, we know that they can fear many things. Some fears, like imaginary monsters under the bed or in the closet, may send them irrationally scurrying into their parents' room at night. Events like thunderstorms can elicit



*Fearless Doesn't Mean Foolish!*

the same reaction, but children will quickly find solace and comfort in the arms of their parents! At other times, children implicitly trust their parents to protect them despite the risks associated with the circumstance. Whether wise or not, probably most fathers and perhaps some mothers have picked up their infant children and tossed them into the air to catch them. Usually, the infants giggle and smile with glee. Although parents consciously know the risks of such behavior, the children still trust them implicitly—even as an infant knowing that they love them and will catch them to keep them from falling!

As infants grow into teenagers, they still trust their parents and find comfort in them even if they won't admit it. For example, teens who have the privilege of driving must recognize that they have the responsibility to operate the car in a safe manner as well

## Introduce

as to maintain it properly so it will function. Certainly, learning is crucial and errors will be made; however, teenagers still have confidence that if a problem arises their parents will be there to help them. Whether they run out of gas, have a flat tire, or a whole host of other problems, they can turn to their parents first to help them resolve an issue; therefore, they have somewhat less anxiety in life over these things as compared to an adult who owns the car and must make payments on a loan and finance all the day-to-day operations as well as maintenance. Although teenagers may do foolish and unwise things at times, they know that their parents will still be there to guide them, help them, and love them (and punish if warranted).

We have a heavenly Father in whom we can trust. We should act wisely and responsibly, but we don't need to fear! We can operate fearlessly and courageously when we follow His plan and place our trust wholly in Him. Fear enters the picture when we attempt to navigate life on our own and fail to seek Him first! Abram found this out the hard way. Upon arriving in the Promise Land that God showed him, a severe famine forced him to flee into Egypt to find food and resources to survive. Instead of trusting God as he did when showing him the Promised Land, Abram feared that Pharaoh would see the beauty of his wife and kill him to take her for himself. Rather than trust the Lord to resolve the situation, Abram decided to concoct a plan of his own which led to more problems and further complications! Yet, like a holy and good Father, God intervened and rectified the situation despite Abram's poor judgment. In this lesson, we will learn how we should relate to the Lord fearlessly by trusting in Him first and following His plan for our lives.

Key  
Question

What are some things which you fear or cause you anxiety?  
How does trusting in the Lord help to alleviate such feelings?



### Genesis 12:10-13

#### **ABRAM'S INCLINATION:**

Last week, we learned how Abram responded to the Lord with faithful obedience to His command; this week we will see how his faith is tested by events that occurred in his life. Sometime after arriving in Canaan, a **severe famine** gripped **the land**, forcing Abram to make some monumental decisions (v. 10). In verse 1, this chapter opened with the Lord speaking directly to Abram and telling him to go “to a land that [He] will show” him. Now, however, we don’t see any directives from the Lord. The text matter-of-factly states that Abram **went to dwell in Egypt** because of the severity of **the famine**. Whether God instructed him to go to Egypt or not, we do not know. But what we do know is that Abram’s faith turned into fear because he took matters into his own hands without first seeking the Lord! Even though God doesn’t speak directly in these verses, we still find Him working behind the scenes—primarily to clean up Abram’s mess and rescue His servant!

As **the famine** grew in intensity, Abram lost sight of the larger picture and the future promises that God had made became a distant afterthought. Understandably, he began to focus on his most immediate needs like most of us probably would as well. In so doing, his trust became momentarily misplaced! Rather than turn to the Lord and trust in Him alone for provision, protection, and guidance, he began to trust in what he could do—a problematic character flaw that we will see recur in his life until he fully learns to trust in the Lord regardless of the circumstances. After he had arrived in Canaan, Abram’s activities centered on the worship of the Lord; each time he set up camp he constructed an altar ([Gen 12:7-8](#)). With the burgeoning **famine**, however, his worship seemingly turned into self-preservation! He became near-sighted and did what was best in his mind to survive which in



turn distracted him from his primary focus in life—the worship of the Lord!

Why is it important to remain consistent in our worship of the Lord despite difficult circumstances in life?

Question  
# 1

Several years ago, the men of the church went on a camping excursion to Oklahoma and some of us ventured into the beautiful Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Preserve. The year prior we had discovered two gorgeous twin lakes nestled between two rocky bluffs, so we wanted to return and explore them further. After several hours of searching, we finally found them again. This time Damon Harvey and I decided to



explore the lake on the left while three others descended to the one on the right. After making it down to the lake, we found a path that ascended higher into the foothills, so we began the trek it to see where it led.

Walking a few yards along the trail, I suddenly heard a rattle and looked down to see a Western Diamondback camouflaged amongst the rocks. Luckily, it wasn't coiled, but its four-foot body sprawled sunning on a rock no less than two feet away from me. I reacted immediately! From a flat-footed position,

I yelped and leapt over Damon's shoulders, flying backwards five feet above the ground and landing on my back amongst a pile of rocks. My glasses and hat were ejected into the wilderness and the breath was knocked out of my body, but nonetheless I staggered in my condition to rise and run away. I didn't think in all this! I just reacted and even put myself into more danger—whether from a back injury or more snakes that tend to congregate in the same general area.

I was focused on my immediate circumstances and responded somewhat instinctively for self-preservation, allowing my fear to cloud my judgment! Yet, losing sight of the bigger picture could have actually put me into even more danger. Life can be the same

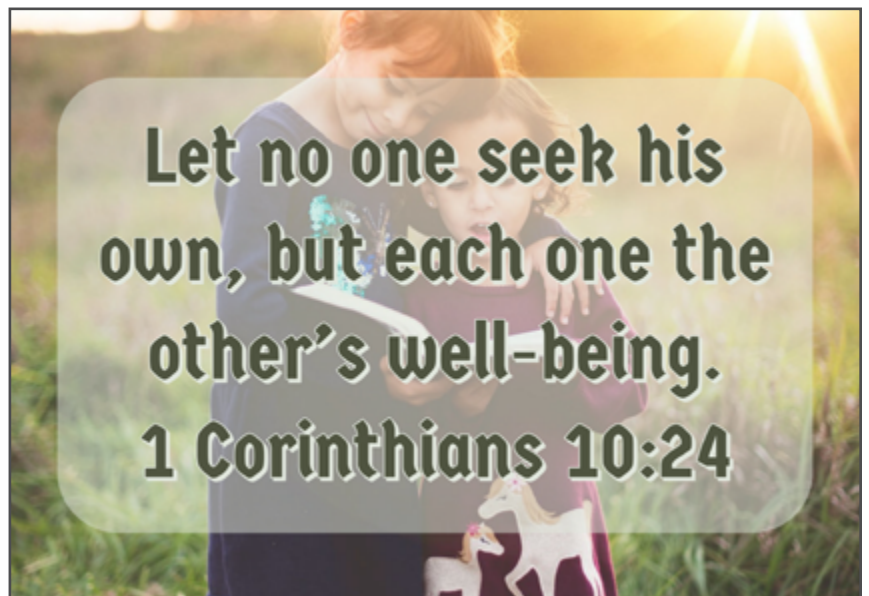
way when we focus on our circumstances and don't take time to assess the situation from the Lord's perspective and according to His plan. In the end, we will likely create a bigger mess than if we had waited upon direction from Him. Abram found this out the hard way! Therefore, we need to learn to act with wisdom that comes from the Lord by taking time to seek Him rather than allowing fear to dictate our responses.

How would you assess your response during difficult times in your life? How did the Lord give you wisdom when you sought Him?

Question  
# 2

Because Abram began focusing on his situation in life rather than upon the Lord, he became selfish in the decisions that he made. As their caravan drew **close** to the border of **Egypt**, he began to fear that the beauty of **his wife Sarai** would attract the attention of the **Egyptians** and create problems *for him*, so he came up with a plan (v. 11)! Consequently, he posits that **when the Egyptians see Sarai, they will kill him**, but **let her live** since he for some reason perceives that the men there have an eye for **beautiful** women and will ruthlessly treat foreigners to get what they desire (v. 12). Therefore, he asks Sarai to lie and say that she is his **sister** so that they will leave him alone and **let him live because of her** (v. 13). Based on Abram's plan and actions, we can identify two practices that we should avoid so we can make wise decisions: fear usually leads to selfishness and the failure to communicate the whole truth in an attempt to mislead others is immoral and sinful.

Although we do not have the complete rationale for his decision other than he doesn't want to be killed and how he later describes cultures who do not fear the Lord as lacking moral scruples as justification for committing the same sin to Abimelech ([Gen 20:11](#)), Abram's selfish motives become plainly evident. He was primarily concerned with what may happen to him rather than what may happen to Sarai or the others caught up unknowingly in his sordid plan! Even though he believes that they will spare Sarai's life, Abram still doesn't think about how they may treat her nor does he show



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any concern for her safety. If they're willing to **kill** to take her as their own, one would think, they would also be willing to abuse her to fulfill their desires even if she claims to be his **sister**. In the end, it's all about him! Therefore, he acts irresponsibly which places his **wife** in even more danger! However, Abram doesn't share this character flaw and mindset alone. In our own society as well as our individual lives, we can easily observe how fear causes us to act selfishly at times.

Even though we may have observed some in our society responding with generosity and caring for the welfare of others during this recent pandemic, many have behaved selfishly! In the early stages even before the stay-at-home orders, people flooded grocery stores and membership club warehouses to hoard supplies in panic. The empty aisles and shelves, however, don't present the entire picture of people hoarding cleaning supplies, toilet paper, and other food items for obviously selfish reasons. When some items like disinfectant wipes could no longer be found, people began buying baby wipes whether or not they had a baby who actually needed them which made it difficult to find for parents who actually did!

Personally, I saw a person loading a SUV—both the trunk and backseat—with hundreds of rolls of toilet paper from a large warehouse store before limits on quantities were set in place. It was obviously more than a typical family would need for several months! People bought out of fear which ultimately became selfishly motivated because they didn't think how their actions may cause others to go without or how they would affect the production and supply chain! They only thought of themselves and what they could get at that moment! Just this one example poignantly illustrates how selfish man can be when seized by fear.

In what ways does fear cause us to behave selfishly?

Question  
# 3

Not only did Abram behave selfishly, but he also lied and urged others, namely Sarai, to participate in his deception. Technically, Sarai was his half-sister or step-sister as we learn in [Genesis 20:12](#) where Abram reveals to Abimelech: "Indeed she truly is my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife." From Scripture, we don't know if Terah (Abram's father) had multiple wives or his first wife died. In any case, Abram perpetuates a half-truth to both the Egyptian people and Abimelech. Nevertheless, a half-truth meant to mislead and deceive is still

a lie! We live in a culture that has adopted different levels for lying. A white lie, in many people's minds, is harmless and even preferable if it helps someone to avoid a harmful situation, it saves someone's feelings from being hurt, or spares someone from receiving a bad reputation. The Bible, however, has no such degrees for lying; any lie or attempt to deceive is wrong! As we shall see, Abram's lie actually causes more trouble for everyone



involved rather than achieving the stress-free resolution he desired.

To illustrate our society's tolerance and acceptance for lying, we only need to look at our commercials. An advertisement for a video doorbell surveillance system which allows people to monitor their homes from anywhere with an Internet connection shows a suspicious character casing the home before attempting to burglarize it. A woman, obviously in a restaurant with friends, responds to the ring by telling the shady visitor that she's bathing the kids. She didn't have to lie, however! She could have simply said, "I'm unavailable at the moment. Please leave your card and I'll look over it." Thus, she would have told the truth while still not revealing that she wasn't at home in a way that misled; then, the criminal would have no way of knowing! Yet, we see such instances repeated throughout our culture in an effort to avoid something seen as a problem. In addition, people often tell others what they think they want to hear so that it elicits a favorable response to them—even when they have no intention of actually doing or fulfilling what they have said.

In what ways do we see deception and lying in general in our culture?

Question  
# 4

Although we should never under any circumstances lie or make misleading statements, it still doesn't give us the excuse to gossip or speak crassly and critically under the guise of "being real" or authentic. When we speak, we must do so in love so that it edifies and helps the person to mature; therefore, we must still measure and evaluate what we say and how we say it. Often, we'll hear people today say, "I'm just being real." In essence,

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they use that as an excuse to give their unfounded opinion or say and do anything that they want without consequence. Instead of “being real,” let’s be like Christ. He chose His words carefully; He scolded, rebuked, and corrected when needed; He offered comfort and encouragement when the opportunity presented itself; He used His words to teach and help people mature in their faith. He did all this while speaking the truth! Let’s imitate Him in the content which we speak and the manner in how we speak.

Why does speaking the truth still require discretion?

Question  
# 5

## Genesis 12:14-16

### PHARAOH’S IGNORANCE:

Next, we see the consequences of Abram’s actions not only for himself, but also for those around him—some of whom, like Pharaoh, were ignorant of the whole scheme.



As they arrived in **Egypt**, things turned out similarly to how Abram had envisioned them. Just as he had thought, **the Egyptians saw Sarai was very beautiful** (v. 14). Perhaps, what happens next doesn’t go quite as he had anticipated. Members of Pharaoh’s court (literally **princes**) noticed **her** and **commended her to** their leader (v. 15). Both Abram and

Sarai willingly go along with this ruse—fully aware of Pharaoh’s intention to take her as his wife! Somewhat honorably according to the custom at the time, **Pharaoh** gave Abram a dowry for Sarai. Unlike Abram’s perception, **Pharaoh** actually **treated him well for her sake** (v. 16). Thus, he enriched Abram, giving him **sheep, oxen, male and female donkeys**, and **servants**!

Here, we have two servants of the Lord—who knew better—lying and precariously placing themselves in a situation that could have led to adultery! **Pharaoh**, on the other hand, acts out of ignorance. He doesn’t knowingly take Sarai to commit adultery

with her—as David later does with Bathsheba. Although this doesn't excuse Pharaoh's role in the whole scheme, it does serve to highlight the heinous nature of Abram's sin! He willfully sinned; he knew the boundaries God had established, but he ignored them to serve his own selfish purposes! In his interaction with Abimelech later in life, Abram admits the reason for deceiving him (and likely Pharaoh as well) to believe that Sarai was only his sister and not his wife: "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife" (Gen 20:11). In behaving this way, however, Abram is the one who flaunts God's boundaries and shows no respect or trust in Him! Thus, he actually does what he accuses these other cultures who did not serve the Lord of doing!

What does willful or intentional sin say about our relationship with the Lord as believers?

Question  
# 6

People, particularly believers, tend to point out the same sin in others in which they themselves are engaged. Perhaps, they do this as a distraction to their own faults or as a justification that they aren't *that* bad. In any case, however, they behave just like the culture around them from which they claim to be set apart! For this reason, Jesus warns us, "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" ([Matt 7:5](#)). As believers, we know right from wrong; we have no excuse because we have Scripture to guide us! We ought to live holy and righteously because we have a clear standard and example to follow in Christ. When we behave immorally, deceitfully, and hypocritically, it reflects negatively upon Christ in a way that He does not deserve. Why would Pharaoh, or anyone for that matter, want to serve a God whose servants act dishonestly and irreverently in a manner even worse than the secular culture? Therefore, let us make sure that we live righteously, reflecting Christ's character, so that we can point people to Him rather than drive them away from Him!

## Genesis 12:17-20

### **GOD'S INTERVENTION:**

Throughout this event, Abram has acted on his own, but now the Lord steps in to rectify his mistakes and resolve the situation amicably. We don't hear Him speak, but we see Him act when He sends **plagues** upon **Pharaoh and his house because of Sarai** (v. 17). Despite Abram acting upon his own, God rescues his servant and keeps him from suffering a worse fate! In a way, He also does the same with **Pharaoh**. Although

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we aren't told how he came to recognize that Sarai **was Abram's wife** and that the **plagues** occurred **because of** her or how God revealed it to him specifically, **Pharaoh**



nonetheless angrily summons Abram to interrogate him (v. 18)! He first asks two pointed questions successively without giving Abram the chance to respond: "**What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?**" With these questions Pharaoh cuts to the heart of the issue of Abram's deception. He then asks another question

followed by an explanation of the consequences: "**Why did you say, 'She is my sister'**" (v. 19)? In the NKJV, the translators phrase Pharaoh's statement after the question to imply that he **might have taken** Sarai as his **wife**; however, translated more literally **Pharaoh** states that he indeed had taken **her as his wife**. Thus, he recognizes that Abram's willful deception has caught him in this evil, adulterous plot as well. Even though the text doesn't make clear whether the marriage was actually consummated, one thing does become evident: **Pharaoh** knows that adultery is immoral and sinful. He wants nothing to do with such an evil plan! Therefore, he throws Abram out of the country—the very place where he had sought to escape **the famine** and find security and provision! **Pharaoh, therefore**, returns Sarai **his wife** and bids Abram to **take her and go his way** (v. 19). He then gives instructions to his servants to accompany them to pack and **send** them **on their way** with **all that** they **had**—even what he had given them honorably through dishonest means while in Egypt (v. 20)!

At points, this sounds more like a modern soap opera than Scripture, but that's what happens when people try to determine their own fate apart from the Lord. We can learn two things from this response. First, our choices and sin affect others! Abram involved Sarai in the plot and literally dragged **Pharaoh** into the middle of this scheme through his deceptive plan. Whether we consciously think about it or plan for it to happen, our sin affects others. Some people will attempt to justify and defend their sin



as their personal choice. Some will say that it's their business and their freedom to live life in the way they so choose. However, as believers, we must realize that our choices have a profound impact upon others; therefore, we must think about how our actions not only influence others, but how they reflect upon our Savior as well.

How can our sin affect others, especially in the church?

Question  
# 7

Second, whether by silent consent like Sarai or by complete ignorance like Pharaoh, each party is ultimately responsible for his or her own actions. Ignorance, therefore, is no excuse for sin! Although Pharaoh acted in complete ignorance of the situation, God still held him accountable. As believers, however, we have no excuse ([James 4:17](#)). God has outlined the boundaries by which we must abide in Scripture. For non-believers, they still have no excuse because God has given them a conscience which helps them to distinguish right from wrong and points them to Him as the sovereign Creator ([Rom 2:12-16](#)). In the end, God has given us enough information that points to Him and relates His plan, so everyone will be held responsible for how he or she acts and the choices he or she makes regarding Christ Jesus. Therefore, as believers, let us make the right choices and not cause others to stumble, but let us be stalwart examples of those who relate fearlessly to the Lord because we trust implicitly in Him for everything in life!

Why is ignorance of the law or sin not an excuse for anyone?

Question  
# 8

Fear shouldn't necessarily be defined as insecurity caused by uncertainty, but rather it is predicated upon misplaced trust. Fear creeps into the picture when we don't trust the right source! Apart from a relationship with Christ, we have everything to fear in life and even more to fear in death. When we have confidence in ourselves or human institutions, we have no hope; the only thing in which we can be certain is that they will one day fail! The economy, as we have seen during this pandemic, can collapse putting millions out of work; currency can be devalued; retirements can disappear; governments can't prevent any of this from happening! To avoid such fear and panic, we need a source that will never fail despite whatever circumstances may arise in life. Although we won't ever be immune from misfortune or the problems of this world, there is one source whom we can trust to help us through these trying times so that we can relate fearlessly: Jesus Christ. No matter what may happen here on earth, Christ promises to deliver us through these times and give us victory in the end! We only need to trust in Him. When we allow fear to control our lives and dictate our decisions, our choices will often be fraught with problems. We will tend to look at our immediate needs selfishly and seek the most fortuitous route to alleviate them—even if sometimes it involves unethical and immoral decisions like those Abram and Sarai made. Yet, we don't have to resort to such dastardly deeds. We can trust Christ who will guide us to live righteously, protect us, provide for us, and care for us in an even greater way than we could ever do for ourselves. Therefore, let us seek Him and relate fearlessly to the challenges that life may pose because we know that our Savior has the whole world in His hands!

## ***Incorporate***

What causes fear in our world today? How can these fears affect our relationship with the Lord? How can we as a church help one another overcome this fear and remind others where our trust should be placed?

As a church, how can we biblically practice accountability amongst our membership to help ensure that we make righteous decisions?

How does the sin of an individual affect the whole church? What should the biblical response of sin in the church be?

*June 21, 2020*



*Relate with  
Forbearance  
Genesis 16:1-16*

Focal Verse:

"So Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai."

Genesis 16:2

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## Introduce

In 2004, we had just finished our last Sunday service in Maberera, Kenya as a mission team before embarking on a two-day retreat in Maasai Mara, the internationally renowned game preserve, to rest before the arduous journey home. That year, we had three van drivers from the Nairobi area who were unfamiliar with that rural part of Kenya outside of the main routes they usually traveled. Nonetheless, someone suggested that they take a well-known shortcut to locals that would cut the travel time more than in half. After receiving



a few vague directions, the drivers and the team began the journey only to discover a few miles into the trip a posted warning that the bridge was out. So, the drivers stopped to inquire of the locals whether a vehicle could ford the river. According to the debate amongst the locals, they came to the conclusion that it couldn't, so they received advice on how to best navigate around the closure and remain on the "fastest" route.

Consequently, the drivers pressed forward with confidence they could get us back on track and make up time. Soon, however, it became apparent that none of the landmarks were consistent with the route described to them. Rather than turn back, the drivers ventured onward like pioneers blazing a trail—only stopping occasionally to ask people along the way if we were on the right road. As the roads became more rural and less maintained, the solid dirt gave way to ruts, then mud, and finally standing water. Eventually, one of the vans became stuck in this quagmire which required both pushing and towing to get it dislodged. As nightfall began to ensue, we finally arrived at the town just outside of the western entrance. Because predators primarily begin hunting at dusk into the night, traffic into the park is prohibited and all safaris must return to their respective lodging. After hearing the reason for our delay, the gracious park hosts took pity and allowed us to enter if we would agree to go straight and swiftly to the lodge which was still more than an hour away.

As we began the trek inside the park, we witnessed a spectacular sunset, but our

## Introduce

problems were far from over! Halfway to the lodge now in almost complete darkness, the van in which I rode lost all the lug nuts from one wheel and started to shimmy violently. Fortunately, the driver recognized the problem and stopped safely, but no one had a solution to the problem after an extended time of trying. In the middle of waist-high grass the same color as a lion's coat and mane, we had to change vehicles twice! It certainly puts it into perspective when you see a free-roaming herd of elephants only a few yards down the road! Eventually, almost ten hours later from a normally four-hour trip, we made it to the lodge—dusty, dirty, and weary, but safe. Even if we had taken the long route rather than tried to follow the shortcut, we would have made it in less than half that time!

Many people in life grow impatient and want things done right now according to their way—especially in our day and age of instant everything! They take shortcuts to expedite the process, but often these are fraught with problems. In Genesis 16, Sarai becomes impatient with God and wants Abram to have the security of an heir in fulfillment of God's promises made many years ago. Rather than wait upon the Lord, Sarai concocts a plan of her own to hasten the process and give God a helping hand. Yet, her actions along with Abram's consent created a major problem of which we still see the effects today! When we grow impatient and are tempted to take matters into our own hands, we need to remember that problems will abound when we get ahead of God's promises and fail to see things from His perspective. Consequently, we need to relate with forbearance or patience because His timing is always perfect.

Key  
Question

How does taking "shortcuts" in life often lead to problems?

### Genesis 16:1-4

#### SARAI'S PLAN:

As we learned the very first time we met Abram in [Genesis 11:29-30](#), he and Sarai had **no children** together. Since that time, God has made a covenant with Abram to make him “a great nation” and make his “name great” ([Gen 12:2](#))—both of which require the birth of a male child that would bear his name and produce a heritage of descendants.

After several years pass, the Lord appears to Abram in a vision to quell his fears and remind him of his promises. Rather than allow Abram to appoint a foreign-born servant named Eliezer as his heir,



God promises “one who will come from [his] own body shall be [his] heir” ([Gen 15:2,4](#)). Moreover, God further clarifies His promises to give him as many descendants as the innumerable stars that fill the heavens ([Gen 15:5](#)). In all this, Abram “believed the Lord and He accounted it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

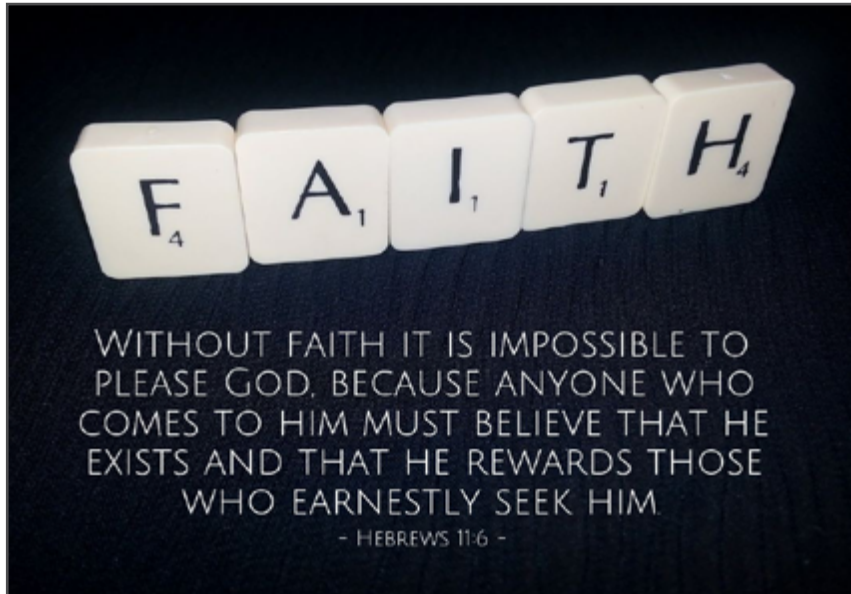
Turning the pages of history a few years forward, impatience causes the couple to make some poor choices in how they relate to each other, those around them, and ultimately the Lord. Sarai, for example, plants doubt in Abram’s mind once again and urges him to take matters into his own hands similar to what he had done in Egypt, so that he could produce an heir on his own by any means available. As the couple had advanced in years, the text reminds us again that **Sarai had borne him no children**. However, it also points out that **she had a maidservant** named **Hagar** whom they probably had acquired during their stay in Egypt (v. 1). This **maidservant** should have been a reminder that God always provides and fulfills His promises despite our helplessness and even ineptness at times. Conversely, the **maid** becomes a tool they use in an attempt to give God a helping hand.

Sarai recognizes that **the Lord has restrained her from bearing any children** to this point, so she encourages Abram to **go in to her maid**, so **perhaps she could obtain**

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**children** through **her**. Abram does not question the plan, give any guidance, or put up any resistance; the text notes that he simply **heeded the voice of** his wife. After they had lived **in Canaan** for **ten years**, Sarai **gave her Egyptian maid, Hagar**, to Abram **as his wife** (v. 3). When Abram had gone **in to** her, **she conceived**. Instead of celebrating that her plan had worked, it caused great conflict in the home as **Hagar became despised** by Sarai (v. 4)!

Throughout the events that transpire, the couple doesn't seek the Lord and wait upon



a response; they just act! Although the text doesn't relate the logic behind their decision, perhaps they thought this plan would be acceptable and work because God has only said an heir would come from Abram's body to this point. It's not until [Genesis 17:16](#) that He specifies Sarai would be the one to produce Abram this heir. Rather than seeking clarification, the

couple jumps to conclusions and assumes that it requires them to act now rather than wait upon the Lord. As we have seen throughout their lives, failing to seek the Lord and getting ahead of Him has once again caused huge problems—just as it did in Egypt!

What is the danger in jumping to conclusions in life about any situation or circumstance?

Question  
# 1

Through these events, we must recognize that God wants us to rely upon Him and exercise faith rather than trusting in the things that we can do ourselves. Although God has given us responsibilities to fulfill along the way, He wants us to acknowledge our own limitations and trust wholly in His provision. Sarai rightly concluded that God had **restrained** her womb **from bearing children**. In not allowing her to conceive yet, God desires to show that He is the source of all life and that He is the One who makes all things possible even when they are impossible for us ([Matt 19:25-30](#)). God initiated the covenant with Abram by grace and He will be the One to fulfill it and circumvent any obstacles that may arise! Although He did use Abram to establish this covenant



based upon his obedience, God demonstrated that it was His grace and power which brought it to fruition at exactly the right time. He did all the planning and made all the provisions! Abram simply had to trust in Him!

When has God asked you to rely and wait upon Him in faith?

Question  
# 2

Waiting upon the Lord, however, doesn't mean that we sit inactive doing nothing while we wait for Him to fulfill His promises. Rather, it means that we should seek guidance from Him first and then act upon the responsibilities which He gives to us. In gardening, we know that God causes plants to grow and produces the harvest.

Along the way, however, He gives us responsibilities to make preparations to receive the harvest. We must till the ground, remove any rocks or weeds, and add fertilizer. Yet, we must wait for the right time to place the seeds in the ground! If we place them too early, late freezes may damage or kill the crops; if we place them too late, the harvest may not come before



the weather changes in the Fall. Even while we wait for the promised harvest after planting the seeds, we have things that we *know* that we ought to do. We must water the plants and keep them free from insects and weeds. In all, we must still rely upon the Lord to protect the crops from natural calamities and produce the harvest at the right time! To have success, therefore, we must do things in the right way and at the right time based upon leadership from the Lord!

Likewise, life can be viewed the same way as gardening. We need to do things in the right way, in the right order, and at the right time according to the Lord's plan. Therefore, we need to seek guidance from God, know the responsibilities which He has given us, and wait upon Him for the right time to act! For Abram, God had given him one responsibility in the covenant: "you shall be a blessing" ([Gen 12:2](#)). While waiting upon God to deliver the promised heir through Sarai, Abram should have practiced being a blessing to the people around him. Instead, he brought curses and conflicts

## Instruct

upon many of those with whom he interacted. As we learned last week, his lies brought calamity on Pharaoh—certainly not blessing. This week, his participation in Sarai’s plan and apathy over her anger brought turmoil into their relationships. Again, he hasn’t learned to be a blessing!

Waiting for God to fulfill His promise, Abram should have sought to mature in his faith and cultivate healthy relationships with others in which he could have pointed them to the Lord. In all we do, we need to seek the Lord first while fulfilling the responsibilities He has clearly given us. Like Abram, we need to mature in our faith and strengthen our relationship with the Lord so that we can be a blessing to others as we share the gospel! Guessing, taking matters into our own hands, and using trial and error as a means of discernment can lead to various problems. However, we can avoid these problems when we seek the Lord first and actively wait in faith for Him to give definitive direction.

What responsibilities has God given us while we wait upon Him for further guidance in specific situations?

Question  
# 3

## Genesis 16:5-6

### ***THE PLAN’S PROBLEM:***

When we devise our own plans apart from the Lord, we quickly see the problems this creates. Our impatience often leads to mistakes! Rather than being jubilant that her plan worked, Sarai becomes indignant. In an off-handed way, she acknowledges her

But they that wait upon the Lord  
shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up  
with wings as eagles;  
they shall run, and not be weary;  
and they shall walk, and not faint.

**Isaiah 40:31**

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mistake, but blames Abram when she exclaims, “**My wrong be upon you**” (v. 5)! **My wrong** is best translated as the **wrong** done to me. She has become enraged because she perceives that Hagar is gloating and has **despised** her inability to produce a child of her own. However, Sarai, not Abram or Hagar, is the source of her own misery! She brought this upon

herself, but blames her sin upon others—a familiar response from many of the people we’ve studied in Genesis so far. This dysfunction not only strains her relationships with Abram and Hagar, but it also carries over into her relationship with the Lord because she asks Him to choose sides: **the Lord judge between you and me**. In her sin of jealousy and animosity, she asks the Lord for an evaluation! Because neither of them sought the Lord in this decision to ascertain His perspective and plan, they are both at fault!

How would the Lord evaluate your decisions, actions, and attitudes?

Question  
# 4

Sarai and Abram aren’t alone in their impatience and haste to make a decision. We live in a fast-paced world filled with impatient people. Having entertainment on demand, instant access to information online, and shopping with same-day delivery in some cases has only caused people to display their impatience even more rapidly! As a society, we want results and we want them right now! We want instant gratification as well as immediate resolution to our problems. But God and life in general doesn’t work that way. We need patience. Impatience leads to chaos, confusion, and frustration; God, however, created the world to have order and purpose when we follow His plan. Life may be but a vapor in the scope of eternity (Jas 4:14), but maturity and growth in Christ still require a lifetime of development. Maturity doesn’t happen overnight. Therefore, we need to take time to evaluate our decisions and ponder the consequences of our actions: how will they affect our lives in the future, how do they affect others, and how do they reflect upon the Lord?

Many Americans share the desire to lose weight as evidenced by the number of commercials on the topic. Aside from physical reasons that people cannot lose weight, many simply want to find an easy way that guarantees results immediately. Rather than maintain a balanced, healthy diet and exercise, many turn to diet fads, pills, and procedures. Balanced diets and exercise require discipline and patience. Pills and procedures promise quick results, but at what cost? In the long run, they may reduce weight at the expense of the balanced nutrition we need, produce unwanted side effects, or cause us to gain weight more rapidly once finished with the fad. We should desire a permanent solution not something temporary! In life, we need patience and discipline to mature in our faith; let’s not take shortcuts at the expense of growing in our relationship with the Lord! To have lasting results requires a consistent relationship

## Instruct

with the Lord and complete surrender to Him in every area of our lives. While we wait upon Him for direction, let's do the things which we know that He has called us to do and wait patiently until He shows us the specific path that we ought to take!

How has impatience in your life led to mistakes or wrong decisions? What has the Lord taught you from these situations?

Question  
# 5

Abram had a chance to direct them as a couple to seek wisdom from the Lord, but he didn't from the very beginning. Like Adam who stood there silently in the garden and did not intercede for his wife, Abram also takes a hands-off approach. He tells Sarai, **"Indeed your maid servant is in your hand; do to her as you please"** (v. 6). This advice makes the situation worse! Through this approach, Abram tries to extricate



himself from the situation to avoid blame for his own actions and, in a way, validates Sarai's sin by telling her to deal with it how she sees fit. As the leader of the home, Abram should have led them to seek the Lord before entering such an agreement in the first place and to think through the consequences that this union with Hagar may have had (compare [Gen 16:2](#)

[and 3:17](#)). He does none of this! Instead, he listens to an opinion without receiving a directive from the Lord.

An entire series of lessons could be written on this subject, but we'll briefly concentrate on three principles aimed specifically at husbands based upon their God-given role in the home. First, husbands should lead by example. Search Scripture and seek wisdom through prayer before acting! Take time to evaluate things from God's perspective. Second, husbands should establish a spiritual environment in the home where they seek the Lord as a couple. Just as the husband should take time to process things individually with the Lord, he should afford his wife that same opportunity all-the-while continuing to discuss and seek the Lord as a couple when the decision must be made.

If both spouses truly seek the Lord, He will always reveal His plan to both partners and not just one! God wants order and unity in the household—not disagreements and dysfunction. Third, if disagreement does occur, don't condemn, but continue to model the righteousness of the Lord. Like Abram, we have no control over someone else's actions, but we do have control over how we act and respond. Although we can't choose the path that someone else takes, we can gently guide and correct (when necessary) based upon how we apply the principles in Scripture by which God has given us to live. Unfortunately, Abram didn't follow any of these principles and created an even larger problem.

Why is it important to take time to seek the Lord individually as spouses before making a decision collectively?

Question  
# 6

## Genesis 16:7-12

### GOD'S PROMISE:

Because of Sarai's harassment and harsh treatment, Hagar **fled from her presence** (v. 6b). She likely traveled a substantial distance before stopping at **a spring in Shur** in southern Canaan **in the wilderness** of the Negev desert (v. 7). There, **the angel of the Lord** speaks to her to offer guidance and hope. He asks her two questions: **where have you come from** and **where are you going** (v. 8)? However, she answers only one when she tells him that she is **fleeing the presence of her mistress**. At this point, she's just trying to escape the danger; perhaps, she doesn't clearly know where she's **going** yet. Nonetheless, **the angel of the Lord** gives a shocking command for her to **return to her mistress and submit herself under her hand** (v. 9)!

Upon revealing the command, the divine messenger also makes a merciful promise that the Lord **will multiply** her **descendants exceedingly**, making them an innumerable **multitude** (v. 10). Yet, he doesn't go as far as to promise to mitigate



Sarai's animosity toward her or to protect her from suffering harsh treatment (see [Gen 21:9-21](#)). But in the promise of the birth that would lead to many **descendants**, she can implicitly know that no physical harm would come to her that would cause her death or a miscarriage. Still, she had to place her trust in the Lord to find strength to endure any challenges that she would face upon her **return!** **The angel** then proceeds to reveal new information about the **child**. Hagar already knew she was pregnant, but now she knows the gender: **a son** (v. 11). After the gender reveal *par excellence*, he gives explicit direction to **name** him **Ishmael** which means **the Lord has heard your affliction**. The Lord doesn't promise an easy road in life when we follow Him, but He does promise to be by our side and help us to endure and overcome any challenges that may arise. Therefore, Ishmael's **name** can bring hope and reassurance to a troubled and persecuted woman when she obediently places her trust in the Lord!

How has the Lord given you hope and reassurance during challenging times in life?

Question  
# 7

Life isn't a video game in which we can hit the reset button to clear all the data and start over when we make mistakes as if nothing ever happened. In Christ, God makes us a new creation and wipes our slate clean—not holding our sins against us. Yet, the decisions that we make matter. Their consequences have lasting effects, even though Christ forgives us. Our choices not only affect us, but those around us as well. We see this reflected in the relationship between Abram's progeny, Isaac and Ishmael, even today in the turmoil it creates in the Middle East. Although God corrected the wrong by protecting Hagar and Ishmael, the consequences of Abram and Sarai's fateful decisions remain in human history. Therefore, we can't be in a hurry to make a decision without first seeking the Lord and evaluating it according to the plan outlined in Scripture!



We need to weigh the consequences of our decisions. We can never take back the words that we say even though we apologize; we can never undo the hurt that we cause and the trust that we destroy when we act carelessly.

We must think before we act and evaluate what we say and how we say it! Although relationships can be repaired through forgiveness with the help of Christ, in some ways they will remain forever changed. Abram, Sarai, and Hagar's relationships were. When we seek the Lord first and make responsible choices based upon His guidance, this type of dysfunctional relationship will never occur on our part. As we've learned, we can't control what others say and do, but we can control how we respond. Therefore, let's respond in love, in purity, in righteousness, and in holiness according to the will of the Lord.

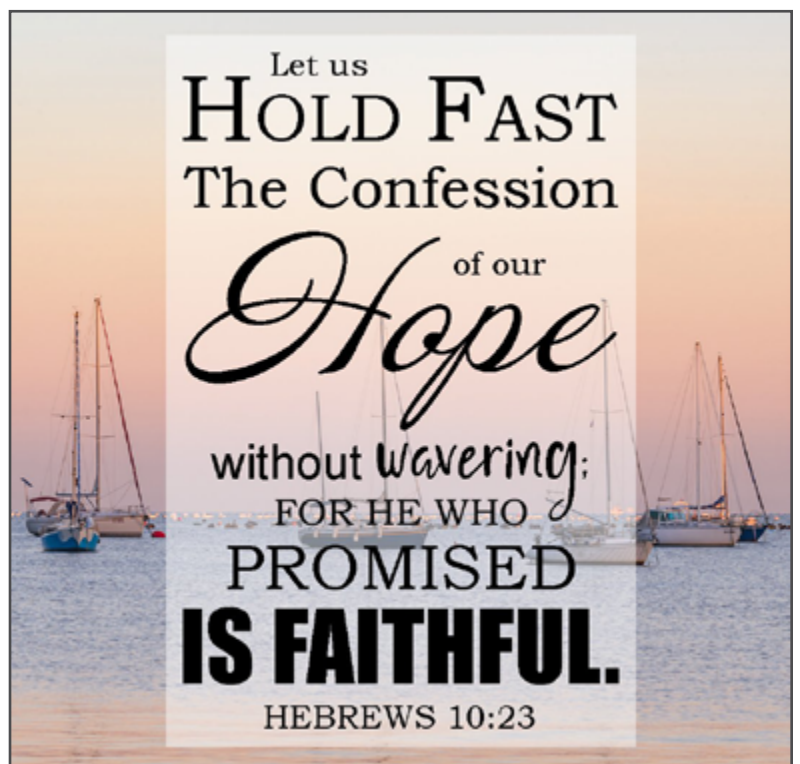
How have your choices affected others or how have others' choices affected you? How can we overcome the negative effects of our choices in Christ?

Question  
# 8

## Genesis 16:13-16

### GOD'S PERSPECTIVE:

We can find hope in the midst of trouble and despair when we view things from God's perspective. Interestingly, Hagar doesn't **name** the place after God like others in the Old Testament do, but she gives Him a **name**! The text reveals that **she called the name of the Lord: "You-are-the-God-Who-Sees"** (v. 13). This leads her to postulate a question: "**Have I also here seen Him who sees me?**" Nowhere in the text does it say that **the angel of the Lord** appeared to her, but only that he spoke. Through the **name** that she gives the Lord and the subsequent question she poses, Hagar rhetorically asks if she has encountered the God who sees her needs and takes care of her—which she must answer with an emphatic yes! In her flight from Sarai, God sought Hagar personally and revealed Himself through His divine messenger. Like His covenant with Abram, God took the initiative to rescue Hagar; He would be the One who would sustain her and care for her. She needed to trust in Him and respond in obedience.



## Instruct

What a beautiful picture of the Lord captured by Hagar in this moment of tribulation! God watches over us. He sees us. He notices us and knows what we need. He doesn't wait for us to come to Him; He takes the initiative to come to us if only we would acknowledge Him and accept His help. The palmist similarly writes, "God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble" ([Psalm 46:1](#)). How? He seeks us! He finds us where we are. To Zacchaeus, Jesus announces, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). We have someone to whom we can turn for help in any situation. We have someone who is right here with us; someone who is available all the time. Someone who wants to have a relationship with us and offers us the means to have that relationship if only we would trust in Him and accept His plan for our lives!

How has God revealed Himself to you both during times of turmoil and times of triumph in your life?

Question  
# 9

Finally, we see the immediate conclusion to the events that transpired. Hagar returns to Abram and bears a **son** whom they name **Ishmael** just as the Lord had commanded (v. 15). At Ishmael's birth, Abram **was eighty-six-years old** (v. 16). It would be another fourteen years before God would fulfill His promise of an heir through Abram and Sarai. Abram would soon learn, however, what was impossible for him was possible through the Lord. He just needed to be patient, seek the Lord, and wait upon Him!



In the introduction, we saw how a purported shortcut turned into an ordeal that led to a chain reaction of problems. We must ask ourselves: Is it better to do something quick simply to get it done or to do it right with lasting results? We've all tried to find shortcuts in life or take the easy road. Yet, in the long run, these shortcuts have led to many mistakes and problems. Although God promises to take our burdens upon Himself ([Matt 11:28-30](#)), there is no shortcut or substitute in our relationship with Him! We must walk with Him daily and learn to trust Him patiently!

While we wait upon the Lord for direction, we need to do the things to which we know that He has called us. We must grow in our relationship with Him through prayer, Scripture, and fellowship with other believers; we must practice righteousness, worship and serve Him, and share the gospel with a lost and dying community. As we do these things, God will reveal His specific plan for us at the right time and we will move in step with Him. Therefore, let's practice patience as we wait upon the Lord rather than become anxious and develop our own plans. When we see things from the Lord's perspective, we may have to endure trials, but we'll never make a mistake under His leadership!

## *Incorporate*

How would you evaluate your participation in the plan that God has given us?

When have you deviated from that plan? How has God used circumstances or people to bring you back into His plan?

What plan has the Lord outlined for us as a church? How are you currently participating in that plan? How does your participation or lack thereof affect others in the church as well as the secular community?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*June 28, 2020*



BLAMELESS

*Relate Faultlessly*

*Genesis 17:1-27*

Focal Verse:

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’”

Genesis 17:1

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## Introduce

Last week, we learned that following God requires patience. In our minds, we may have an idea of how and when we would like to see the Lord act in an answer to our prayers; we may even have a precise timetable that we would propose. But God always acts at the precisely right timing regardless of our plans or schedules. His timing is always perfect! Thirteen years have passed between [Genesis 16:16](#) where Abram is eighty-six and 17:1 where he has now turned ninety-nine! In all, twenty-four years have passed between God's



initial promise to Abram in [Genesis 12](#) and many things have transpired in his life—perhaps leaving him wondering when God will act. As we shall see, God once again appears to Abram to offer reassurance and more specific details about the fulfillment of His promises. The wait for one particular promise is now almost over!

Although we don't have any record of what occurred during these thirteen years, let's place ourselves for a moment in Abram's shoes. Would we have prayed and faithfully waited or lost hope and focused on something else? It can be challenging when we perceive God is silent when in reality He's telling us to be patient and wait! Even Job who had a healthy walk with the Lord lamented in his trouble: "Why do You hide Your face and regard me as Your enemy" (Job 13:24)? Job desperately sought answers for his affliction in the face of his friends' accusations. God would eventually speak directly to His servant ([Job 38](#)), but it required that Job endure and trust while he waited. In one respect God answered immediately and said, "Wait patiently for My full explanation. I'll reveal it to you at the right time. Trust Me." Thus, Job could still cry with confidence, "For I know that my Redeemer lives" ([Job 19:25](#)).

Recently, while driving to church, I heard a host on a local Christian radio station pose this question: "Why does God answer some prayers and not others?" This question is theologically wrong on several levels. As humans, it shows three things about our mindset: our impatience, our lack of understanding, and our demand that God bend His will to ours! First, we want an immediate answer and we grow impatient when God

## Introduce

says, “Wait for My explicit directions at My time.” In reality, God does answer our prayers immediately; He says, “Yes, no, or wait upon My timing.” Second, we perceive that when God says “no” or tells us to “wait” that He didn’t respond to our prayers. This indicates a lack of understanding of who God is and how He works. Finally, we shouldn’t pray for our will to be done; we must seek His will!

When Abram sought God, He always answered; even when he attempted to venture on his own, God still responded! In Egypt, He showed Abram He would protect and provide; there was no need to lie and trust in his own plan. When he wanted to appoint Eliezer as heir, God reassured him that He would fulfill His promise through His servant’s own body. Through the birth of Ishmael, God said, “Wait; don’t get in a hurry; I have a plan!” To say that God answers some prayers and not others couldn’t be further from the truth! God never deviates from His plan and always works according to His schedule. While we wait for His perfect timing, we should remain faithful and blameless in our walk—practicing righteousness and obediently doing the things to which He has called us.

Key  
Question

How will walking blamelessly or faultlessly with the Lord influence the way we pray?

### Genesis 17:1-8

#### A CALL TO RIGHTEOUSNESS:

**When Abram was ninety-nine, the Lord appeared to** him for a third time to reassure him of His promises, but first He reminds him how he should **walk** (v. 1). As an **almighty** and holy **God**, He expects Abram to **walk before** Him blamelessly. We must exercise caution here not to think that God's bestowal of the covenant depends upon Abram's **blameless walk**. On the contrary, the covenant is solely a gift from the Lord through His grace! Abram does nothing to earn it through his righteousness. In fact, he has been anything but **blameless**: he's lied, knowingly created a potentially adulterous relationship, grown impatient, and was apathetic toward the mistreatment of Hagar. Yet, we see God's grace time and again despite Abram's miscues! Abram still trusts the Lord and walks in faithful obedience, but he's not perfect; he makes plenty of mistakes, but they don't negate the covenant! A simple illustration will help us understand why God instructs Abram to **walk** blamelessly before citing the details of the **covenant**.

When we receive a gift, we don't pay for it; we just need to accept it. Even though we don't pay for it, we still have responsibilities that come along with it and the giver usually has some expectations about how we will treat it. A couple of years ago, my parents swapped their 2015 CR-V with me for my aging Accord which they would trade for a new car. They didn't charge me anything for the increase in value I received and what they would lose over my former car. With this newer car, I had responsibilities:

obtain insurance, pay the taxes and registrations fees, and maintain it well and regularly. Being an all-wheel-drive and the fact that I love to camp, I sent my parents all kinds of videos of the car off-roading in rough terrain. (I really had no intention of treating the car that way; I was just being a good son to get a reaction!) So, my dad responds, "Son, you need to keep



## Instruct

it on the road.” My parents had expectations about how I would drive and treat the car. It was still a gift. I did nothing to earn it or deserve it; yet, it still came with expectations and responsibilities.

Our gift of life in Christ Jesus functions the same way. We don’t earn it or deserve it; it’s free of charge. Yet, it comes with expectations and responsibilities. We can’t lose or forfeit our gift in Christ once we repent of our sins and surrender to Him, but we should desire to show respect to our heavenly Father by how we live because we love Him. Grace saves! But love compels us! Therefore, let us continually remind ourselves of the responsibilities that we have in Christ to **walk** blamelessly with Him because we love Him.

What expectations does our heavenly Father have of us? How would you evaluate your fulfillment of those expectations?

Question  
# 1

After outlining how Abram should conduct himself, God reminds him of the general promises of the **covenant** before detailing a more specific plan (v. 2). By way of summary, He reaffirms that He **will multiply** him **exceedingly** ([Gen 12:1; 15:5](#)). This requires an heir who would carry on Abram’s lineage. For the third time in twenty-four years, God reiterates this promise. Although Abram may have wondered when God would actually fulfill it, he still responds in faith and worship! In an act of reverence, Abram falls **on his face** lying prostrate on the ground as the Lord continues to speak (v. 3). As we will see as the chapter advances, God is now ready to announce how and when He will fulfill this promise!

*Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."*

*Luke 18:27*



At this point, God declares, “**As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you**” (v. 4). We may hurriedly read this statement without giving it much thought, but it’s theologically significant! God doesn’t use the pronouns us, our,



or we, but **Me, My,** and **you.** Through these words, He explicitly confirms that He is the initiator, guarantor, and finisher of the **covenant.** He does everything! Essentially, God Himself is the **covenant!** Abram is only the recipient who receives these magnificent blessings predicated upon faith. Abram and Sarai may have participated in the act that produced an heir by faith, but God ultimately fulfilled the promise through the birth of Isaac when it was humanly impossible through their aging bodies ([Heb 11:11-12](#)). Thus, Paul can write, “And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb” (Rom 4:19). What a gracious and benevolent God we serve that does what we can’t do on our own!

What has God done for you that you could not have done for yourself? How do you worship and praise Him for this?

Question  
# 2

Next, God expands upon His original promise to make Abram “a great nation” ([Gen 12:2](#)). He reveals that he **shall be a father of many nations** (v. 4b)! He now invests the promise with universal implications. God doesn’t choose His words arbitrarily; He has a plan and purpose behind each of them! The plural term **nations** doesn’t just refer to Abram’s physical descendants through Isaac and Ishmael, but to all who will follow the precepts of the Lord in faith; this includes us! Through the “great nation” (Israel) that God would make Abram, He would send the Messiah to save “**many nations**” (Gentiles who would believe). Thus, “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” through Abram ([Gen 12:3](#)). Both Israel (nation) and Gentile (**many nations**) can find salvation in Jesus the Christ by faith through grace! This leads Paul to assert, “Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the **father** of us all” ([Rom 4:16](#)).

With this new revelation, God changes Abram’s **name** to **Abraham** to serve as a reminder of this overarching purpose (v. 5). Technically, Abraham means something like “the father is exalted.”\* In a way, God the Father is exalted through Abraham’s faith which facilitates the belief of **many nations!** Through a play on words, Abraham as the **father of many nations** becomes a source of exaltation for the Lord! Likewise, our lives ought to be a source of exaltation for the Lord in how we live righteously and blamelessly. God should look upon our obedience and faithfulness with pride. Therefore, let us strive to be conduits for God’s grace and point others to Him! Let us

## Instruct

**walk** faithfully in purity and love, so there is no doubt who we represent.

### In Reference



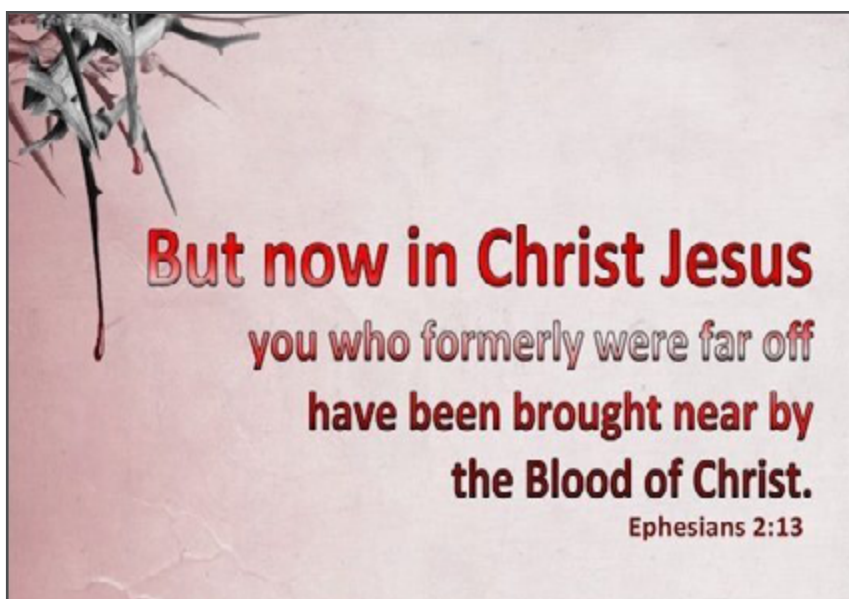
Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), p. 364.*

In what ways do you exalt the Lord with your life? In what areas might you need to improve?

Question  
# 3

Further expanding upon this universal promise, God declares that He **will establish** His **covenant between** Himself, Abraham, and his **descendants** in subsequent **generations** (v. 7). Here, we find the heart of the **covenant: to be God to him and his descendants!** God wants a personal relationship with Abraham and his descendants. To reject God is to reject the **covenant!** This becomes the only true stipulation for participation in the **covenant:** to serve God and surrender to Him in faith! Thus, it is **everlasting** for those **descendants** and **generations** who follow Him. Those who follow the path of secular nations and idolatry have no part in it. Doing good deeds, earning it through works, and practicing religious rituals do not guarantee it; only a relationship predicated upon faith in God does!

As an **everlasting covenant**, Jesus doesn't nullify or cancel it, but He fulfills it. Like



Abraham, we participate in this **covenant** through a relationship with God based upon faith in Christ Jesus! To reject Christ, therefore, is to reject this **everlasting covenant** and have no part in the inheritance that God has promised in Him! We cannot have salvation and eternal life apart from a relationship in Christ through the **covenant** established

in His blood to which we respond in repentance and faith. Thus, He is to **be our God!** Although God's promise has universal implications in faith, it also has specific

implications to Abraham and his **descendants**. Literally, God will take a barren womb and **make** him **exceedingly fruitful** (v. 6). From Abraham's lineage will **come nations** (Isaac and Ishmael) and **kings**. To his **descendants** through Isaac, God will **give** the current **land in which** he now resides as a foreigner (**stranger**); He will give **all Canaan** to them as an **everlasting possession** after they dwell four hundred years in Egypt (v. 8; [Gen 15:13](#)). Even though God specifies the **covenant** is **everlasting**, Israel does not inherit the land based upon their physical lineage alone. They can, and do at times, lose the land because of their sinfulness. This does not negate God's promises, but it reinforces the one true requirement—a relationship. When the people turn from the Lord to serve idols or walk in wickedness, they reject His **covenant to be their God**. Consequently, God then uses foreign nations (Assyria and Babylon) to punish the unrighteous and restore a remnant which walks in faith and has a relationship with Him! Whether Israel or the Gentile nations, entrance into the **covenant** depends upon a relationship with the Lord!

What is the danger of placing confidence in one's physical lineage? How does Paul help us understand in Phil 3:3-11?

Question  
# 4

## **Genesis 17:9-14**

### ***A SIGN TO REMEMBER:***

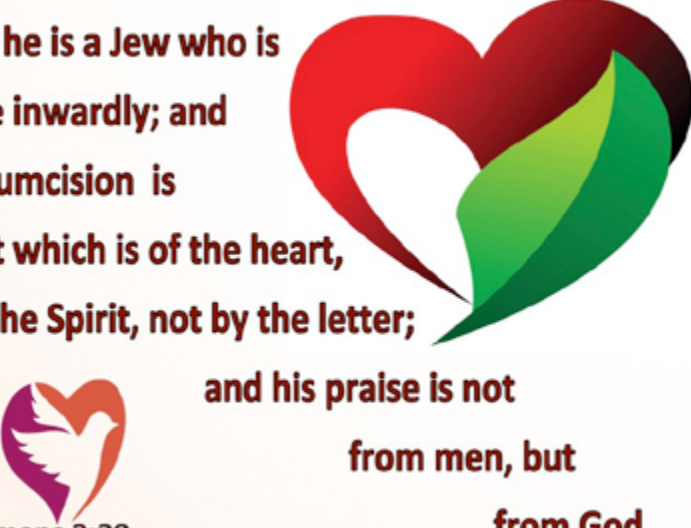
Having outlined the content of the covenant, God gives them a sign by which they can remember these promises and their responsibilities. Therefore, He tells Abraham that he and the **generations** that follow must **keep** His **covenant** (v. 9). Again, the **covenant** which they must **keep** is to have a relationship with Him based upon faith and expressed through obedience and holiness. The outward **sign** that they are obediently keeping it is the circumcision of **every male** associated with their household (v. 10). The following verses in this section then outline the specific details of how they should perform this rite (v. 11). At **eight days old, every male child born** into the household, including those of foreign-born servants not of their direct **descendants**, must **be circumcised** (vv. 12-13). Finally, God describes the penalty for not acting in obedience to follow Him. Any **uncircumcised male child will be cut off from his people** because **he has broken** the Lord's **covenant** (v. 15).

To help us better understand, we'll deal with three questions that may cause some confusion. How does it function as **a sign**? Why are foreign-born individuals

## Instruct

included? Why are children who have no choice in the matter at **eight days old cut**

**But he is a Jew who is  
One inwardly; and  
circumcision is  
that which is of the heart,  
by the Spirit, not by the letter;  
and his praise is not  
from men, but  
from God.**



Romans 2:29

**off?** First, circumcision functions as an outward **sign** of a personal relationship with the Lord who sees the heart of an individual. When one looks upon it, he should be reminded of the God whom he serves; it all goes back to the purpose of the covenant: **to be God to them** (v. 7)! Moreover, it serves to remind both the individual and the Lord of the faith

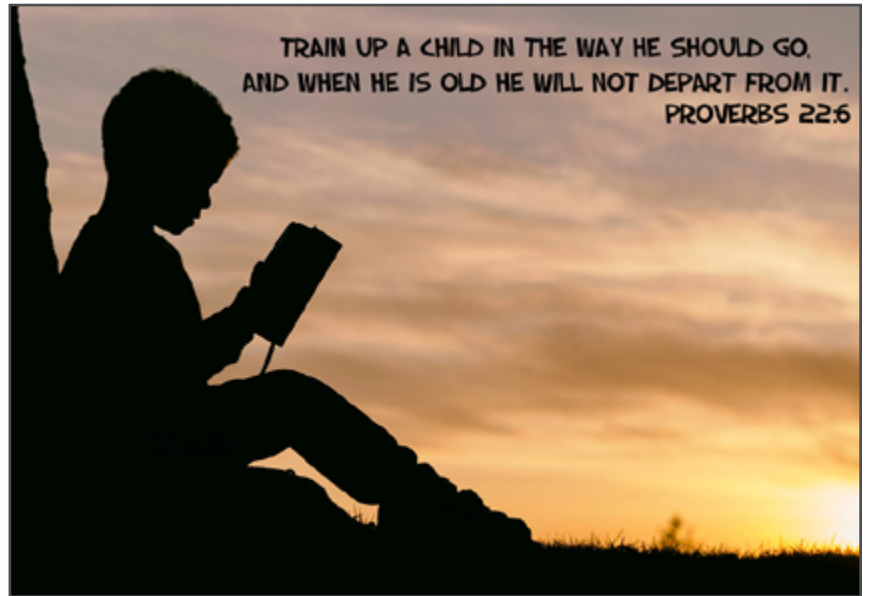
displayed through obedience that this relationship requires. They didn't enter into this **covenant** through circumcision, but by faith displayed it through their obedience! In the New Testament, baptism functions as a **sign** in the same way ([Col 2:11-15](#)). It connotes an outward act of obedience to illustrate an inward change where one repents of his sin and faithfully accepts Christ as his Savior.

Second, circumcision given to foreign-born servants shows God's grace! He isn't exclusive as some may regard, but inclusive! Thus, the covenant is available and open to anyone who believes and worships Him alone. Everyone has an opportunity to have a relationship with Him if only he or she would accept. People often fault the Old Testament for not focusing on missions. But this is a mission right here often overlooked! Through the influence of the believing household, foreign-born servants have the opportunity to see how God works and see Him modeled. Therefore, the believers in the household should bring up their physical **descendants** and others to know the Lord too. Through their witness, these servants can know how to have a relationship with the Lord! Ultimately, God's **covenant** was to bring all people into a relationship with Him which He accomplishes through the faithfulness of those who serve and worship Him obediently.

What is our responsibility to relate the "covenant" to others? How would you evaluate your participation in that task?

Question  
# 5

Third, the stern warning of being **cut off** shows the severity of rejecting a relationship with the Lord. It seems cruel, however, that God would punish a **child** for the fault of his parents. We must look at it this way, however. The failure to have the **child** circumcised is an indictment on the parents! God has tasked them to raise their children in the Lord and teach them the right path according to His ways ([Deut 6:7-9](#); [Prov 22:6](#)). Parents who don't



follow the Lord obediently in this practice will likely not teach their children and point them to the Lord; hence, they will likely grow up never having known the Lord! Consider this. The Passover served as a **sign** for both God and the people of Israel of His gracious provision during the exodus when the people obediently sacrificed the lamb and applied its blood to the door frame ([Exod 12](#)). As children began to ask their parents "what this service" means, they are to tell them what the Lord did. The same would be true of the sign of circumcision. Parents would tell their children how it signifies a relationship with the Lord based on obedience. Parents who don't circumcise their children are very unlikely to point them to the Lord and raise them in His ways! Nonetheless, this doesn't prevent someone when he is older from coming to a relationship with the Lord and acting obediently! In fact, God often warns those who merely practice circumcision as a ritual to repent and turn from their sins ([Deut 10:16](#); [Lev 26:41](#); [Jer 4:4](#)). Consequently, we are back where we began. The covenant is based upon faith in the Lord expressed through obedience and living righteously.

Why is it so important to train children from an infant what it means to have a relationship with the Lord?

Question  
# 6

## Genesis 17:15-22

### ***A COVENANT RATIFIED:***

After issuing the command to circumcise as a way to remember the **covenant**, the Lord ratifies or puts it into action with a significant announcement. Sarai will bear a **son**! At

this point, God changes her **name** from Sarai to **Sarah** as a reflection of this new status



(v. 15). No explanation is given for the name change or its meaning (princess). Similar to His rationale with Abraham, God reiterates the promise to **ble**ss Sarah and **give** him **a son by her** which will make her **a mother of nations** and a progenitor of **kings** (v. 16). Although Abraham has always trusted and believed God with respect to His promises ([Gen 15:6](#)),

doubt seems to creep into his mind here. Instead of falling **on his face** in reverence (v. 3), he now does so in laughter (v. 17). He can't believe his ears. In his mind, he asks the question: How can a **one-hundred-year-old man** and a **ninety**-year-old woman bear **a child**? Biologically, he found this implausible if not impossible. As he had with Eliezer years ago ([Gen 15:2-4](#)), Abraham proposes a more practical solution that Ishmael might be that heir (v. 18).

But God had a different plan! He didn't scold Abraham, but He did correct him. He informs him that **Sarah** his **wife** will **bear a son** who shall be named **Isaac** which means "he laughs" (v. 19). Through Isaac and **his descendants**, God **will establish** His **everlasting covenant**. Although He doesn't make the same kind of covenant with Ishmael, God still promises to **ble**ss him and **make him fruitful**; he will bear **twelve princes** and will be made into **a great nation** (v. 20). After years of waiting, God now provides a definitive date! Sarah will **bear** Isaac **at this** same **time next year** (v. 21)! With this, the Lord **finished** speaking and departed from Abraham's presence (v. 22). Ironically, Abraham seems to challenge or question the Lord when He provides specifics. When offered a land which He will be shown, he just went! Now, however, he has reservations about the plan. Perhaps, the years of promises without results had begun to take a toll and caused him to be more skeptical. Nonetheless, we can use three principles to overcome doubt in our own lives. First, don't challenge, but seek clarification. Mary did when visited by the angel: "How can this be, since I do not know a man" (Luke 1:34). God answers our questions when we ask in sincerity. Second,

reflect upon how God has been faithful and fulfilled His promises in the past. Abraham should have a long list of how he's seen God act! Since God is always faithful and can do what we can't, He will surely do that which He promises in the future even when it seems impossible with us! Finally, we must continue to worship and serve obediently as we await God's promises. Abraham does as we shall see next.

How do you deal with doubt and uncertainty?

Question  
# 7

### Genesis 17:23-27

#### ***AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE:***

Having spoken with the Lord, Abraham responds immediately to His commands. Although he may have momentarily expressed uncertainty and doubt, he quickly reverses back to the right course and obediently trusts the Lord. As the Lord had commanded as an outward sign of the covenant, Abraham, Ishmael, and **every male born into** the household **were circumcised that very same day** (v. 23)! Abraham was **ninety-nine-years old** and Ishmael **thirteen** when they **were circumcised** (vv. 24-25). Just as the Lord had specified, Abraham obediently responded and had **all in his house circumcised** (vv. 26-27). What a picture of faith expressed through obedience after all these years of waiting for God to fulfill His promises!

We too need to put our faith into action! James rightly says, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas 2:26). Our faith should compel us to act in obedience! Certainly, we must wait upon the Lord for direction and His perfect timing, but we need to act without hesitation when He has clearly revealed His plan and purpose to us. To relate to the Lord blamelessly or faultlessly requires action. We are to do or practice the things which He has revealed to us in Scripture (i.e. righteousness); we are also to avoid participating in those things which He has also specified (sin). In so doing, we will walk in perfect harmony with His will. Therefore, let us seek Him, wait upon His timing, and practice walking in righteousness as He has given us an example through His Son to follow!

In what ways have you and do you express your faith in the Lord through action?

Question  
# 8

Some, like the radio host mentioned in the introduction, have allowed the culture to influence their perception of the Lord and how He works. In Scripture, God has given us a clear pattern by which we ought to conduct ourselves. We don't need to pray whether we should do these things that Scripture has instructed us. We should do them immediately without question! We can and should, however, pray that God would grant us the strength and wisdom to accomplish these things—whether they are things we ought to do (pray, share the gospel, read Scripture, love others, and live holy lives that reflect His character, etc.) or things which we ought not do (sinful actions He forbids). Therefore, part of walking blamelessly or faultlessly before the Lord is to do these things because we love Him and want to honor Him with a good testimony. Moreover, we are to do these things which we *know* God has commanded us while we wait further instruction and clarification for His specific plan for us. Too often, here is where we can become bogged down in life. We can't afford to wait *inactively*, but we must wait *actively* and do what we *know* God desires! God will always reveal His specific plans to us as we wait, but in some ways this may take years from our perspective; it did with Abraham. A perceived delay from our perspective doesn't mean that God hasn't answered our prayers or has forgotten about us. It means that He is waiting for the perfect time to reveal His plan for us more fully. In the meantime, we are to worship, serve, and follow Him obediently as we walk blamelessly according to the path which He has given us!



## ***Incorporate***

The main thrust of the covenant is: “to be God to you and your descendants” (v. 7). What does this mean? Cite other Scripture to support your answer.

What events in your life where you have seen the Lord work can you use to encourage others who are going through a difficult time?

Even though we should respond to the Lord immediately, why do we still need to take time to evaluate our decisions and use discretion in our actions? In other words, what’s the danger in rushing to a decision?

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