

Study Two

THE STORY



Genesis 12-36
God Builds a Nation

Timeless Truth: What sin corrupted, God overcomes through faith.

Creation, Corruption, Covenant, Catastrophe, Confusion....now my Lord focuses world history to one man and his descendants, the **Clans** of Abraham.



God's master Plan to restore us to Himself gets a fresh start with words spoken in an idol-plagued society to an old man. Beginning with Abraham, God faithfully determined to fulfill His promise. God chose to create a new nation through Abraham and his childless wife, Sarah. God took the first step and revealed His plan to Abraham. God confirmed the Garden Covenant with an unsought, unexpected promise to Abraham. The LORD spoke His great, "I will's"

- I will...make your descendants into a great nation
- I will...give you and your descendants a land in which to dwell
- I will...**bless all other nations through the *Descendant* that will come from you**

And two thousand years later, God's Son was born. My faithful LORD recorded that Jesus was this Offspring of Abraham. God, the Promise-Giver is the Promise-Kept.

God's autobiography, His Bible, contrasts the faithful God with His fickle followers. God chose to use broken people to hold His unbreakable promises. On a day-to-day basis, God's people continued to make bad choices. The ever-present sin-nature, mankind's totally corrupt will, is still present even in those who trust God's words.



Abraham and Sarah waited for years for the child God promised. These remarkable people opt for a sinful, short-sighted workaround to conceive an heir through Sarah's servant, Hagar.

Abraham's son, Isaac, grows up and gets married to Rebekah. The Lord records that they raise a very dysfunctional family. Communication between Isaac and Becky was corrupt, based on gossip, assumptions and self-will.

One of Isaac's twin boys, Jacob, improves the sinful "workaround methods" of his dad and his grandfather, Abraham. It seemed that Jacob was self-doomed. He was building a legacy of conniving and cheating his way through life, with lies and half-truths. The other boy, Esau, sets his mind to murder his brother, to imitate Cain, the first murderer. Sin totally warped every aspect of family life, even in the line of the promised Messiah

What sin corrupted, God overcomes through faith.

In spite of their lies, their fickle behaviors, their deceits and doubts, God's people still feebly trusted God's promises. So it was that Abraham picked up stakes. He traveled to a foreign land just because God said to. Abraham trusted God. Abraham gave his relative, Lot, the choice real estate. Abraham trusted God would still somehow bless him.

Abraham and Sarah trusted God's Word through laughter and tears. Finally they hold their own newborn son, Isaac, God's promise-kept. Then, in a dramatic moment recorded for eternity, God commanded and Abraham prepared to sacrifice that son, Isaac. It was a test designed by God to make Abraham's trust even stronger. And it worked just like God planned. God provided an "in-place-of-sacrifice" to keep Isaac alive. Abraham's remarkable faith got even stronger!



The key verse of these various snapshots of history is:

"Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD credited it to him as righteousness." Therein lays the Gospel itself. God

used this Gospel to open the eyes of Paul in the year 50 and likewise remove the blindness from Martin Luther, some 1400+ years after Paul's life!

Abraham's family continued to live by faith in God's Gospel.

By faith, Abraham found a wife for Isaac to carry on the Promise of God to bless all nations.

By faith, Isaac confirmed God's blessing-promise for his son, Jacob.

By faith, Jacob was brought into a literal wrestling-match with God and into a name change to "Israel".

With every detail of History, God's autobiography reminds us it is not angels that He came to save, but Abraham's descendants. Yes, sadly we are sin-flawed people, disgusting rebels in our thoughts, words and activities. Thankfully God's own words bring us to see our sin, turn to Him and trust His mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We are thus blessed by our faithful Lord in every generation.

Study Two Questions

Creation, Corruption, Covenant, Catastrophe, Confusion, Clans - God Builds a Nation, Gen. 12-36

1. Often God is full of surprises. Tell about a time God did something in your life, or perhaps a close friend, that was surprising. *OR* Write one surprising thing about yourself on an index card; then let people choose a card from a hat and guess who said what.



2. God called Abraham to make a change and then to make a sacrifice in his life. What are some of the excuses or reasons people offer when they want to get out of following God's leading?

2b. Abraham did not offer whiny excuses. Why?

3. In what ways did God's call to follow Him actually increase Abraham's relying on God?

4. What safety did Abraham leave behind in his home city?

5. What did God promise to do for Abraham? What was "Abraham's part"? Why are we reminded of the Elephant and the Flea story when we think of this section?

6. What does God reveal about His character as He deals with Abraham?

7. Why is relying on God so hard for us?

What does reveal about *our* character?

About *our* relationship with God?



8. This Clan section begins with a CPR to start and keep Abraham's faith alive. What was the **Command, Promise and Response** recorded in Genesis 12:1-4?

Command:

Promise:

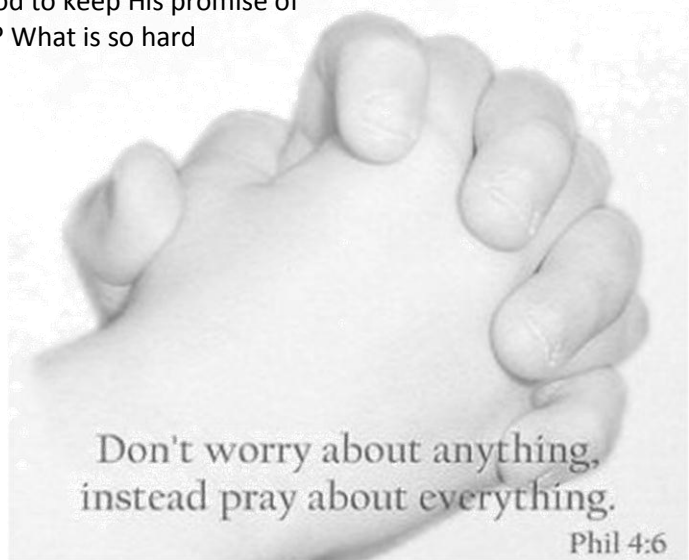
Response:

9. What's the principle God is working in Abraham?

10. What's the link, if any, between worshipping God and God's mission?

11. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for God to keep His promise of a son, are you waiting for something now? What is so hard about waiting? Explain.

12. Abraham and Sarah together stepped out in faith. Tell about a time when you together with another person took a step of faith with God. What happened?



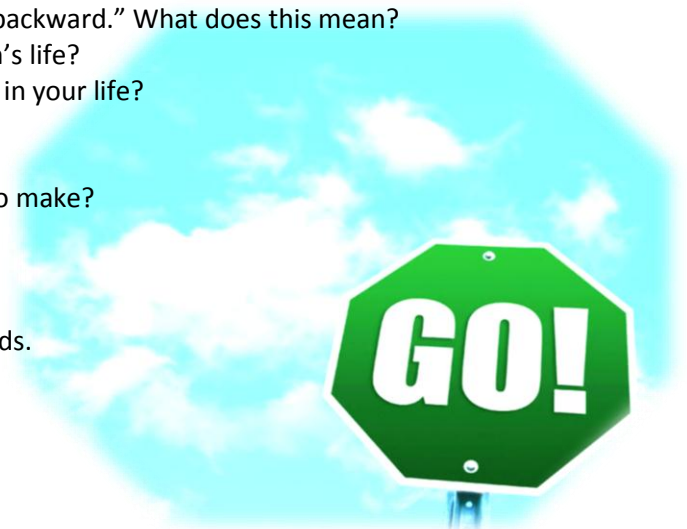
13. Sarah got tired of waiting for God to act. So did Abraham. So Sarah gave her servant, Hagar, to Abraham. Legally it was permitted and proper. Morally it was a rebellious "workaround" that brought sadness and tragedy for years upon years. In spite of clear histories warning us, what things do Christians do to 'help' God out in life? Why?

14. God initially commanded the sacrifice of his son Isaac. But what did Abraham actually wind up sacrificing? What does this foreshadow in the New Testament?

16. "God's ways are often seen and understood backward." What does this mean? How does the LORD show His will in Abraham's life? How has God's "mysterious ways" been seen in your life?

17. What step of faith does the LORD want you to make? What do you have to do to obey? Are you?

18. Summarize this **Clan** section in your own words.



Kind Time – Take some time to encourage one another in prayer.

Next time: Genesis ch. 37 to ch. 50