UNIT 2
God the Covenant-Maker
GENESIS 12–50
And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

GENESIS 15:6
SESSION SEVEN

God’s Covenant with Abraham

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-6; 17:1-14

THE POINT

God chooses a nation through which He will reverse the curse of sin and reclaim the world as His kingdom.

CHARACTERS

• The Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
• Abraham: biblical patriarch; chosen by God to be the father of many nations

PLOT

As we saw in the previous session, Genesis 11 tells the story of the generations who came out of the flood and built the Tower of Babel with its top in the sky. The Lord came down to judge their pride, and He did so by confusing their language and scattering them over the earth.

The problem of sin and separation from God that began in the garden in Genesis 3 had not gotten better; in fact, it had only gotten worse. People were not only separated from God, but they were now separated from one another.

What can be done to remove these barriers that come between our relationships with both God and one another? How will God fix this problem? Watch and see how God initiated a renewed relationship with His people and continues His rescue plan.
GOD INITIATES A RENEWED RELATIONSHIP

As we start with this story, we see from the very beginning that God has not given up on humanity. He still has a rescue plan in place, and that plan involves entering into a unique relationship with Abraham (though he was called Abram before God changed his name).

Through Abram’s descendants, God will reverse the misfortunes of Eden (separation from God) and Babel (separation from one another). The specific promises that God made to Abram make this connection with the events of Babel clear: The people of Babel wanted to “make a name” for themselves (Gen. 11:4), but God promised to make Abram’s name great (12:2). The rebels at Babel were scattered over the earth under God’s judgment, but God promised to and through Abram to bless “all the families of the earth” (12:3).

Circle the uses of the pronoun “I” as it appears in God’s words to Abram. What do you think this tells us about God’s commitment to His glory and His plan of redemption?

Genesis 12:1-4
Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.
GOD COMMANDS ABRAM TO TRUST HIS PROMISES

Sometimes evidence seems to stack up against promises. God made wonderful promises to Abram, but Abram and Sarai still didn’t have any children. Both of them were old, and Sarai was well past the years of being able to conceive. So Abram began to question God’s promise, and even took matters into his own hands.

Abram experienced great doubt despite God’s great promises. He looked at his situation, and he thought that he would try to help God along by pointing out his servant Eliezer. If we’re honest, we’ll admit this kind of doubt is understandable. There are times in our lives when the promises of God do not look so promising.

In the midst of Abram’s doubt, God came to him and restated His promises, even adding to them. And Abram believed!

God reassured Abram that he would have children of his own. He would give him offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky. Not only did God restate this promise to Abram and his children repeatedly (see Gen. 22:17; 26:4; also 28:14), but He saw it through. In Deuteronomy 1:10, Moses said, “The Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven,” and again in Deuteronomy 10:22.
AS LONG AS A MAN IS THINKING OF GOD AS AN EXAMINER WHO HAS SET HIM A SORT OF PAPER TO DO, OR AS THE OPPOSITE PARTY IN SOME SORT OF BARGAIN—AS LONG AS HE IS THINKING OF CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS BETWEEN HIMSELF AND GOD—HE IS NOT YET IN RIGHT RELATION TO HIM. HE IS MISUNDERSTANDING WHAT HE IS AND WHAT GOD IS. AND HE CANNOT GET INTO THE RIGHT RELATION UNTIL HE HAS DISCOVERED THE FACT OF OUR BANKRUPTCY.

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

CHRIST CONNECTION

The story of the calling of Abraham points to Jesus in many ways. For instance, in Genesis 12:7 the Lord made a promise to Abraham’s seed, or offspring. This can be understood as referring to all of his offspring collectively (see Gen. 13:16) or just one (see Gen. 3:15; 4:25 [“child”]). Indeed, it could be said that Abraham’s collective offspring benefited through the singular promised offspring of Isaac.

In Galatians 3, Paul picked up on this peculiarity of the word “seed.” Paul emphasized that God’s promise was not to “seeds” but to one “seed,” and ultimately the “seed” of Abraham is Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). Yet those who belong to Jesus are then collectively considered “Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (3:29).

Another connection is found in Genesis 15:6, where we saw Abraham believing the promise of God and God counting it to him as righteousness. In Galatians 3, the apostle Paul pointed to Abraham’s faith as a model of saving faith. Paul argued that we are not justified (declared righteous before God) by trying to keep the rules (Gal. 3:11). Those who break God’s law are cursed, and we’re all law-breakers. But the good news is that Christ became that curse for us on the cross (3:13). Justification only comes through faith in Jesus, and just as with Abraham, God credits His righteousness to our account (3:6-7). Today, we too are called to trust the promises of God.
God’s Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

› In what areas of your life do you often struggle with trusting the promises of God (at home, at school, with your future, in relationships, etc.)?

› When have you taken matters into your own hands to ensure the outcome you want? How did that turn out?

› What sometimes causes us to assume our relationship with God is dependent on how well we keep His rules?

› What kind of person will a rules-focused life cause us to become? Do you think that’s what God wants? Why or why not?
The calling of Abraham teaches us a great deal about stepping out in faith while not knowing the exact details and plans that lie ahead. The situation with Abraham was no different—he too experienced the same comforts, friendships, and familiarity that we would face upon leaving the places we call home.

- God’s initiation of relationship with Abraham called for Abraham’s obedience. Why do you think Abraham obeyed God by leaving his land?
- What would it take for you to obey God if He called you to do something that makes no sense from the world’s perspective?

Abraham’s calling causes us to think about the reality that God is the one who pursues us, not the other way around, and it is because of His righteousness, and not our own, that we are able to stand rightly before Him.

- How does knowing that God seeks after us encourage you to trust in Him?
- How should knowing that God is the one that makes us righteous before Him motivate us to pursue lives of holiness?

The calling of Abraham is primarily about God continuing His rescue plan of humanity. It isn’t primarily about Abraham, or even his future descendants—it is about God, and the fact that He will be rescuing peoples from every tribe, tongue, and nation as a result of His actions in the life of Abraham. If God has a global perspective, shouldn’t we as well?

- What are some ways your student group can be involved right now in being a light to the nations?
- How does the way we live affect our mission as God’s people? How does it bring glory to Him?