

Abraham

Finding Your Place in God's Story

In September 2020 we begin a new series of Sunday talks on the life of Abraham. Abraham's story has had a greater impact on the world than we can quantify. His example helps us in many aspects of the Christian life today - *What does it mean to have faith? To trust the promises of God in the face of life's uncertainty and disappointments? To be someone that God has made to be a blessing to the world?* We will explore these questions and more in our Sunday series.

This 12-week reading plan covers Abraham's complete history as recorded in the book Genesis. It includes key New Testament passages which underline Abraham's significance and spiritual heritage.

The aim is that our daily readings will give us strong biblical grounding from which to approach the Sunday talks. We also hope that they will strengthen our sense of unity and common pilgrimage in these times of uncertainty, change, and new beginnings.

Sunday Talks

NB: on Sundays 11 October and 8 November the series pauses for Harvest and Remembrance, respectively.

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| 1. | A New Beginning Gen 11.26-12.1 | 13 September |
| 2. | Blessed to be a blessing Gen 12.1-3 | 20 September |
| 3. | Call charges Gen 12.1, 4-9 | 27 September |
| 4. | Fear, Lies and Failure Gen 12.10 -20 | 4 October |
| 5. | Questioning the promise Gen 15.1-18 | 18 October |
| 6. | Forcing the issue 16.1-16 | 25 October |
| 7. | Promise Sealed 17.1-22 | 1 November |
| 8. | Signed, sealed, delivered 21.1-21 | 15 November |
| 9. | Father, Son and Sacrifice 22.1-19 | 22 November |

Recommended reading:

Wiersbe, Warren. *BE OBEDIENT - Abraham: Learning the Secret of Living by Faith*
Swindoll, Charles R: *ABRAHAM*

Week One - from 7 September

Monday	Genesis 1.26-31; 3.1-12
Tuesday	Genesis 4.25 - 5.32
Wednesday	Hebrews 11.8-12
Thursday	Hebrews 11.13-16
Friday	Genesis 11.10 - 12.4

Ponder and pray

- What do the early chapters of Genesis tell us about God's original intention for his people and how this 'paradise' was lost?
- What do we learn from Genesis chapters 4,5 and 11 about Abraham's family roots? Why would these historical connections be important to Israelites? To you?
- Where did Abraham come from? How many of his family journeyed with him?
- Where is 'home' for you? When did you first leave there? What for? Who or what did you take with you? Leave behind?

I thank you, Lord, for your promise that you know the plans that are ahead for me, and that they are plans that bring hope and not harm. (Jeremiah 29.11)

Help me once again to trust in your promises for my future, and to yield to your purposes for my life.

Week Two - from 14 September

Monday	Romans 4:1-5
Tuesday	Romans 4.13-25
Wednesday	Genesis 12.1-3
Thursday	Genesis 12.4-9
Friday	Genesis 12.10-20

Ponder and pray

- What 3 promises did God make to Abraham? With what qualifications?
- Which promises appeal to you and why? (Would you rather be blessed, or be a blessing?)
- How did Abraham show that he trusted God?
- What do (or did) you hope to be doing at age 75?
- Has there been a time when you have made a significant, personal sacrifice in response to God?
- To what (people, place, need) might God be calling you in this season?

I ask you, God, to give me courage to leave what is safe and familiar, and to follow you. Amen.

Week Three - from 21 September

Monday	Genesis 13.1-4
Tuesday	Genesis 13.5-10
Wednesday	Genesis 13.11-13
Thursday	Genesis 13.14-18
Friday	Genesis 12.1-9 (review, for teaching on Sunday 27 Sept)

Ponder and pray

- In Chapter 13, why do Abraham and Lot choose as they do? In forsaking rich cities and choosing less fertile land, what does this reveal about Abraham? (See Hebrews 11.8-16)
- If faced with a similar choice would you have followed the example of Abraham or of Lot? Why?
- In reply to Abraham's faith what new promise does God give?
- What promises of God have you taken to heart? What has God promises you that you still have difficulty accepting?

Help me once again, God, to trust in your promises for my future, and to yield to your purposes for my life. Amen.

Week Four - from 28 September

Monday	Genesis 14.1-7
Tuesday	Genesis 14.8-12
Wednesday	Genesis 14.13-17
Thursday	Genesis 14.18-24
Friday	Genesis 12.10-20 review, for Sunday 4 October)

Ponder and pray

- In Chapter 14, what subtle but slippery slope of sin do you see in the life of Lot? How does his progressive move towards Sodom dangerously affect his life?
- What is the point of the Abraham's victory over the 4 kings (vv 13-24)?
- What alliances do you make? Have you ever been burned by a partnership that went bad, or blessed by an ally?

God, show me this day who is blessing me and whom I might bless. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Amen.

Week Five - from 5 October

Monday	Genesis 15. 1
Tuesday	Genesis 15.2-5
Wednesday	Genesis 15.6
Thursday	Genesis 15.7-16
Friday	Genesis 15.17- 20

Ponder and pray

- How has God already been Abraham's 'shield' and 'great reward'?
- What does Abraham fear most? What's wrong with wanting reassurance?
- In adopting a servant 'heir' is Abraham faithless or faithful? What does God think?
- In the dream (vv12-16) and after God's covenant (vv18-20) what news is comforting? Discomforting?
- Where in your life do you need God to say "Do not be afraid". Where are you longing for some certainty?

Almighty God, I thank you for all the times you have shielded and blessed me - especially for the times I have not been aware of your grace. Help me always to trust in the covenant you make with me, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Week Six - from 12 October

Monday	Galatians 3:1-9
Tuesday	Galatians 3.15-18
Wednesday	Galatians 4:22-27
Thursday	Genesis 16.1-15
Friday	Genesis 15. 1-8 (review, for Sunday 18 October)

Ponder and pray

- Why did God wait so long to give Abraham and Sarah a son?
- How do we sometimes second-guess God, as Sarah did? Why do we do this?
- What were the negative results of Sarah and Abraham trying to run ahead of God?
- What promise have you been waiting years for God to fulfil?
- How do you live, knowing that God is 'the One who sees me' (v13)?

I'm sorry, Lord, for the times I let my impatience lead me to despair and temptation. Transform my desire for satisfaction into a desire to please you. Amen.

Week Seven - from 19 October

Monday	Genesis 17.1-5
Tuesday	Genesis 17.6-14
Wednesday	Genesis 17.15-22
Thursday	Genesis 17.23-27
Friday	Romans 4.9-12

Ponder and pray

- Do you know the meaning of your name?
- In 17.1 God names himself for the first time ('God Almighty is the traditional rendering of the Hebrew 'El Shaddai' - 'omnipotent One'). Why did God use this name with Abraham at this time?
- What was the significance of circumcision? If cutting off a foreskin is no longer required of God's people, what IS required? (Galatians 5.6).
- 'When God is preparing a bright future for you, don't cling to the things of the past'. What does that mean to you today?

God, help me once again, to leave the past in your hands, to trust in your promises for my future, and to yield to your purposes for my life. Amen.

Week Eight - from 26 October

Monday	Genesis 18. 1-7
Tuesday	Genesis 18. 8-15
Wednesday	Genesis 18.16-26
Thursday	Genesis 18.27-33
Friday	Genesis 17.1-23 (review, for Sunday 1 November)

Ponder and pray

- How does Abraham go overboard in showing hospitality to the three visitors? (18.1-8)
- Why does Sarah laugh? How does her laughter differ from Abraham's in 17.17-22, or does it? Why then does God rebuke Sarah but not Abraham for laughing?
- Where in your life is God telling you, 'It's never too late?' Where is he saying, 'It's OK to laugh?', or, 'Why don't you believe me?' What will you do about that this week?

God help me hear you. 'May I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day. Amen'. (Prayer of Richard of Chichester)

Week Nine - from 2 November

Monday	Genesis 19.1-13
Tuesday	Genesis 19.14-26
Wednesday	Genesis 19.27-37
Thursday	Genesis 20.1-7
Friday	Genesis 20.11-17

Ponder and pray

- Genesis 19: to what extent does contemporary society compare with Sodom? What do you think has prevented its total destruction?
- Although we tend to think of immorality as personal, Sodom and the other cities of the plain had adopted a 'corporate immorality'. Have you ever been part of an organisation or group that had noticeably moral or immoral traits?
- What about Lot's story moves you to pray?
- Genesis 20: when have we seen Abraham commit this same mistake before? Who is the hero of this story? Why?

God, thank you that when I am faithless you remain faithful. Help me to grow in faith and trust in you. Amen.

Week Ten - from 9 November

Monday	Genesis 21.1-7
Tuesday	Genesis 21.8-14
Wednesday	Genesis 21.15-21
Thursday	Genesis 21.22-34
Friday	Galatians 4:21-31

Ponder and pray

- What does the story of chapter 21.1-21 reveal about God's faithfulness?
- From Sarah's perspective, why must Hagar and Ishmael be sent away? Likewise from God's perspective? According to St Paul? (Gal. 4.21-31)
- What does God's treatment of Hagar and Ishmael reveal about God?
- As Hagar was for Sarah, who is the one with whom you can't get along and would like to send away? What can you do to change the situation? Like Hagar, where do you need God's comforting?

God, thank you for your mercy and grace to me. When relationships are difficult and hurtful, help me to look to you for comfort, and show grace to the other. Amen.

Week Eleven - from 16 November

Monday	Genesis 22.1-5
Tuesday	Genesis 22.6-8
Wednesday	Genesis 22.9-14
Thursday	Genesis 22.15-19
Friday	Genesis 22.20-24

Ponder and pray

- What were some of the other tests that Abraham faced before God asked him to sacrifice Isaac?
- What's the difference between trials and temptations? Does every Christian have trials from God? Why?
- What is usually our first concern when we're being tested? What should our first concern be?
- How is this story of Abraham and Isaac a picture of what Jesus Christ did for us? How is it different?
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'And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in; that on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin.'

Loving God, how great thou art. In my times of testing, help me to be obedient and faithful to your love.

Final Week - from 23 November

After Sarah's death, Abraham takes the initiative to find Isaac a wife.

Monday	Genesis 23
Tuesday	Genesis 24.1-14
Wednesday	Genesis 24.15-33
Thursday	Genesis 24.34-66
Friday	Genesis 25.1-11

Ponder and pray

- Genesis 24: Why is the story of Isaac getting a bride so important? Who is the bride that God has provided for His Son?
- What do Christians today owe to Abraham?
- Genesis 23 and Gen 25.1-11: How is the grief of a believer different from that of an unbeliever?
- What would you like your epitaph to say?

God, thank you that Abraham's story did not end only with your blessing for his natural family.

Help me, like Abraham, to live a life of faith and obedience; to be a vessel through which you can pour your love and reveal your glory; to leave a spiritual legacy that will count for all eternity. Amen.