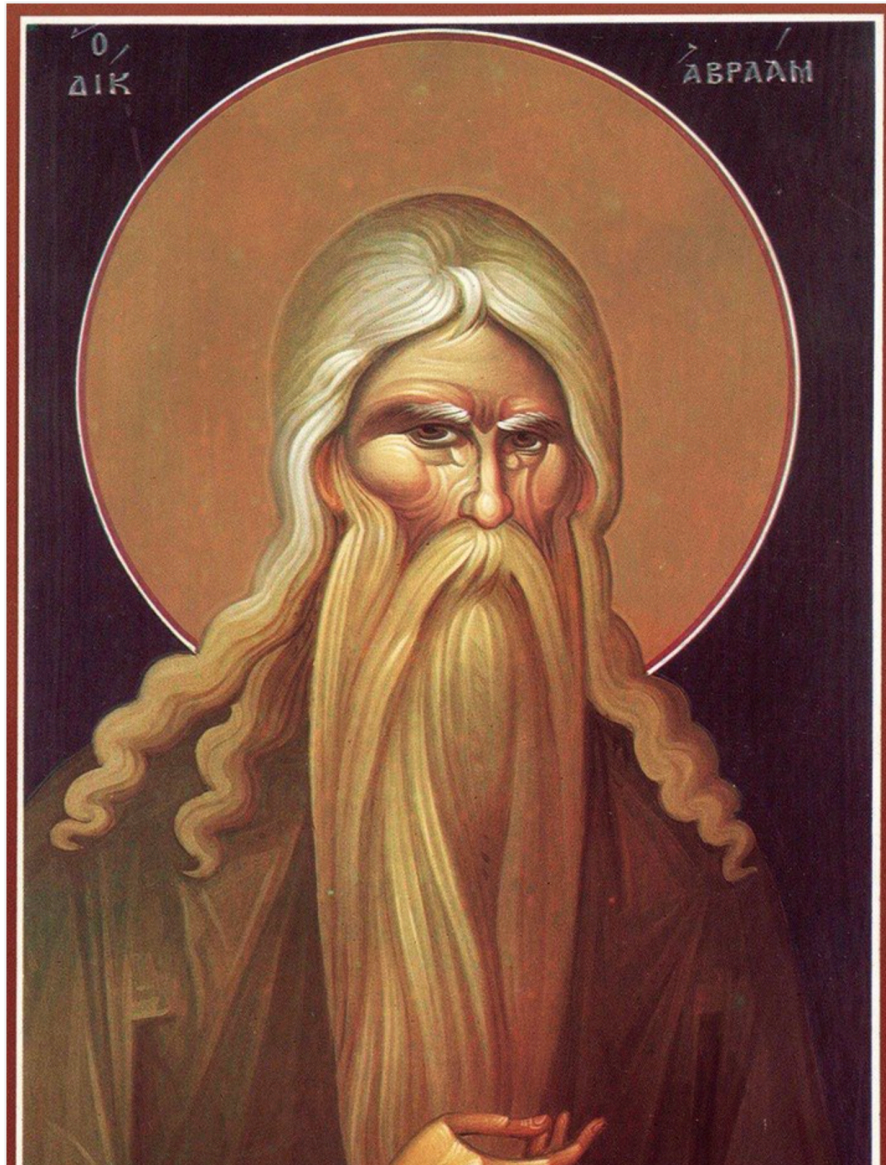


Genesis 12- 24: Abraham and the Family of Faith



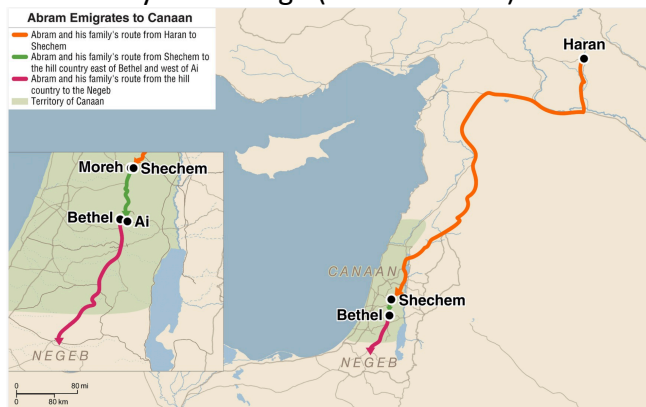
Welcome to the sermon series study guide for this series. We had a short series on the first 12 chapters of Genesis a few years ago, and it has always been my intention to return to Genesis and slowly continue through this formative first book of the Bible. We continue on with the life of Abraham.

Let me tell you a little bit about this guide. First, the basic component of this guide is inductive Bible study. Yes, I have included a little bit of “big ideas” that stood out to me as I first went over these sections, but when preaching and/or studying this later, I may come to a more sophisticated understanding of what the particular passage is all about. That is okay and expected. Don’t let my initial notes distract you!

**Background:** (Excerpts from *The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*)

One of the Bible’s most significant personalities, the “wandering Aramean” ([Dt 26:5](#)) whom God called from the city of Ur to become patriarch of God’s own people. Referred to as the “friend of God” ([2 Chr 20:7](#); [Jas 2:23](#)), Abraham played an important role in Hebrew history and in the “drama of salvation.” Through Abraham’s life, God revealed a program of “election” and “covenant” which culminated in the work of the Messiah Jesus Christ. God said to Abraham, “in you all the families of earth shall be blessed” ([Gn 12:3](#); another rendering of the last two words of this quote is “bless themselves”). Centuries later, the apostle Paul explained that the full import of God’s promise was seen in the preaching of the gospel to all nations and the response of faith in Christ, which signifies believers from all families of the earth as children of Abraham ([Gal 3:6–9](#)).

Most place Abraham toward the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (1900–1800 BC) or the end of the Early Bronze Age (2150–2000 BC).



**Video Guide and Commentary:**

If helpful, here is the Bible Project overview of Genesis:

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/genesis-12-50/>

Here is also a free commentary if you want to dig deeper:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/genesis/>

### Instructions for Leaders:

Leaders - Feel free to print the entire workbook for all the members of your group. Make sure you go over the passage and the lesson notes before each study. You can try to go through the steps (Observe, Interpret, and Apply) yourself, so that you are prepared to share your thoughts and answers as the group goes through the same process together.

If so desired, it can be helpful to watch a summary video from the Bible Project on the first week to get everyone acclimated to the structure and setting of this epistle (<https://bibleproject.com/videos/1-timothy/>) .

### Instructions for Small Groups:

- A. Pray: Before anything, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word, give wisdom, and ask for his help in submitting to the message God wants to convey.
- B. Study the Word - Inductive 3 Steps
  1. **Observe** - Main Question: What does this passage say?
    - Look for repeated words or themes, transition words (ie. but, therefore, for), Images/metaphors, verbs (note past, present, and future), who is doing the action, surprises, theme words, look up words that don't easily make sense.
    - A truth, a command, a warning, a question
    - Descriptions of God: the Father, Son, and Spirit
  2. **Interpretation** - Main Questions - What does the passage mean? What aspect of the gospel (that is, who Christ is and what He has done for us and what this means for our lives) is revealed in the passage?
    - Consider the passage that has come immediately before and that follows straight after. How does this impact how we understand the passage?
    - Read any references provided from the rest of scripture.
    - What would you say is the main idea of this passage?
  3. **Apply** - Main Question: What does this mean for us/me today?
    - How does this passage challenge my view of God?
    - Is there a command to obey or a promise to hold on to?
    - How can we live this out in community?
    - How does it change what I'll do tomorrow?

Bonus - Each week, in brackets I included some specific questions from the passage that you may wish to go over.

C) Close in Prayer - asking for help to live out the truths of the passage, and praying for one another's prayer requests.

## 1. Genesis 12:1-9 – The Adventure Begins

Some Big Ideas:

- God's initiative.
- Context: Failed individuals (Genesis 6 - men of renown/seeing and taking, every inclination evil), failed unity ("let us make bricks/tower"), God chooses a family.
- Covenant beginnings: Explore how this may be an expansion/change to the covenant with Noah and Adam.
- God wants to bless all people and bring about redemption through Abram and his seed. God wants to set apart a people and a place for the Kingdom.
- A call to go into the unknown. A call to adventure.
- Obedience and faith. Hebrews 11:8-12

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

[Bonus: Vs. 8 says Abram built an altar. What does this tell about his priestly role?]

## 2. 12:10-20 – Abram and Sarai in Egypt – Mistakes made

Some Big Ideas:

- Immediately after hearing the story of Abram's obedience and faith, we are met with a story of cowardice and shame.
- Abraham lacks wisdom and boldness in his trust.
- God's faithfulness in spite of human weakness. Echoes of Exodus. Plagues. Pharaoh sends Abraham away with the words "take your wife and go."

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
  - What does this passage mean?
  - What does this passage mean for us/me today?
- C. Close in prayer for one another

(Bonus: What do we make of the sinful patterns of this same lie being repeated in Genesis?)

### 3. 13 – Quarrelling and Blessing – Abram and Lot

Some Big Ideas:

- While God is blessing Abram, Lot falls under the same blessing.
- Lot chooses “the best” which is the worst decision for him that will cost him everything.
- Abram is given everything, but owns none of it. The promised seed and generations to come will inherit.
- Abram is learning to trust God and live a quiet and peaceful life. “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, skillful in teaching, patient when wronged” (2 Tim 2:24).
- Trusting God in the midst of deep disagreement.

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: Abram and Lot both live in “enemy” territory. How does one succeed and how does the other end up in failure? Is there a pattern for us to follow?

#### 4. 14 – Abram and Melkizedek - Mysterious Priest and King

Some Big Ideas:

- Melchizedek shows up again in Hebrews chapter 7. Explore how this New Testament framing gives insight into the Genesis reading. Explore how his kingship and priestly office offer a Christological type.
- Abram is invested in the well-being of Lot and his neighbours.
- Abram accepts no gift, but offers a gift instead to the king of Salem.

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
  - What does this passage mean?
  - What does this passage mean for us/me today?
- C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: What implications does the non-Abrahamic God-follower/priesthood have for the Church?

## 5. 15 – The Unilateral Covenant Expanded

Some Big Ideas:

- Suzerian Vassal treaties. God alone goes between the animals halves, thus implying he will bear the weight of the trespass.
- Compare with the covenant in chapter 12. List similarities and/or changes.
- James 2:23 and Romans 4:3 - This passage and the order (faith and then imputed righteousness) is key to understanding our own righteousness and salvation.

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: What does Abram's faith mean? Is it more than intellectual assent? Emotional feeling? What is it made of? What can be emulated and what is harder for us "who do not see, but still believe" (to quote from Jesus)?

## 6. 16 (and maybe 21:8-21)– Sarai and Hagar

Some Big Ideas:

- Another big mistake made by the family. Abram and Sarai lack faith and come up with their own solution. Abram is passive. Sarai becomes resentful.
- Galatians 4 instructs us how to think about these two peoples - one representing the slave (tied to the law). The other represents the free person (tied to the promise/gospel).
- God is “the God who sees me” to Hagar. She meets the mysterious Angel of the Lord.
- Chaos ensues when we take matters into our own hands. But, God’s providence continues.

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: In your own mistakes have you see God continue to bless you? Has God shown himself to be the God who sees you?

## 7. 17 – The Sign of the Covenant

Some Big Ideas:

- Colossians 2 Baptism has become the sign. Discuss similarities and differences in these signs.
- Consider the why of this sign. Positively, it is an act (painful/sacrificial) that establishes an obedient relationship. Negatively, it demonstrates what being cut off from the people of God indicates.
- Explore the relationship between Abraham and his household - Abraham as representative must both receive the sign, and all who come under him (servants, relatives, etc).

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: Why do you think the finished work of Christ was hard to accept for those steeped in the Jewish customs (e.g. circumcision, kosher laws, sacrificial system)? What are the things that we are tempted to think come between us and salvation?

## 8. 18- 19 – Abraham Intercedes

Some Big Ideas:

- Abraham (and Lot) shows hospitality to angels - link to Hebrews 13:2.
- Abraham meets the mysterious angel of the Lord.
- The promise of a specific date when the promised child shall appear is given.
- Sarai laughs. She may be wrong for doing so, but that laughter of unbelief is turned to the laughter of fulfilled hope.
- Abraham intercedes for a wicked society. Explore what our attitude ought to be to the wicked world.
- God's perfect knowledge vs. our imperfect prayers.

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: Knowing what we know of God's infinite knowledge, what do we make of the angelic visitation of Sodom?

**9. 20 (21:22-34 too)– Lies, Fears, and Mistakes - Same Mistakes (?) and new conflicts**

Some Big Ideas:

- Abraham falls into sin and old behaviours.
- Abraham has conflict with his neighbours, with his wife and concubine.
- Being sanctified, but still a long way away.
- Gospel: We never live up to the hype of what we ought to be. But Jesus did!

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

Bonus: Why is it hard to have faith and live rightly with our family and neighbours?

## 10. 21:1-7, 22:1-19 – The Sacrifice on the Mountain

Some Big Ideas:

- Explore the region (future temple, future crucifixion)
- Explore the request (the promised son).
- Resurrection themes (Hebrews 11:19)
- Sacrifice provided by God

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another

**Bonus:** People often find this story challenging or they too easily dismiss those challenges. How does the death of Christ help us have a greater understanding of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac?

**11. 24 – A Bride for His Son – The death of Abraham and Sarah (23-25) – passing the baton**

Big Ideas:

- Ending well - passing the baton to the next generation.
- The bridegroom receiving his Bride echoes Song of Songs and Rev 21
- The way faith has effected Abraham's servants, son, Laban, and Rebekah.

A) Pray

B) Study: Observe, Interpret, Apply

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean?
- What does this passage mean for us/me today?

C) Close in prayer for one another