

Father Abraham

Genesis 12—25



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INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

AUTHORSHIP

Both Jews and Christians accept Moses as the human author of Genesis. God revealed to Moses both the history and laws of His people. Moses was the great leader of Israel who led the people out of Egypt and was also known as the great law-giver. New Testament writings confirm Moses's authorship of Genesis. Jesus describes Moses's writings as the "book of Moses" in Mark 12:26, and the "law of Moses" in Luke 24:44.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

The forty years of wilderness wandering is a likely time frame for the writing of Genesis. Many scholars believe 1446 BC to be an accepted date of the "exodus," when Moses led Israel out of Egypt. This would place the wilderness wanderings from 1446 to 1406 BC.

TYPE OF LITERATURE

Genesis is one of the five Old Testament books known as the Law. The Law, also known as the Pentateuch (PEN-tuh-tyook) meaning "five-volume book" (Genesis-Deuteronomy) contains the laws given by Moses to Israel. Other portions of the Law contain narrative sections which involve major characters with their failures and successes, from which lessons can be learned. Key names and their stories in Genesis include Adam and Eve, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Genesis 12—25 focuses on Abraham and the arrival of Isaac, the promised son.

PURPOSE OF GENESIS

The purpose of Genesis can be summed up in the phrase, "a book of beginnings." Genesis 1:1 begins with the phrase, "In the beginning," which is one word in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament. God used Genesis to record the beginning of the world and universe through Creation and the beginning history of man. This particular study will cover *Genesis 12—25: Father Abraham*, a key figure in the line of humanity through whom the Messiah would come.

UNIT AIM

There is a strong emphasis in Genesis 12—25 on God's covenant with Abraham. The covenant involved Abraham becoming a blessing to the nations, God blessing Abraham with many descendants, and God blessing his descendants with the land of Canaan. "Father Abraham" and his wife Sarah would have a son named Isaac, through whom God's everlasting covenant would continue.

A key verse comes in Genesis 15:6, which highlights the faith of Abraham. The climax of Abraham's story comes in Genesis 22 where Abraham, by faith and fear of the LORD, was willing to sacrifice his promised son. The LORD, however, stopped him and provided a sacrifice. In this unit, *the learner will understand that through Abraham, God's covenant blessing and plan of redemption for the world would move forward.*

PROMISES AND BLESSINGS

GUIDED BIBLE STUDY

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. Who is speaking and being addressed in this passage?
2. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
3. What is being contrasted in this passage?
4. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a promise to claim or a truth to believe?
2. Is there an example to follow?
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?

Outline for Lesson One: Promises and Blessings

Genesis 12:1-9

Part One: The LORD _____ to Abram (12:1-3)

A. The LORD gave a command to Abram (12:1)

B. The LORD promised to Abram (12:2-3)

Part Two: Abram _____ the LORD (12:4-6)

A. Who and what Abram took (12:4-5a)

B. Where Abram went (12:5b-6)

Part Three: The LORD _____ to Abram (12:7)

A. The LORD promised the land (12:7a)

B. Abram built an altar (12:7b)

Part Four: Abram _____ His Journey (12:8-9)

A. Abram journeyed to the mountain (12:8)

B. Abram journeyed to the south (12:9)

Lesson One: Promises and Blessings

Genesis 12:1-9

Aim: The learner will understand that the Lord promised to bring untold blessings to the world through the obedience of Abraham, the forefather of the Hebrews and the Christ.

Introduction

Have you ever decided to go on a trip with your family but had no clue about your ultimate destination? While some may enjoy such an adventure, most people prefer mapping out the details of their trip. The LORD called upon Abram to go on such an unmapped journey. The LORD certainly knew where Abram's journeys would lead him, but Abram had no such details when he left home.

We were first introduced to Abram in Genesis 11:26-32, the **immediate context**. This passage tells us of Terah, who fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. They lived in Ur of the Chaldees, part of modern-day southern Iraq. Haran died in this land leaving behind his son Lot. Abram and Nahor took wives named Sarai and Milcah, respectively. Terah took his family and settled in Haran (In Hebrew, the place name is pronounced kuh-rahnn). The mention of Abram in this passage is important as the opening of Genesis 12 begins to recount the story of Abram, which becomes the focus of the thirteen lessons contained in this book.

Abram's name means "exalted father," which is ironic since the Scripture declared his wife Sarai as barren (11:30). Barrenness carried a stigma of shame in their culture, which likely added stress to their lives. God will later change Abram's name to Abraham (Genesis 17:5), which means, "father of a multitude." The name change signifies the many descendants who would eventually come from Abraham, including those of the faith of Abraham. In Romans 4:16, a **related passage**, Paul refers to Abraham as the father of those who believe. Father Abraham would indeed have many descendants, both physical and spiritual.

This first lesson focuses upon God's initial contact with Abram when He gave him pertinent information about his future and the future of his descendants. These opening verses of Genesis 12 help to propel forward God's story of redemption. It is a story that permeates the whole of Scripture, as the LORD recounts promises and blessings to Abram that would eventually impact the world.

Part One: The LORD Spoke to Abram (12:1-3)

A. The LORD gave a command to Abram (12:1)

Abram's first recorded encounter with the LORD involved a command to leave his home country, a place where he had settled down with his wife Sarai. Notice carefully how God's command moves from broad to narrow. Abram was to leave: (1) his country, (2) his relatives, and (3) his father's house (12:1). This was God's way of saying that He wanted Abram to leave behind a familiar place and people and go to a new place that God would show him. How difficult it must have been to leave the familiar surroundings of home and his relatives. Can you imagine God telling you to leave everything and everyone familiar to you for an unknown destination? This was God's command to Abram.

B. The LORD promised to Abram (12:2-3)

The LORD's command for Abram to leave his country, relatives, and father's house was not all that the LORD said when He **addressed** him. God had big plans for Abram. What follows is often understood as the Abrahamic Covenant. While the word "covenant" does not appear in this text, other Scriptures such as Leviticus 26:42 refer to it as a covenant. What is a covenant? A covenant is when one party promises to do something for another party. There are two types of covenants described in Scripture. **First**, "conditional" covenants occur when the party receiving a promise must meet certain obligations, such as God's covenant with Israel in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 28-29). **Second**, "unconditional" covenants, such as the one God made with Abram, occur when no conditions must be met to receive the promises. This covenant God made with Abram appears as a series of promises with a command in between them.

1. A covenant promise to make him a great nation (12:2a)

God first promised to make Abram a great nation (12:2). Abram would have been familiar with the concept of nations as he was surrounded by many nations such as Egypt and the ones in Canaan. What an impressive promise to become a nation, but not just any nation, a "great" nation! Of course, to become a nation, Abram would need many descendants. To have many descendants, Abram would need to have his first son, but Sarai was barren (11:30).

2. A covenant promise to bless him (12:2b)

Secondly, God promised to bless Abram personally (12:2b). The **key word** bless means to endow one with the ability to prosper. God's blessings upon a person can come in all shapes and sizes. God can choose to prosper us materially and/or spiritually. For Abram, it would certainly include both as he would have many descendants (15:5), receive God's righteousness (15:6), and accumulate goods (14:16). **In what ways has God blessed you?**

3. A covenant promise to make his name great (12:2c)

Not only did God promise to make Abram a great nation, but the third promise included making his name great (12:2c). One's name is often tied to one's reputation. Scripture mentions his name 311 times, with 69 of those occurring in the New Testament. Jews, Christians, and even Gentile groups consider Abram (or Abraham) a great figure from history. **What sort of reputation does your name bear?**

4. A covenant promise of blessing and cursing (12:2d-3a)

Before mentioning the final three promises, God inserted a second command. God **first** commanded Abram to leave his country (12:1). The **second** command involved Abram being a blessing (12:2d). This command could be translated, "and so you must be a blessing." Why is it that Abram must be a blessing? God's plans for Abram will dictate God's blessings upon the world through the coming of the Messiah. What happens with and through Abram will impact the world. The command that Abram must be a blessing leads to God's next three promises.

Promises four and five will be considered together. As a **cause and effect**, God promised positively to bless those (effect) who bless Abram (cause; 12:3a). The same promise of God's prospering Abram will be for those who treat Abram well. As a **contrast**, however, from a negative standpoint and stated as another **cause and effect**, those who curse Abram (cause) will be cursed by God (effect; 12:3a). Two different Hebrew words are translated "curse" in this verse. The first Hebrew word for curse means to treat lightly or with contempt. The second word means to place under a ban or to remove one from the power of blessing. Those who treat Abram lightly or with contempt will have God's favorable hand removed from them. This reinforces the fact that these promises involve God's protection for Abram to ensure that he will indeed be a blessing.

5. A covenant promise to bless the families of the earth (12:3b)

The sixth and last promise involves a blessing to the families of the earth. The **key word** families refers to different ethnicities and nations. God's blessing to Abram would impact the nations of the world, a great **truth to believe**. The Messiah would eventually come through Abram's family line (Matthew 1:1-2; Luke 3:34). Jesus's death and resurrection would mean untold blessings for the world in terms of eternal redemption. In Revelation 5:9 a **related passage**, God redeems people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." **Praise God** for His plan to bless the earth in this way!

Part Two: Abram Obeyed the LORD (12:4-6)

A. Who and what Abram took (12:4-5a)

A command is only as good as the recipient who obeys it. Stated as a **cause and effect**, Abram departed (effect) as the LORD commanded him (cause; 12:4a). What perfect obedience we witness by Abram! His complete obedience is emphasized in three ways: (1) His willingness to do what God said; (2) His willingness to go despite his age of 75 years; and (3) His taking all which he possessed. Abram was not going on a short-term journey, but he was departing permanently, thus he took his wife, nephew, and all the substance or goods they acquired in Haran along with other people as well. **Are you willing to follow Abram's example of following God's plan for your life?**

B. Where Abram went (12:5b-6)

Their journey would take them to the land of Canaan (12:5b). According to the **historical context**, this land was already occupied by people groups. This mattered not to God, for the land belonged to Abram and his descendants based upon God's covenant promise. In the land of Canaan, Abram makes it as far as Sichem (syeh-come) or Shechem (sheh-come) and the plain or oak of Moreh (12:6a). The word plain actually refers to a tree, thus some translations have it as the "oak of Moreh." According to the **historical context**, pagan gods were worshipped under such trees. With the addition that the Canaanite was "then in the land" (12:6b), this lets the reader know that Abram and his people were now in enemy territory.

Part Three: The LORD Appeared to Abram (12:7)

A. The LORD promised the land (12:7a)

Now that Abram was in the land, God appeared to him and promised that He would give this land to his seed or descendants (12:7a). The **key word** seed in this context refers to one's offspring. Promise upon promise and blessing upon blessing, God was certainly revealing His favor toward Abram and his descendants.

B. Abram built an altar (12:7b)

How does one respond to God after hearing of such wonderful promises and blessings? The best way to respond is through worship. In the form of a **cause and effect**, after Abraham heard the LORD's promise of land (cause), he built an altar (effect; 12:7b). In Genesis 8:20, a **related passage**, Noah also built an altar to the LORD after God saved him and his family during the worldwide flood. **What are some reasons you should worship God today?**

Part Four: Abram Continued His Journey (12:8-9)

A. Abram journeyed to the mountain (12:8)

Abram's time of sojourning through the land of Canaan was not over. From Shechem and Moreh, he traveled to the mountain between Bethel and Hai or Ai. There the Bible says that he pitched his tent and built another altar to the LORD. Added to this, it also says that he "called upon the name of the LORD," a phrase first mentioned in Genesis 4:26. May we **follow this example** of Abram of calling upon the name of the LORD daily.

B. Abram journeyed to the south (12:9)

Abram, knowing that this land did not belong to him yet, continued his journey as he headed farther south. The **key word** south refers to the Negev or south country. This would take Abram closer to the area of Egypt, which becomes the setting for the next lesson.

Conclusion

Abram stepped out in faith when the LORD told him to leave his country, relatives, and father's house. Abram could have objected and told the LORD that he was living comfortably with his family in Haran. Abram, however, obeyed when he heard God's command and of the promises and countless blessings that awaited him and his descendants, the Hebrews. Through Abram's obedience, God's plan for bringing a blessing to the world, including the coming Christ, was underway as God's plan always prevails.

Apply It

- **Believe the truth** that all families of the earth have been blessed through Abram (12:3).
- **Praise God** that He has a plan to bless the earth (12:3b).
- **Follow the example** of Abram who . . .
 - obeyed the Lord's command (12:4).
 - followed God's plan for his life (12:4-5a).
 - called upon the name of the Lord (12:8).

“LITTLE LIES” CREATE BIG PROBLEMS

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

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2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
2. Is there an attitude to change or a sin to confess in this passage?
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage:

Outline for Lesson Two: “Little Lies” Create Big Problems Genesis 12:10-20

Part One: _____ in the Land (12:10)

Part Two: Abram Planned a _____ (12:11-13)

A. The motivation for the lie (12:11-12)

B. The content and cause of the lie (12:13)

Part Three: Events in _____ (12:14-16)

A. The Egyptians noticed Sarai (12:14)

B. Sarai taken into Pharaoh's house (12:15)

C. Pharaoh treated Abram well (12:16)

Part Four: Pharaoh and His House _____ (12:17)

Part Five: Pharaoh _____ Abram and Released Him (12:18-20)

Lesson Two: “Little Lies” Create Big Problems

Genesis 12:10-20

Aim: The learner will understand that it is better to trust completely in the Lord than to lie to protect oneself.

Introduction

Abram heard some wonderful words from the LORD in Genesis 12:1-3, the **immediate context**. The LORD promised Abram that he would become a great nation with a great name, father multiple descendants, become a blessing to the nations, and have the LORD’s protection from those who might curse him. After hearing such wonderful words, Abram should have known that God was for him. But like so many who receive the promises of God, a lack of faith combined with trying circumstances can cause believers to forget the promises and blessings of God. The believer should never forget to maintain complete trust in the Lord.

Part One: Famine in the Land (12:10)

A trying circumstance developed in Abram’s life following the LORD’s promises and blessings. Abram found himself having a mountain-top experience following this word from the LORD. We might call this a spiritual “high” which fills a person with great confidence. What often follows a spiritual high is a test of one’s faith. Many believers can relate to such testing after a great moment in their spiritual journey with the Lord. Abram’s test came in the form of a famine.

The **immediate context** reminds us that Abram journeyed to the south (12:9), where he experienced a great famine. Famines occurred from a long period of little-to-no rain which would cause the wheat and barley to stop growing. These crops were necessary to sustain people’s main food supply. Stated as a **cause and effect**, because the famine was “grievous in the land,” Abram journeyed to Egypt (effect; 12:10). The **key word** grievous means heavy or oppressive. This famine marked a serious situation and Abram had to decide to find necessary food. According to the **historical background**, Egypt was a prime place to go during a famine as its food supply remained fairly constant due to the Nile’s water supply. This famine set up a test regarding Abram’s trust in God. ***What situation has come into your life recently that resulted in a test of your faith?***

Part Two: Abram Planned a Lie (12:11-13)

A. The motivation for the lie (12:11-12)

Sometimes a lie is not planned but happens in the heat of the moment. A pressure situation develops and a lie becomes the immediate reaction. On other occasions, a person might plan out a lie ahead of time, which is what Abram did. As Abram approached Egypt, he spoke to Sarai about her beauty. He mentioned to her that she was “a fair woman to look upon” (12:11). The **key word** fair means handsome or beautiful. It can be used both of women or men. The same Hebrew word is used to describe David’s eyes in 1 Samuel 16:12.

Normally, having a beautiful woman at one’s side is not a problem for a man. But for Abram, he perceived her beauty as problematic when entering Egypt. Abram feared that if the Egyptians knew that Sarai was his wife, they would kill him

but, in **contrast**, allow her to live (12:12). Abram seemed more concerned about his own life and well-being than for Sarai's, who might very well become another man's wife.

B. The content and cause of the lie (12:13)

In response to his fear, Abram asked Sarai to lie to the Egyptians about their relationship and say that she was his sister (12:13). The **key phrase**, "I pray thee," shows Abram's desperation as it literally means to plead with someone. It would be similar to asking, "Would you please do this for me?" Abram developed a scheme to keep him out of trouble and then he included his wife by asking her to lie. There is a popular saying which states, "Desperate times call for desperate measures." Those who place their trust in the Lord, however, do not have to resort to desperate measures. Abram trusted his wife's lie more than placing full trust in the LORD. Complete trust in the Lord should be the believer's first response to pressure-filled situations. As a **cause and effect**, the purpose for the lie (cause) was so that it would go well for Abram and allow him to live (effects; 12:13).

One might argue that in Abram's situation this was not really a lie. In Genesis 20:2, we are told that Abraham (this is after his name is changed) lied to Abimelech and said that Sarah was his sister. After Abimelech found out the truth, Abraham told him that Sarah was his sister, the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother (20:12). So, Sarai was indeed Abram's half-sister. Thus, to report to the Egyptians that they were half-siblings was technically not a lie. While it is true that the biblical record states they were half-siblings, they were fully married, and this is what they lied about. It is important to note that Abram's intent to claim Sarai as his sister was to deceive, and deception, especially with an evil motive, is a form of lying. Resorting to deception demonstrates a lack of faith.

Jesus said that Satan is a liar and the father of lies in John 8:44, a **related passage**. In Proverbs 6:16-17, 19, another **related passage**, the Bible declares that God hates a lying tongue and a false witness that speaks lies. Therefore, to do something God hates is a sin, which makes lying a definite **error to avoid**. Abram should have trusted in the LORD instead of lying to save himself. The LORD's protection would be there for Abram as the LORD had already promised to bless him and not cause harm to befall him.

Part Three: Events in Egypt (12:14-16)

A. The Egyptians noticed Sarai (12:14)

Just as Abram predicted, when they entered Egypt, the people noticed that Sarai was fair (12:14), a **repeated word** from 12:11. It did not take long for Abram's fear to manifest itself. The **key word** beheld is from the same Hebrew root word translated "see" in 12:12. This word means to perceive, consider, or enjoy looking at someone or something. The fact that others beheld her beauty confirmed the truth of Abram's observation about his wife.

B. Sarai taken into Pharaoh's house (12:15)

Not only did the Egyptian people take notice of Sarai, but the princes of Egypt did as well (12:15a). These princes, who served as officials before Pharaoh,

were in a position to convey news about Sarai's beauty to him. The Bible says they "commended her before Pharaoh" (12:15b). The **key word** commended comes from a Hebrew word that means to praise. In this context, and stated as a **cause and effect**, when the princes saw her beauty (cause), they commended or praised her to Pharaoh (first effect) and she was taken into Pharaoh's house (second effect). The word "saw" comes from the same Hebrew root word as found in 12:12 (translated "see") and 12:14 (translated "beheld").

C. Pharaoh treated Abram well (12:16)

In response to Pharaoh's pleasure with Sarai, and noted as a **cause and effect**, "he entreated Abram well (effect) for her sake" (cause; 12:16a). The **key word** entreated means to treat kindly or graciously. This kindness to Abram came in the form of animals and servants. The animals included sheep, oxen, donkeys, and camels. The servants included both male and female servants. One might interject and say, "Well, it looks like Abram's lie is paying off!" Abram receiving wealth from Pharaoh should in no way be perceived as God's blessing upon Abram for his lie. God hates lying and would not reward him for sinning. God does not reward sin, but judges it. What seemed to be a "little lie" was about to create a big problem.

Part Four: Pharaoh and His House Plagued (12:17)

Quite possibly, Abram felt good about the situation with Sarai in Pharaoh's house because of the wealth he accumulated from Pharaoh. Clearly, however, the LORD was not happy. The LORD demonstrated his unhappiness with this situation by bringing great plagues upon Pharaoh and his house (12:17). Another **cause and effect** is noted as the LORD brought these plagues (effect) because of Sarai, Abram's wife. The **key word** plague refers to affliction or skin disease. The text does not specify what kind of plagues God brought, just that He plagued Pharaoh and his house.

Notice how the text emphasizes Sarai as Abram's wife. This could be to emphasize that God's promises and blessings to Abram involved both of them. In due time, God would bring about their first descendant, but this could not happen if Sarai remained a part of Pharaoh's harem. Even though Abram sinned by lying, the LORD intervened to ensure that the promises and blessings would come to pass according to His will. **Praise God** for his protection of Abram and Sarai for their role in His redemptive plan for the world!

Part Five: Pharaoh Questioned Abram and Released Him (12:18-20)

The text does not tell us how Pharaoh came to know that Abram and Sarai were married. Maybe the plagues came shortly after he took Sarai into his house and he put two and two together. Maybe the LORD revealed this information to him in a dream. However it happened, Pharaoh got the message and approached Abram with a series of questions after he found out that Sarai belonged to Abram (12:18). To paraphrase, Pharaoh asked him: (1) What have you done to me? (2) Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? (3) Why did you indicate she is your sister? One must wonder if Pharaoh was also thinking, "Who are these people that plagues would come upon us for taking this woman into my house?" This may have been the Egyptians' first encounter with the LORD, but it would certainly not be their

last (see Exodus 7—12)!

Pharaoh then told Abram, to “behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way” (12:19). The **key word** behold here is meant to bring serious attention to the situation. Pharaoh presented Abram’s wife to him and gave two commands—“take her” and “go.” Pharaoh definitely wanted to be rid of these plagues, and since Sarai was the source of them, she and Abram must go. Pharaoh commanded his men to make sure these commands were carried out (12:20). So, in a last **cause and effect**, Pharaoh gave the command (cause) and his men escorted them away (effect). Abram and Sarai were back together as husband and wife along with all their belongings.

Conclusion

Sir Walter Scott, an early 19th century English poet, coined the all-familiar phrase, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.” It came from his poem entitled, *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field*, which entails a young man who gets involved with a mistress and together they concoct a scheme to accuse her fiancé of treason. It did not go so well for them, just as it did not go so well for Abram and Sarai, and their scheme to fool Pharaoh. Abram believed this was the only way to protect him. Their lie brought trouble to Pharaoh’s house and interrupted God’s plan for Abram. From the text, it does not appear that it dawned on Abram to trust solely in God during a difficult circumstance. Certainly, God’s protection would have been there for Abram as God had big plans for him and his descendants.

Apply It

- **Avoid the error** of lying to protect yourself (12:13).
- **Confess the sin** of lying if there is something you have lied about in your life.
- **Change your attitude** from fear to complete trust in the Lord if you find your trust in Him to be lacking (12:18).
- **Praise God** for his protection of Abram and his wife to ensure His redemptive plan for them and the world would move forward (12:17).

NOTES

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

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Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Three: Conflict Resolution

Genesis 13:1—14:16

Part One: Abram Returned to _____ (13:1-4)

Part Two: Abram and _____ Experienced Conflict (13:5-13)

A. The reason for the conflict (13:5-7)

B. The solution to the conflict (13:8-13)

Part Three: The LORD _____ Abram of Blessings (13:14-18)

A. The specifics of the blessings (13:14-17)

1. The blessing of land (13:14-15, 17)

2. The blessing of descendants (13:16)

B. Abram responded to the promise of blessing (13:18)

Part Four: Nations Experienced _____ (14:1-12)

A. Those involved in the conflict (14:1-3)

B. The reason for the conflict (14:4)

C. The effects of the conflict (14:5-12)

Part Five: Abram _____ Lot (14:13-16)

Lesson Three: Conflict Resolution

Genesis 13:1—14:16

Aim: The learner will recognize the importance of making wise decisions to resolve conflict and understand that the Lord will provide strength to handle conflicts regardless of their magnitude.

Introduction

Most people do not enjoy conflict, especially when that conflict involves family. Such conflicts have the potential for creating emotional damage that can last for generations. Some conflicts, not necessarily involving family, can seem so big and dangerous that getting involved could prove detrimental. Abram got involved with two different kinds of conflict in 13:1—14:16—a family squabble and a war of nations. Both conflicts involved Abram’s nephew, Lot, and Abram knew he needed to get involved with both to bring peace with Lot and to rescue Lot. Conflict resolution includes wisdom both to make the best decisions for a good and peaceable outcome and complete trust in the Lord when the conflict seems too great.

Part One: Abram Returned to Bethel (13:1-4)

Abram and Sarai went back to the land of Canaan after their ordeal in Egypt where they lied to Pharaoh about being brother and sister (see the **immediate context** of Genesis 12:10-20). They, along with Lot, moved back into the “south” country or the Negev (13:1). According to the **immediate context** in 12:16, Pharaoh blessed Abram with much livestock and servants under the guise that Abram and Sarai were brother and sister. The current text reminds us that Abram possessed riches of cattle, silver, and gold (13:2).

Beyond the south country, they returned to Bethel where they once lived between Bethel and Hai (pronounced hah-eye) (13:3). Note the **cause and effect**. Abram returned specifically to the altar he made the first time he lived there (cause) and he again “called on the name of the LORD” (effect; 13:4). This **key phrase** is repeated from 12:8 and refers to Abram’s worship of the LORD. Worshipping the LORD was a great response by Abram, especially in light of how God protected them in Egypt even though they lied to Pharaoh. **Follow** Abram’s **example** of calling on the name of the LORD in worship.

Part Two: Abram and Lot Experienced Conflict (13:5-13)

Now that Abram and his family were back at home, one might expect the “happily ever after” end to the story. But, conflict arose. Genesis 13:5-13 marks the first of two conflicts.

A. The reason for the conflict (13:5-7)

The text mentioned Abram’s wealth in 13:2, but Lot also possessed his fair share of wealth which consisted of flocks, herds, and tents (13:5). Stated as a **cause and effect**, both Abram and Lot possessed so much wealth and goods individually (cause) that it became difficult for them to dwell together (first effect; 13:6). This difficulty manifested itself with strife between Abram’s and Lot’s

herdsmen (second effect; 13:7a). The **key word** strife refers to a dispute or lawsuit. Based on the context, it appears the dispute revolved around territory needed for grazing animals. The text reminds us that Abram and Lot were not the only inhabitants, as the Canaanite and Perizzite also dwelled in the land (13:7b).

B. The solution to the conflict (13:8-13)

A resolution is needed when conflict arises. In the form of a **cause and effect**, Abram spoke to Lot and called for no strife between them and for there to be no strife between their herdsmen (effect) because “we be brethren” (13:8). This **key phrase** does not mean they were actually brothers, but rather it emphasized that they were family. It is a shame when families experience strife, especially over land and possessions. Abram pleaded with Lot when he said, “I pray thee,” a **repeated phrase** from 12:13, when he pleaded with Sarai to tell the Egyptians she was his sister.

Abram wisely came up with a solution to avoid further strife. He told Lot that there was much land available in this area. In a series of **cause-and-effect** relationships, Abram said, “If you go to the left (cause), then I will go to the right,” or vice versa (13:9). The plan to separate made sense, a **key word** meaning to branch off. In this plan, we see Abram’s generosity toward his nephew. As the patriarch of the family, Abram had every right to choose the best land for himself, but he deferred to his nephew. What an unselfish act by Abram! **Follow** Abram’s **example** of looking for wise solutions to family conflict.

Lot took advantage of Abram’s generous spirit by choosing the best land for his flocks (13:10-11). Lot “lifted up his eyes” and beheld the plain of Jordan. The text describes this plain as well watered and **compares** it to the garden of the LORD, a reference to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10). This was before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It was also **compared** to the land of Egypt as one goes toward Zoar. Egypt possessed a great watering system because of the Nile River. Likewise, the Jordan River provided good water for the plain providing lush vegetation. Abram dwelled in Canaan while Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain (13:12).

Lot’s decision to pitch his tent toward Sodom would eventually prove to be a not-so-wise decision. The text declares that the men of Sodom were wicked men and sinners (13:13). This statement about the men of Sodom stands as a precursor to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, a **related passage**.

Part Three: The LORD Reminded Abram of Blessings (13:14-18)

At this point, Abram possibly believed that God’s promise of land for his descendants lay in jeopardy. Lot chose the best part of the land, so where would this leave Abram’s descendants in the future? The LORD reminded Abram that the promise of blessings still remained.

A. The specifics of the blessings (13:14-17)

1. The blessing of land (13:14-15, 17)

The first blessing mentioned by the LORD to Abram included the promise of land. Just as Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the plain of Jordan, now the LORD told Abram to lift up his eyes and look in every direction of the compass (13:14).

Every place Abram could see forever belonged to him and his seed (13:15). God gave this promise of land the first time in 12:7, the **immediate context**. The **key word** seed refers to Abram's descendants and is a **repeated word** from 12:7. One of Abram's descendants would be the promised seed of Genesis 3:15, the Messiah or Jesus Himself! God even encouraged Abram to walk the length and breadth of the land (13:17). Basically, God said to Abram, "Go ahead, check out your inheritance!"

2. The blessing of descendants (13:16)

The LORD further described the blessing of Abram's many descendants through the use of simile or **comparison**. He told Abram, "If a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (13:16). This use of comparison is meant to emphasize the large multitude of Abram's descendants.

B. Abram responded to the promise of blessing (13:18)

Abram eventually settled in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron (13:18a). Now that he was in a new place, he built a new altar unto the LORD (13:18b). With the reminder of blessings, Abram kept his focus on the LORD. May we **follow** Abram's **example** by keeping our focus on the Lord.

Part Four: Nations Experienced Conflict (14:1-12)

A. Those involved in the conflict (14:1-3)

After Abram and Lot settled their conflict, a much larger conflict developed that would involve them both. Sometime after Abram built his altar in Hebron (13:18), four kings went to war with five other kings in the valley of Siddim (*sih-deem*), which is near the Dead Sea (14:1-3). The four kings controlled the lands of Babylonia and the lands northeast and southeast of Babylonia. The five kings controlled Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim (zuh-boy-eem), and Bela or Zoar—cities in the plain of Jordan.

B. The reason for the conflict (14:4)

For twelve years, the five kings in the plain of Jordan served Chedorlaomer (ked-ore-lay-ah-mer) (14:4a). The **key word** served likely refers to the kings of Jordan paying a tribute of money and/or food to Chedorlaomer. However, in the thirteenth year, the five kings chose to rebel (14:4b), meaning they gave no tribute in this year, which would not set well with Chedorlaomer.

C. The effects of the conflict (14:5-12)

The **first** main effect involved Chedorlaomer conquering kingdoms on his way to confronting the five kings who stopped paying tribute. Chedorlaomer began his campaign in the north and worked his way south by smiting or defeating the Rephaims in the Golan Heights east of the Sea of Galilee, the Zuzites further south in Transjordan (east of the Jordan), the Emims east of the Dead Sea, and the Horites south of the Dead Sea (14:5-6). Chedorlaomer took the lead in this campaign and the three kings allied with him (Amraphel, Arioch, and Tidal) fought as well (14:5a). Chedorlaomer and his allies then turned their attack against the Amalekites and Amorites southwest of the Dead Sea, conquering them as well (14:7).

The **second** main effect involved confronting the five kings. Knowing that Chedorlaomer and his allied kings were coming, the five kings of the Jordan “joined battle” with them in the valley of Siddim (14:8-9). This **key phrase** means that they prepared themselves for battle by organizing their troops. The four kings (led by Chedorlaomer) caused the five kings (who stopped paying tribute) to flee. Some of the fleeing troops fell in the slime or tar pits located in the Siddim Valley, while those who escaped fled to the hills (14:10).

The **third** main effect involved the four kings taking possession of Sodom and Gomorrah’s goods and victuals or food (14:11). They also took possession of Lot, who was now living in Sodom, along with his possessions (14:12). Notice how Lot went from pitching his tent toward Sodom in 13:12 to living there in 14:12.

Part Five: Abram Rescued Lot (14:13-16)

Abram received word from one who escaped the battle of the kings that Lot had been captured (14:13a). At this time, Abram lived near Mamre the Amorite who had two brothers, all confederate (allied) with Abram (14:13b). In the form of a **cause and effect**, when Abram heard his nephew was taken captive (cause), he gathered 318 trained servants born in his house and began his pursuit (effects; 14:14).

Abram, using stealth by attacking at night, smote the armies of the four kings led by Chedorlaomer and continued to pursue them near Damascus, a long way to pursue from where the conflict began (14:15). Just as Chedorlaomer smote those whom he attacked (14:5, 7), now Abram and his men smote him. With great success, Abram brought back the goods, Lot and his possessions, along with the women and other people (14:16). **Follow** Abram’s **example** of helping a brother in need.

Conclusion

The Bible reminds us in Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Conflict resulted between Abram and Lot, but Abram made a wise decision to resolve this conflict so that the quarreling would cease between their herdsmen. After Abram and Lot parted ways, God reminded Abram of the promised land and multiple descendants. As bigger political conflicts arose, Lot got swept up in the conflict. Abram gathered his courage and strength, no doubt with God’s promises and blessings in mind, and rescued his family member even though the situation was dangerous. This story of the conflict between these warring kings reminds us of God’s promise to Abram to curse those who curse him and bless those who bless him.

Apply It

- **Follow** Abram’s **example of . . .**
 - calling on the name of the Lord in worship, (13:4, 18).
 - looking for solutions to family conflict, (13:9).
 - helping a brother in need, (14:16).
- **Praise God** that the LORD did not forget His plans for Abram and his descendants.

ENCOUNTERING TWO DIFFERENT KINGS

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. Who is involved in the passage being studied?
2. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the cultural/historical background of this passage?
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Four: Encountering Two Different Kings

Genesis 14:17-24

Part One: Abram and the King of _____ (14:17-20)

A. _____ *of this king* (14:18)

B. _____ *from this king* (14:19-20a)

1. Blessing upon Abram (14:19)

2. Blessing upon the most high God Most (14:20a)

C. Abram's _____ *to this king* (14:20b)

Part Two: Abram and the King of _____ (14:21-24)

A. *The king's request* (14:21)

B. *Abram's response* (14:22-24)

Apply It

Believe the truths

Follow the example

Praise God

Lesson Four: Encountering Two Different Kings

Genesis 14:17-24

Aim: The learner will understand that true blessings come from God, not from the world.

Introduction

Have you ever had an encounter with royalty? Most of us have probably never experienced such an encounter. What would you even say to a king or queen? I would likely be a bundle of nerves if I were to encounter royalty. Abram, in Genesis 14:17-24, encountered two different kings, who will be the focus of this study. In 14:13-16, the **immediate context**, Abram had already encountered kings in battle and won! Now he is about to engage in conversation with two different kings. One of these is quite mysterious and holds the key to understanding the priesthood of Jesus, the Messiah.

Part One: Abram and the King of Salem (14:17-20)

At the outset of this passage, and noted as a **cause and effect**, Abram is met by the King of Sodom (effect) following Abram's defeat of Chedorlaomer (ked-ore-lay-ah-mer) and the three kings with him (cause; 14:17a). This meeting took place in the valley of Shaveh (shah-vay), which is known as the king's dale or valley (14:17b). This valley was likely to the east of Jerusalem. Abram's encounter with the King of Sodom is detailed later in 14:21-24, but another king comes forward, who is heavily **involved in this passage**, and we see Abram's encounter with him first.

A. Identification of this king (14:18)

The text notes the name of this king as Melchizedek (mel-key-zeh-dek). His name means "my king is righteousness" or "king of righteousness." At this time, he served as the king of Salem, a shortened form of Jerusalem (see Psalm 76:2). Not only was he a king, but he served as priest of "the most high God." This **key phrase** combines two words in Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament)—"God" and "upper" or "high." This phrase stands as a designation for God as the most supreme being, a great **truth to believe**. For several chapters in Genesis, the focus has been upon Abram and God's blessings to him and the world. The blessings to the world through Abram allude to the redemption of mankind through his descendant, namely Jesus. It seemed all hope rested upon Abram. And, in a way it did, as God possessed big plans for Abram and his descendants. However, the entrance of an interesting figure like Melchizedek reminds us that God possessed others who served him faithfully as well during this time.

Melchizedek serves as a "type" of Christ in Scripture. A type is a person or thing which prefigures someone or something else. In this case, the entrance of Melchizedek points to someone greater, Jesus, who is the fulfillment of the type. The Bible mentions Melchizedek by name a total of eleven times in Scripture – twice in the Old Testament (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 110:4) and nine times in the New Testament (Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21).

The writer of Hebrews refers to Melchizedek as a type of Christ. The Bible declares Christ to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20). Melchizedek is noted by the author of Hebrews as having no genealogy which means that there is no father, mother, or a family line of descendants mentioned anywhere in Scripture for him (Hebrews 7:3). By this, the author of Hebrews presents Melchizedek as having no beginning or ending, thus speaking of Christ's eternal nature. The Levitical priesthood performed sacrifices pertaining to the Law of Moses that could not fully atone for or take away sins. Therefore, another type of priest was needed who could fully atone for sins, and that person is Jesus Christ. The Levitical priests sacrificed animals, but Jesus sacrificed Himself so that mankind's redemption could be fully realized. Melchizedek is a great figure who points us to these wonderful truths about Jesus!

B. Blessings from this king (14:19-20a)

1. Blessing upon Abram (14:19)

Melchizedek first spoke a word of blessing to Abram (14:19a). God already spoke words of blessing to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17. Melchizedek referred to Abram's relationship to "the most high God," a ***repeated phrase*** from 14:18, the One who is the possessor of heaven and earth, a ***truth to believe*** (14:19b). God is the creator and owner of all things as stated clearly in Psalm 24:1-2, a ***related passage***. This king and priest speaking words of blessing to Abram served as a great reminder that the true blessings of life come from God. ***What blessings from God have you enjoyed recently?***

2. Blessing upon the Most High God (14:20a)

Melchizedek also spoke a word of blessing to God. The ***key word blessing***, when used concerning people, refers to a bestowal of power for success. When the word is used concerning God, it speaks of praise to God, for no one needs to ensure God's success! The main praiseworthy item noted is that God delivered Abram's enemies into his hands (14:20a). Abram's success in battle came from the LORD. Praise God that He delivered over Abram's enemies! ***When was the last time you praised God for His deliverance in your life, whether physical or spiritual?***

C. Abram's response to this king (14:20b)

In the form of a ***cause and effect***, Abram's response to this word of blessing (cause) was to give this priest "tithes of all" (effect; 14:20b). The ***key word tithes*** refers to a tenth portion. Abram knew his blessings came from God and that Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God. In a form of worship, he gave a tenth of the spoils of war to this priest who represented God.

Abram's giving a tenth was done before the Law of Moses made it a requirement. Prior to the law, there was already an expectation of giving unto God. This can be seen as far back as Cain and Abel who brought offerings unto the Lord (Genesis 4:3-4). Jesus even mentioned the tithe in the New Testament as something not to be neglected in the parallel accounts of Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42, ***related passages***. Avoid approaching the tithe from a legalistic standpoint, which means, attempting to calculate ten percent to the penny from each paycheck

and then giving no more than that. For it also says in the New Testament, to those under the covenant of grace, that God loves a cheerful giver in 2 Corinthians 9:7, a **related passage**. The tithe is a good baseline or place to start, but a cheerful giver will likely learn to give more.

Abram stands for all time as an **example to follow** when it comes to giving a tithe. Giving should be a part of our regular worship of God. ***Are you prepared to give a tithe or offering to the Lord with a cheerful heart this Sunday in your church?***

Part Two: Abram and the King of Sodom (14:21-24)

The king of Sodom reappears on the scene as another king involved in this passage. This king stands in contrast to Melchizedek. Whereas the king of Salem wanted to offer a blessing to Abram, this second king wanted to barter with Abram. How would Abram respond to this second king?

A. The king's request (14:21)

The King of Sodom offered a dual request to Abram—give me the people and you can keep all the goods for yourself (14:21). When Abram rescued Lot from Chedorlaomer, he also rescued women and other people according to 14:16, the **immediate context**. These are likely the people the king of Sodom ruled. He now wanted the people back but was willing to allow Abram to keep the goods, which likely refers to the spoils of war. On the surface, this seemed like a decent proposal by the king of Sodom. However, Abram's response lets the reader know that this was not the case at all.

B. Abram's response (14:22-24)

The remainder of the passage for this study deals with Abram's response to the king of Sodom. In his response, Abram said, "I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD" (14:22a). This **key phrase** means that Abram made a firm oath to the LORD. According to the **cultural background**, lifting one's hand toward heaven was a practice in the ancient world for declaring a solemn oath to God (Deuteronomy 32:40; Revelation 10:5-6). We are never told in the biblical text when Abram made such an oath, but it is reasonable to assume that he made it before going into battle. Abram even borrowed from the phrases spoken by Melchizedek—"the most high God" and "possessor of heaven and earth" (14:22b). Notice carefully that Abram equated these phrases with the LORD.

Abram made it quite clear to the king of Sodom that he intended to take nothing that belonged to him and his people, not even items so minute as a thread or "shoelatchet" (shoe-latch-it) which refers to the strap of a sandal (14:23a). This king ruled a city of wicked people as noted in Genesis 18:20, a **related passage**. Abram likely wanted nothing to do with their riches. But, stated as a **cause and effect**, the real reason why Abram wanted to take nothing from the king (cause) was so that the king of Sodom could not say he made Abram rich (effect; 14:23b). Abram knew that his true riches and blessings would come from God. ***When was the last time you acknowledged that your true blessings come from God?***

Abram further explained to the king of Sodom that he would take nothing except what had already been consumed, such as the food eaten by his men

(14:24a). Nor would he take the portions or shares belonging to the men who aided him in battle. He mentioned their names as Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. These men are mentioned in 14:13 as allies with Abram. In a spirit of generosity, Abram wanted nothing for himself, but he wanted to make sure his allies were rightly rewarded for their assistance.

Conclusion

Abram experienced a great victory when he defeated the four kings led by Chedorlaomer and rescued his nephew Lot. Follow that with the appearance of Melchizedek who vocalized blessings upon Abram and God. Connect all of this to the previous blessings and promises given to Abram by the LORD Himself, and Abram knew that God was on his side. Abram did not need any blessings from a pagan king like the king of Sodom, for Abram knew the King of all the earth intended to bless him! He would be content to wait on God's blessings as God is the source of all true blessings.

Apply It

- **Believe the truths** that . . .
 - The LORD is the Most High God.
 - The Most High God is the possessor of heaven and earth.
- **Follow the example** of Abram who gave a tithe of his possessions.
- **Praise God** that He delivered Abram's enemies into his hands.

NOTES

REPETITION AND REVELATION

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What comparison do you note in this passage?
3. What contrasts are noted in this passage?
4. What cause/effect relationships are noted in this passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow or error to avoid in this passage?
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Five: Repetition and Revelation Genesis 15:1-21

Part One: The LORD Reminded Abram of His _____ (15:1-6)

A. Abram received a vision (15:1)

B. Abram received a new revelation (15:2-4)

C. Abram reminded of his many _____ (15:5)

D. Abram believed in the LORD (15:6)

Part Two: Abram Prepared a _____ (15:7-11)

A. Abram reminded of the promised land (15:7)

B. Abram _____ the LORD (15:8-11)

Part Three: The LORD Revealed the _____ to Abram (15:12-16)

A. The future concerning Abram's descendants (15:12-14, 16)

B. The future concerning Abram himself (15:15)

Part Four: The LORD Made a _____ with Abram (15:17-21)

A. The conclusion of the sacrifice (15:17)

B. The details of the covenant (15:18-21)

Lesson Five: Repetition and Revelation

Genesis 15:1-21

Aim: The learner will understand that the LORD reminds His people of past promises, reveals His plan for them, and ensures His plan's ultimate fulfillment.

Introduction

The key to learning is often accomplished through repetition, known as the “father of learning” (although some might call it the “mother of boredom”). People are often forgetful, and so repetition can be a valuable tool to help one's memory. In 1 Corinthians 11:24-25, Paul reminded his readers of what Jesus said about doing the Lord's Supper “in remembrance of me.” The repetition of observing the Lord's Supper reminds believers of the importance of Christ's sacrificial death, a much-needed reminder.

More than repetition, we see that information not previously known needs to be revealed. In Genesis 15:1-21, God repeated information previously given to Abram but also revealed to Abram new information for him and his descendants. Even today, believers need to be reminded of God's wonderful truths and understand His revelation made known through His completed, written Word.

Part One: The LORD Reminded Abram of His Descendants (15:1-6)

Keeping a few things in mind regarding the **immediate context** of Genesis 14 will help when studying Genesis 15. **First**, Abram fought with kings who attacked the region and took Lot captive (14:13-16). **Second**, after defeating these kings, Abram encountered Melchizedek who blessed him (14:18-20). **Third**, Abram conversed with the King of Sodom and refused any riches from him (14:21-24). Now the LORD reminds Abram of His blessings and reveals new truth to him.

A. Abram received a vision (15:1)

After the vast experiences encountered in Genesis 14, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. The **key word** vision here refers to a genuine supernatural state generated by the LORD. God often spoke to people in the Old Testament through dreams (eyes closed) and visions (eyes open).

From the text, it would appear that the LORD knew Abram was afraid. In a **cause-and-effect** relationship, God told Abram in the vision not to fear (effect) *because* the LORD would be a shield to him and reward him greatly (15:1). The **key word** shield can refer to an actual shield used in battle. Here, the LORD used it as a metaphor regarding His protection for Abram. God would protect him and ensure his reward would be great.

B. Abram received a new revelation (15:2-4)

Abram responded with a question about this promised great reward. Abram asked the Lord GOD, “What wilt thou give me, since I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer (el-ee-eh-zer) of Damascus” (15:2). The **key word** steward is literally the word for son or grandson and likely here refers to a non-relative living in Abram's house. Abram continued to express doubt before God when he stated, “thou hast given no seed” (15:3). The **key word** seed refers to one's descendants

and is a **repeated word** from Genesis 3:15 and 12:7. God had already promised to Abram many descendants in Genesis 12:2 and 13:16. Naturally, to have “many” descendants, one must have the “first” child. **Avoid the error** of doubting God’s promises.

The LORD reminded Abram, in **contrast**, that his heir would not be Eliezer, but one born from his own bowels or body (15:4). Abram will have a natural son of promise! This promise of a natural-born son was a new revelation to Abram.

C. Abram reminded of his many descendants (15:5)

The LORD took Abram outside and told him to observe the stars. The LORD **compared** the number of stars to Abram’s descendants, if indeed he could number them. Scientists have estimated that there are at least 100 billion stars in our Milky Way Galaxy alone, not to mention other galaxies and clusters of stars that exist in them. God is not giving an estimated amount of Abram’s descendants with this comparison, but rather emphasizing the large number of descendants that would come from him. This promise of many descendants is followed by one of the greatest moments in history.

D. Abram believed in the LORD (15:6)

According to Hebrews 11:8, a **related passage**, Abram previously demonstrated faith in the LORD when he left his father’s house (Genesis 12:4). His belief in the LORD mentioned in Genesis 15:6 relates specifically to the promise of many descendants in 15:5. Abram believed in the LORD and God graciously responded by crediting it to Abram as righteousness, a great moment indeed! Since Scripture interprets Scripture, we have the benefit of what Paul and others say about 15:6. All people need to have such faith in the Lord since righteousness comes by faith, not by works (Romans 4:3, 5, 9, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). Abram also likely believed that God could bring life where there was only death regarding his and Sarai’s ability to have children (Hebrews 11:11-12).

The **key word** counted means to reckon, consider, or put to one’s account. Figuratively, God put righteousness in Abram’s account when he believed in the LORD. Genesis 15:6 marks the first use of the concept of “belief” in Scripture. Noah was marked as just and perfect in Genesis 6:9. Scripture notes Abram as the father of all those who believe (Romans 4:11). The many descendants promised to Abram are not just physical, but spiritual as well. **Follow the example** of Abram by believing in the LORD if you have not done so.

Part Two: Abram Prepared a Sacrifice (15:7-11)

A. Abram reminded of the promised land (15:7)

The LORD further reminded Abram, in the form of a **cause and effect**, that He was the one who called him out of Ur (cause) to give him a land to possess (effect; 15:7). Abram lived in Ur with his father before the Lord called him to leave and sojourn in the land of Canaan (Genesis 11:31). God promised the land of Canaan to Abram and his descendants. **Praise God** that He does not forget His promises!

B. Abram obeyed the LORD (15:8-11)

Abram, looking for assurance of the promised land, asked the LORD,

“whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it” (15:8). The LORD responded by having Abram prepare a sacrifice of a three-year-old heifer, female goat, and ram, along with a turtledove and a young pigeon (15:9). Abram obeyed as the LORD commanded, an **example to follow**, by bringing these animals to the LORD and cutting all but the birds in half (15:10). The slaughtered animals lay there so long that the birds of prey came to consume them causing Abram to drive them away (15:11). The LORD would answer Abram’s 15:8 question after revealing something new in 15:12-16. The LORD then used these animals to answer the question in 15:17-21.

Part Three: The LORD Revealed the Future to Abram (15:12-16)

A. The future concerning Abram’s descendants (15:12-14, 16)

In the form of a **cause and effect**, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Abram and “an horror of great darkness fell upon him” (15:12). God spoke to Abram previously through a vision (15:1), but now God may have shown him something in a dream, or more accurately, a nightmare as the terms “horror” and “darkness” would suggest. No one wants to think that bad things will happen to their descendants, but this is what God revealed to Abram.

The horror and darkness the LORD revealed involved Abram’s descendants being enslaved by a foreign nation for 400 years (15:13). This is a long time for any one group to be enslaved by another. This enslavement took place sometime after the death of Joseph (Exodus 1:8-11). However, after those 400 years, God would judge that foreign nation, and Abram’s descendants would come away with many possessions (15:14). **Praise God and believe the truth** that He judges those who would dare oppress or persecute His people! The timeframe of 400 years and the statement about the iniquity of the Amorites running full (15:16) demonstrates God’s perfect timing in all things. The Amorites, here used as a synonym for the Canaanites in general, lived in the promised land in Abram’s day. Israel would defeat the Amorites when they took possession of the land during the days of Joshua some 600 years after Abram’s day (Joshua 10:12). God would punish the Amorites by allowing Israel to defeat them.

B. The future concerning Abram himself (15:15)

The LORD reassured Abram that he himself would not experience the enslavement of his descendants. The LORD told him, “thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age” (15:15), a **key phrase** meaning that Abram would have a long life with little conflict. God would continue to bless this great patriarch with a good life.

Part Four: The LORD Made a Covenant with Abram (15:17-21)

The Lord had not yet answered Abram’s question from 15:8. That answer came through the completion of the sacrifice and wording of a covenant in 15:17-21. Roughly a full day had passed since God told Abram to count the stars in 15:5 and the completion of the sacrifice the next evening (15:12, 17).

A. The conclusion of the sacrifice (15:17)

An unusual sight ensued when a smoking furnace and burning lamp passed between the animals Abram cut in half (15:17). As the sun had already set, the most

noticeable thing in the darkness would have been the flames from this oven and lamp. This signified God's presence and guarantee to Abram that He would fulfill the promises previously spoken. God often revealed Himself in the form of smoke and fire in Scripture such as in Exodus 19:18. In the form of fire, God alone passed through the pieces to emphasize that He alone would fulfill the obligations made to Abram.

B. The details of the covenant (15:18-21)

God not only answered Abram with the symbolic gesture of the fire passing through the sacrifices, but with His spoken word as well in the form of a covenant. The **key word** covenant refers to one's pledge to do something for another. This word has not been used with God as the subject since God made His covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18; 9:9, 11-13, 15-17.

Through this covenant, God obligated Himself to Abram and his descendants. God's covenant to Abram here is unconditional, meaning that God Himself will fulfill it without asking Abram to meet any conditions. The details of this covenant involve the land God would give to Abram's "seed" or descendants that extends from the River of Egypt (a likely reference to the Nile River) to the Euphrates River (15:18). The Euphrates runs from Turkey through Syria (as the northern boundary) down past Iraq. This territory included the groups mentioned in 15:19-21, that occupied the promised land at the time of God's covenant to Abram.

Conclusion

The LORD told Abram at the beginning of this passage not to fear. Maybe Abram was fearful after his encounter with the kings he fought, wondering what other conflicts might arise. God reassured Abram by reminding him of past blessings foretold and revealing to him what lay ahead for his descendants. Abram himself was told that he would die in peace at a good old age. That word from the LORD was no doubt comforting to him.

God is a promise-keeping God. Believers should remember that God's promises revealed to them in His Word will come to pass because He Himself will fulfill all things. Thanks to Jesus Christ, who was one of Abram's descendants, those who believe in His death and resurrection have great hope in a future with Him in the new heaven and earth!

Apply It

- ***Avoid the error*** of doubting God's promises (15:3).
- ***Follow the example*** of Abram who believed in the LORD (15:6).
- ***Praise God*** that He does not forget His promises (15:7, 18).
- ***Praise God*** and ***believe the truth*** that He judges those who oppress His people (15:14).

THEY DID IT THEIR WAY

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What comparison do you note in this passage?
3. What cause/effect relationships are noted in this passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the cultural/historical background of this passage?
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
2. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Six: They Did it Their Way Genesis 16:1-16

Part One: Sarai's _____ (16:1-4a)

A. The reason for the plan (16:1)

B. The details of the plan (16:2a-b)

C. The completion of the plan (16:2c-4a)

Part Two: Sarai's _____ (16:4b-6)

A. Her problem with Hagar (16:4b)

B. Her problem with Abram (16:5)

C. Her problem with herself (16:6)

Part Three: The _____ of the Lord Appeared to Hagar (16:7-14)

A. He inquired of her (16:7-8)

B. He instructed her (16:9)

C. He informed her (16:10-12)

D. Hagar named the LORD (16:13-14)

Part Four: The Birth of _____ (16:15-16)

Lesson Six: They Did it Their Way

Genesis 16:1-16

Aim: The learner will understand that God's will must be accomplished His way as man's way can lead to much trouble.

Introduction

In 1968, Paul Anka wrote a song entitled, "My Way." Frank Sinatra made the song popular in 1969 and it continues to be a popular song today around the world. The song is about a man who charted his own course through life. One of the famous lyrics of the song includes, "I did it my way." The theme of doing life "my way" has been the theme of many people throughout history. That same theme shows up in Genesis 16:1-16 in the life of Abram and Sarai. In Genesis 15:4-5, the **immediate context**, God told Abram that he would have a child or heir from his own body which would result in many descendants. God's promise of a child did not come with a date of fulfillment. As time rolled along, Sarai became impatient and thought of a way to bring about the promised heir. The problem with her way is that it was not God's intended way to bring about the promised son.

Part One: Sarai's Plan (16:1-4a)

A. The reason for the plan (16:1)

The opening of this passage reminds the reader that Sarai could not bear children for Abram (16:1a). The Scripture first records Sarai's barrenness in Genesis 11:30, a **related passage**. Such a condition carried quite the stigma of shame for a woman in this culture and became a heavy burden for her to bear. Genesis 16:1 also introduces the reader to Sarai's Egyptian handmaid, named Hagar (16:1b). She played a crucial role in the events recorded in this chapter. Some scholars believe that Hagar's name comes from a Hebrew root word meaning "stranger." A similar Hebrew word is used in Genesis 15:13 when the LORD told Abram that his descendants would be a "stranger" in the land of Egypt. Hagar the Egyptian seems to foreshadow Israel's future trouble with Egypt, prophesied in 15:13.

B. The details of the plan (16:2a-b)

Sarai's barrenness caused her to think of a plan to correct her situation. Sarai approached her husband with an idea. She began by placing blame on the LORD for her predicament, "Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing" (16:2a). The LORD had a distinct reason for her barrenness, namely, to demonstrate His glory by giving them a son in their old age when they were unable to conceive on their own. However, Sarai perceived her barrenness as a problem. She pleaded with Abram ("I pray thee") to "go in unto my maid." Noted as a **cause and effect**, this **key phrase** refers to Sarai's idea for Abram to have sexual relations with Hagar (cause) so that they might have children through her (effect; 16:2b). According to the **historical/cultural context**, ancient near eastern customs allowed for a female slave to be used for bearing children if the wife was barren. However, God did not intend this custom to provide the answer for the promised son, not to mention that this is not God's design for marriage.

C. The completion of the plan (16:2c-4a)

Abram listened to his wife's plan (16:2c). In the form of a **cause and effect**, Sarai took her handmaid (cause) and gave her to Abram that she might become his wife (effect; 16:3). The Scripture also notes that Abram had lived in Canaan now for ten years. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran to sojourn in Canaan, and now he was eighty-five. God promised Abram many descendants when he left Haran, but still, they possessed no firstborn child. Sarai and Abram were getting anxious. Abram was told he would have a child from his own flesh in Genesis 15:4. It is not until 17:16 that God told Abraham that this child would be through Sarah (see also 17:19, 21). According to the Scriptural record, Sarah did not hear that she would bear this son until Genesis 18:10. When God makes a promise, regardless of the amount of time that has expired, He will fulfill it in His perfect timing and in His way. **Avoid the error** of attempting to fulfill God's will through devices of your own making.

Abram did as Sarai told him. Stated as a **cause and effect**, he had relations with Hagar (cause) and she conceived (effect; 16:4a). Sarai's plan had worked, or so she thought.

Part Two: Sarai's Problem (16:4b-6)

A. Her problem with Hagar (16:4b)

One would think that Hagar's conception would bring great delight to Sarai, but it only brought problems. The first problem she experienced involved Hagar. In the form of a **cause and effect**, when Hagar saw that she conceived (cause), she then began to despise her mistress (effect; 16:4b). The **key word** despise means to consider a person of no account or to look down upon someone. The Hebrew word translated "mistress" refers to a lady or queen mother. Here it refers to Sarai as the queen mother of the household. Hagar now had the upper hand as she produced a child when Sarai could not. No matter the circumstance, we should never look down upon another, a definite **error to avoid**.

B. Her problem with Abram (16:5)

Sarai had a problem with her handmaid, but her problems were not over. Her second problem involved her husband. Just as she blamed God for her barrenness, she now blamed Abram for her problem with Hagar, "my wrong be upon thee" (16:5a). Although this was her idea, she now blamed her husband. Sarai repeated Hagar's despising of her (16:5b). Furthermore, she said to Abram, "the LORD judge between me and thee." This **key phrase** marks an expression of hostility or conflict with another. A plan that Sarai thought would bring her joy, now brought tension in their marriage.

C. Her problem with herself (16:6)

You may have heard the expression, "you are your own worst enemy." The third problem Sarai possessed involved herself. Abram, not appreciating the blame his wife placed upon him, told Sarai concerning her handmaid, "do to her as it pleaseth thee." This **key phrase** literally means to do what is "good" in your sight. Sarai heard what she wanted to hear from Abram. What was "good" in her sight was to mistreat her handmaid, which is not good at all. She "dealt hardly" with

Hagar, meaning that she afflicted or oppressed her in some way. As a **cause and effect**, after Sarai mistreated her handmaid (cause), Hagar fled (effect). **Avoid the error** of exacting revenge on another when that person looks down on you.

Part Three: The Angel of the Lord Appeared to Hagar (16:7-14)

A. He inquired of her (16:7-8)

Sarai's treatment of her handmaid placed Hagar in a bad predicament now that she was with child and wandering in the wilderness alone. The angel of the LORD found Hagar by a fountain or spring of water near Shur, an area east of Egypt (16:7). This verse marks the first instance in Scripture of the "angel of the LORD." Many scholars believe the angel of the LORD here is a reference to a pre-incarnate state of Jesus (before He took on human flesh) as Hagar calls Him "God" in 16:13. The angel of the LORD inquired from her regarding two things, basically asking: (1) "Where have you come from?" and (2) "Where are you going?" (16:8). Notice, Hagar only answered the first question when she replied that she fled from her Sarai, her mistress.

B. He instructed her (16:9)

Notice the **cause and effect** in 16:9. After inquiring about her comings and goings, the angel of the LORD instructed or commanded Hagar to return to Sarai (cause), and to subject herself under her hands (effect). Abram told Sarai that her handmaid was in her "hand." Now, the angel of the LORD told Hagar to go back under her "hands." The wilderness was no place to have a child. Furthermore, God also had plans for her unborn son.

C. He informed her (16:10-12)

The angel of the LORD also informed Hagar of some important things regarding her son. **First**, God intended to multiply her seed so much that the number would be hard to count (16:10). This sounds very similar to God's promise to Abram in Genesis 13:16 and 15:5. God would later promise that twelve princes would come from Ishmael in 17:20, and these princes are named in Genesis 25:13-15. **Second**, the LORD informed her that she would have a son and that his name will be called Ishmael (16:11). As a **cause and effect**, the reason his name would be called Ishmael (effect) was because the LORD heard her affliction as Ishmael's name means "God hears." **Third**, the LORD informed Hagar of what kind of man her son would become. The LORD **compared** him to a wild (i.e. donkey) man, and as such, his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand will be against him. Note the **repeated** use of "hands" thus far in this passage. Hagar was in Sarai's "hand," and eventually Ishmael would place his "hand" against others as their "hand" would be against him. **Fourth**, the LORD informed her that he would dwell near his brothers (16:12).

D. Hagar named the LORD (16:13-14)

In response to the Lord's instruction and information, Hagar gave a name to the LORD. The name she gave Him is noted as a **cause and effect**. She called His name, "Thou God seest me," (effect) because she looked after the One who sees her (16:13). After Hagar conceived, she "saw" and despised Sarai her

mistress (16:4). However, when God “saw” Hagar’s plight, He showed her mercy. What a **contrast** in responses to what each one saw! **Praise God** that He both “hears” our affliction and “sees” our plight and often responds with mercy. Also, the well where she encountered the angel of the LORD was called Beerlahairoi (beh-air-lay-high-roy). This **key word** means “the well of the Living One who sees me.” Scripture states this well was located between Kadesh and Bered, northeast of Egypt.

Part Four: The Birth of Ishmael (16:15-16)

One more **cause and effect** states that Hagar bore Abram a son (cause) and Abram named him Ishmael (effect; 16:15). Both Hagar (16:11) and Abram were on the same page in the naming of their son. The Scripture further states that Abram was 86-years-old when Ishmael was born (16:16).

Conclusion

Sarai and Abram came up with a way to bring about a son, but it was not the way God intended to bring them their promised son. Their way brought about a great deal of trouble for Sarai, Abram, and Hagar. God’s will for them, however, would not be deterred as later chapters in Genesis will confirm. God’s will is best, and the way of God’s will is best. May we always seek to do God’s will according to His way.

Apply It

- **Avoid the error of . . .**
 - Abram and Sarai who attempted to fulfill God’s will by devising their own way, (16:2-4a).
 - Hagar who despised or looked down on another, (16:4b).
 - Sarai who exacted revenge by treating another person harshly, (16:6).
- **Praise God** that He “hears” our affliction, “sees” our plight, and shows us mercy, (16:11, 13).

NOTES

THE SIGN OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?
3. What contrast do you note in this passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages which need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow or error to avoid in this passage?
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Seven: The Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant

Genesis 17:1-27

Part One: God's _____ with Abraham (17:1-8)

A. The LORD revealed Himself further to Abram (17:1)

B. Abram _____ Himself before the LORD (17:2-3)

C. God changed Abram's name (17:4-6)

D. God promised an _____ covenant (17:7-8)

Part Two: The _____ of the Covenant (17:9-14)

A. God gave a command to obey the covenant (17:9)

B. God gave the sign of the covenant (17:10-13)

C. God gave a warning concerning the covenant (17:14)

Part Three: _____ Part in the Covenant (17:15-17)

A. God changed Sarai's name (17:15)

B. God promised to bless Sarah with a son (17:16)

C. Abraham _____ in disbelief (17:17)

Part Four: God's Promise Concerning _____ (17:18-22)

A. God confirmed His covenant with Isaac (17:18-19)

B. God promised His blessing toward Ishmael (17:20-22)

Part Five: Abraham's _____ to the Sign of the Covenant (17:23-27)

Lesson Seven: The Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant Genesis 17:1-27

Aim: The learner will understand that God always remains true to His covenant and requires obedience from those with whom He makes His covenant.

Introduction

A famous saying that comes out of Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, states, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet." While that may hold true for changing the name of a rose, names and their meanings held a prominent place in Old Testament times. Genesis 17:1-27 introduces the reader to four new names: Almighty God, Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. The Scripture reveals these names in connection with both God's covenant and the sign of the covenant with Abram. While names changed in this story, God's faithfulness to His covenant remained the same.

Part One: God's Covenant with Abraham (17:1-8)

A. The LORD revealed Himself further to Abram (17:1)

In Genesis 16, the **immediate context**, Sarai gave her handmaid to Abram as a wife and his union with Hagar produced Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old at the time of Ishmael's birth (16:16). The LORD appeared to Abram thirteen years later when Abram was ninety-nine years old (17:1a). The first new name in this Genesis narrative pertains to the LORD. He revealed Himself to Abram as "Almighty God," marking the first usage of this name in Scripture (17:1b). The **key word** Almighty speaks of God's great magnitude and power. He is the One who rules over all. **Believe the truth** that God is indeed the Almighty One.

The Almighty God commanded Abram to walk before Him and be perfect. The **key phrase** "walk before me" refers to the way Abram was to live his life before God. The **key word** perfect does not mean that God commanded Abram to be sinless, but rather blameless. No person can be sinless before God, but God's people can be blameless, which means that one's character is whole or intact without any major blemishes. The Bible uses the same Hebrew word to describe Noah as perfect or blameless (Genesis 6:9). Not only did the LORD reveal something new about Himself as God Almighty, but revealed to Abram the kind of blameless character he needed to possess. May all God's people strive to have such blameless character.

B. Abram humbled Himself before the LORD (17:2-3)

The LORD reminded Abram of His covenant that He planned to confirm regarding the multiplication of Abram's descendants (17:2). Notice how God said, "my covenant." God not only initiated this covenant with Abram, but would faithfully carry it out. Noted as a **cause and effect**, Abram responded in humility (effect) to God's reminder of the covenant (cause; 17:2-3). Abram, so overwhelmed by God's promise, fell facedown before God. Believers today should **follow** Abram's **example** of genuine humility before the Lord. **When was the last time you truly humbled yourself before God?**

C. God changed Abram's name (17:4-6)

Part of God's covenant involved Abram becoming the father of many nations (17:4). God previously told Abram he would make him a great nation (singular; 12:2), but this marks the first time God mentioned that many nations (plural) would come from him. To solidify this part of God's covenant, we come to the second new name in this narrative. As a **cause and effect**, God changed Abram's name to Abraham (effect) because He made him the father of many nations (17:5). The name Abram means "exalted father." The name Abraham means "father of a multitude." This father of a multitude even included kings (17:6), the greatest of them being Jesus Christ!

D. God promised an everlasting covenant (17:7-8)

God's covenant with Abraham was not a temporary deal, but an everlasting covenant (17:7). This covenant would extend past Abraham's day to his seed or descendants. The **key word** seed is singular and refers to the total of Abraham's descendants. As part of the covenant, God would promise to be their God and give them all the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. While Abraham remained a sojourner in the land, it would later become the possession of his descendants (17:8). Just like the covenant itself was everlasting, the specific promises within the covenant remained everlasting as well. **Praise God** for His everlasting covenant with Abraham.

Part Two: The Sign of the Covenant (17:9-14)

A. God gave a command to obey the covenant (17:9)

God called upon Abraham to keep His covenant, a **key word** meaning to guard or observe something. God called upon Abraham's seed to keep this covenant as well (17:9). The **key word** seed is singular and likely refers to Abraham's descendants as a whole. This marks the first time that God called upon Abraham to do something regarding this covenant. God promised many things to Abraham and his descendants, now they must guard this covenant and observe to do what is required of a covenant people.

B. God gave the sign of the covenant (17:10-13)

The requirement for Abraham and his descendants to observe involved the covenant sign of circumcision (17:10). When God made a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, He gave Noah the sign of the rainbow. God's covenant with Abraham also involved a sign. The **key word** circumcision refers to the cutting away of the male foreskin (17:11a). God referred to this act as a token, which is a **key word** that refers to a sign (17:11b). The word "token" or "sign" was also used to refer to the sign of the rainbow in Genesis 9:12, a **related passage**. This sign must be administered to every eight-day-old male which included Abraham's direct descendants and any slave or foreigner bought with money (17:12-13). Just like the covenant itself was an everlasting covenant, the sign of the covenant was everlasting (17:13b). The rainbow after the flood would cause God to remember His covenant not to destroy all flesh with a worldwide flood. The sign of circumcision would now remind Abraham and His descendants of God's covenant with them.

Notice that circumcision is meant to be a sign of the covenant, not a

guarantee that one is right with God. The people of Israel would later equate circumcision with salvation. Even today, some circumcise for health reasons, tradition, or religious reasons, but the Bible makes it clear that circumcision does not save. The apostle Paul, in some **related passages**, would warn the Jews not to think of circumcision in this way (Romans 2:25-29). True, spiritual circumcision is of the heart within those who have faith (Galatians 5:6). Some today want to place their hopes in their baptism, church membership, or good works. Salvation only comes through grace, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. God gave a warning concerning the covenant (17:14)

Failure to observe this sign of the covenant came with serious consequences. Stated as a **cause and effect**, any male child who did not receive circumcision (cause) was to be “cut off from his people” (effect; 17:14a). This **key phrase** means to be eliminated or removed, no longer to be considered as part of the group. God clearly equated the failure to be circumcised as breaking His covenant (17:14b).

Part Three: Sarah’s Part in the Covenant (17:15-17)

A. God changed Sarai’s name (17:15)

The third new name in this passage involved Sarai. God changed her name to Sarah. The two names certainly resemble each other in meaning. “Sarai” means “princess,” while “Sarah” means “noble lady.” Her slight name change indicated that she, like Abraham, belonged under God’s covenant.

B. God promised to bless Sarah with a son (17:16)

Sarah would play an integral part in God’s covenantal plan by giving birth to the promised son. God would bless Sarah and allow her to have Abraham’s son, that is, a son from both of them. This son would be the beginning of great things to come as nations and kings would come from this initial son.

C. Abraham laughed in disbelief (17:17)

Abraham could hardly believe his ears! His old, barren wife would have a son? As a **cause and effect**, when Abraham heard God speak of His blessings upon Sarah (cause), he fell upon his face before God and laughed (effects; 17:17). His laughter likely highlighted his momentary disbelief. How could a 100-year-old man and his 90-year-old wife have a son? This verse says specifically that Abraham said this in his heart, which means that he likely did not vocalize his disbelief, but thought it. Whether one vocalizes disbelief in God’s promises or thinks it, a doubt is a doubt. Believers should **avoid the error** of doubting God’s promises.

Part Four: God’s Promise Concerning Ishmael (17:18-22)

A. God confirmed His covenant with Isaac (17:18-19)

In Abraham’s state of doubt, he expressed to God, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee!” (17:18). Abraham seemed to be saying to God, “Let the covenant come true with Ishmael.” God stressed to Abraham that Sarah would indeed have a son, and his name will be called Isaac (17:19). This marks the fourth and final new name in this passage. The name Isaac means “he laughs.” How ironic and what

a great play on words—Abraham laughed, and God named his promised son “he laughs.” Sarah would soon laugh as well when she heard that she would have a son in Genesis 18:12, the **immediate context**.

B. God promised His blessing toward Ishmael (17:20-22)

God heard Abraham’s plea for his son Ishmael. God reassured Abraham that Ishmael too would be blessed. God promised to make him fruitful and multiply his descendants abundantly. **Praise God** that He listens to our plea! Ishmael would father twelve princes making him into a great nation (17:20). In **contrast**, however, God reminded Abraham that His covenant would be established through Isaac whom Sarah would bear within a year (17:21). Abraham now knew the timing of the coming promised son. With that new information in mind, God stopped talking with Abraham and left him (17:22). The promised son would soon arrive.

Part Five: Abraham’s Obedience to the Sign of the Covenant (17:23-27)

Abraham wasted no time obeying God’s instructions about circumcision. Abraham was committed to God’s command regarding circumcision as he promptly obeyed the order. God gave instructions regarding the circumcising of every male born in his household at eight days old (17:12). However, there were already many grown men, teenagers, and possibly other male children in the household. So, in the “selfsame day” (i.e., the very same day) that God gave him the instructions, Abraham obeyed and had all the males in his household circumcised, even Abraham himself who was ninety-nine years old (17:23-24). Ishmael was thirteen years old (17:25). The text clearly emphasized again that Abraham, Ishmael, and all the males in his household received circumcision (17:26-27). Abraham serves as a great **example to follow** of perfect and whole-hearted obedience!

Conclusion

Genesis 17 marks an important moment in Abraham’s story. The LORD revealed to him that He is the Almighty God. He changed Abraham and Sarah’s names confirming to them that they played a crucial role under God’s covenant. God gave them the name of their long-awaited and promised son. God gave the sign of the covenant that would serve as a perpetual sign for the descendants of Abraham, which Abraham promptly obeyed. Spiritual descendants of Abraham (i.e., believers) should focus on the circumcision of the heart. God’s plan for redeeming mankind was alive and well because the Almighty God could and still can make the impossible come to pass!

Apply It

- **Believe the truth** that the LORD is the Almighty God (17:1).
- **Follow the example of . . .**
 - Abram’s humility before the LORD (17:3).
 - Abraham’s obedience to the LORD’s command (17:23).
- **Avoid the error** of doubting God’s promises (17:17).
- **Praise God** for . . .
 - His everlasting covenant with Abraham (17:7, 13).
 - listening to our pleas (17:20).

NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR THE LORD

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?
3. Is there an attitude to change or a sin to confess in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Eight: Nothing is Too Hard for the LORD

Genesis 18:1-33

Part One: A _____ is Not Too Hard (18:1-15)

A. The LORD appeared to Abraham (18:1)

B. Abraham's response (18:2-8)

C. The LORD said (18:9-10)

D. Sarah's response (18:11-12)

E. The Lord said to Abraham and responded to Sarah (18:13-15)

**Part Two: Punishing _____ and Protecting the _____
is Not Too Hard (18:16-33)**

A. The LORD's question (18:17- 21)

1. "Shall I hide from Abraham?" (18:17-19)

2. Because the cry is great (18:20-21)

B. _____ questions (18:22-33)

Apply It

- ***Follow the example***
- ***Believe the truths***
- ***Avoid the error***

Lesson Eight: Nothing is Too Hard for the LORD

Genesis 18:1-33

Aim: The learner will believe that nothing is too difficult for God.

Introduction

Genesis 18 records the LORD's third direct contact with Abraham. First, He told Abram to leave his father's house for an unspecified land. The LORD further promised to make Abram a great nation and name. He also promised blessing for all families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3). Second, the LORD appeared to him and established His covenant with Abram, changing his name to Abraham (Genesis 17:1-5). Now, with the third contact, the LORD appeared with two messages for Abraham that related primarily to His power and justice.

Part One: A Child is Not Too Hard (18:1-15)

A. The LORD appeared to Abraham (18:1)

During the "heat of the day" or at noon, the LORD appeared to Abraham in the "plains of Mamre" or the "oaks of Mamre" as he rested in the tent door (18:1). This is the third time Genesis **repeated** "plains of Mamre" as the location for where Abraham lived.

B. Abraham's response (18:2-8)

Abraham looked up and saw three men standing "by him" (18:2a). When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them. Upon reaching them, he "bowed himself toward the ground" (18:2b). Although the passage at first implies the men were very close to Abraham, the context makes it clear that they stood close enough for him to see them but far enough for Abraham to run and meet them. Remember that the **immediate context** tells readers that Abraham was ninety-nine years old (17:24).

Two things indicate that Abraham responded to these men as his superiors. **First**, he bowed on the ground before them. The **key word** bowed is often used in Scripture to describe an act of worship (18:2). **Second**, Abraham addressed one of the men as, "My Lord." The phrase appears in Scripture many times as a reference to one's master. Abraham also identified himself as the man's servant and pleaded with him "if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant" (18:3).

Abraham showed hospitality that was customary for that time. He offered water to wash the men's feet and invited them to rest under the tree. He pledged to fetch a "morsel [or just a little bit] of bread" as means to comfort their hearts (i.e., refresh themselves) before they left. The men encouraged him to do so (18:5). Abraham then hurried into the tent and instructed Sarah to begin baking (18:6). He ran to the herd, chose a tender and good calf, and gave it to a young man to prepare (18:7). Abraham set butter, milk, and the prepared calf before the men. They ate as he stood by them under the tree (18:8). The meal was significantly more than a mere "morsel of bread" (18:5). **Cultural background** indicates the importance placed upon hospitality, even to strangers in Abraham's day. Since

restaurants and convenience stores did not exist, people depended upon hospitality from others. **Follow the example** of Abraham and be hospitable.

C. The LORD said (18:9-10)

Although hospitality is indeed a good thing, the primary focus of this passage is more significant. Abraham's visitors asked, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" to which he replied, "Behold, in the tent" (18:9). **Cultural background** reveals that a woman's presence would not be acceptable before male guests. One of the guests confirmed that "I will certainly return . . . according to the time of life . . . and Sarah thy wife shall have a son" (18:10). The **key phrase** "according to the time of life" referred to the nine months when a woman is expecting a child. The guest must have been sitting near the tent door because Sarah heard his words as she was behind him. This promise was repeated from Genesis 17:21, the **immediate context**, that Sarah would bear a son named Isaac.

D. Sarah's response (18:11-12)

Genesis 18:11 describes Abraham and Sarah as "old and well stricken in age." The **key phrase** "it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" simply means that Sarah's age prevented her from conceiving a child.

Notice the **cause and effect** in 18:12. When Sarah heard the promise of having a son (cause), she "laughed within herself" and asked, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (effects). Sarah's question demonstrates her acceptance that both she and Abraham were old, worn out, and beyond the ability to have the pleasure of bearing a child together. Sarah's response seems to express unbelief. The Bible does not tell us if Abraham had shared with her the promise given to him in Genesis 17:21. Although Sarah simply may not have known about the promise, her questions appear to reveal her doubts, knowing the lack of physical ability within both herself and her husband.

For the sixth time, Genesis **repeated** that Abraham and Sarah were advanced in years (12:4; 16:16; 17:1, 17, 24). Why did Moses repeatedly write of Abraham and Sarah as "too old?" It seems that he tried to make it completely clear that they were physically incapable of having a child. Thus, requiring the birth of Isaac to be dependent upon a genuine act of God.

E. The Lord said to Abraham and responded to Sarah (18:13-15)

For the first time in Genesis 18, the passage identifies one of the men. "And the LORD said" is a **key phrase** that revealed the personal name of God, Yahweh. God Himself appeared to Abraham in human form. He asked Abraham why Sarah had laughed at the message that she would bear a child. Sarah had asked, "Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?" (18:13). Notice again, Genesis **repeated** Sarah's age as being "old."

However, the LORD addressed her question with His own question, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" (18:14a). This is a rhetorical question, which means the expected answer should be obvious. The expected answer is "No" in that nothing is too hard or difficult for the LORD. He reemphasized that He would return within the time of life (i.e., months of pregnancy) and Sarah would have a son. It was not too hard for the LORD to start Abraham and Sarah's family. The LORD's

power was the solution to Sarah's doubts and what seemed like the couple's problems related to being "old."

In response to His comments, Sarah denied her laughter. Notice the **cause and effect**, she denied (effect) because of absolute fear (18:15a). The LORD replied directly to her denial, "No, but you did laugh" (18:15b). It seems unclear as to why the LORD confronted Sarah directly, but the New Testament confirms that at some point her doubt turned to faith. Hebrews 11:11, a **related passage**, verified that "through faith" she "received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

Believe the truth that the LORD is powerful and that nothing is too hard for Him. **Avoid the error** of doubting His message.

Part Two: Punishing Sin and Protecting the Righteous is Not Too Hard (18:16-33)

The men stood up and looked toward Sodom. Abraham went to "bring" or send them on their way (18:16).

A. The LORD's question (18:17- 21)

1. "Shall I hide from Abraham?" (18:17-19)

The LORD questioned, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (18:17). Notice the **causes** that resulted in the LORD's question. **First**, He saw that Abraham would certainly become a great and mighty nation through which all nations would be blessed (18:18). **Second**, the LORD said, "I know him," a **key phrase** basically meaning "I have made Abraham My friend" or "I have chosen him" (18:19a). The LORD intended the friendship to have a purpose, that Abraham would command or direct his children and household to "keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" so that the LORD would bring about what He had spoken to Abraham (18:19b). The "way of the LORD" refers to one's moral character and course of life focused upon pleasing the LORD. The term "justice" refers to righteousness while "judgment" refers to making proper decisions. **Believe the truth** that the LORD expects no less from His friends today.

2. Because the cry is great (18:20-21)

The LORD revealed, "that thing which I do" (18:17). Notice the **causes and effect**. **First**, the "cry" of Sodom and Gomorrah is "great." The word "cry" refers to an outcry of distress by victims calling out for help. The word "great" refers to an abundance. **Second**, their sin is "very grievous" or exceedingly heavy (18:20). Because of these, the LORD declared "I will go down now and see" if the sin of Sodom truly equaled the outcry. He would know if the cries were not true (effect; 18:21). Thus, this would leave no room for Sodom to claim her innocence and His unjust punishment. His investigation of Sodom exemplifies that the LORD is fully aware of the truth when He disciplines.

B. Abraham's questions (18:22-33)

At this point in the text, the men turned their faces away from Abraham and went toward Sodom. However, Abraham remained and stood before the LORD (18:22). The close relationship detailed in 18:17-21 created a foundation upon which Abraham could address the LORD with boldness and respect.

Abraham drew near to the LORD and asked “Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (18:23). Abraham’s question seems to demonstrate his awareness of Sodom’s sinful condition. The **key word** righteous refers to those right, correct, and lawful. The **key word** wicked refers to those guilty of immorality and hostility toward God. In 2 Peter 2:6-9, a **related passage**, Peter addressed the same question and concluded that God’s actions toward Sodom demonstrate His ability to protect the righteous while punishing the wicked.

Abraham continued asking the LORD to reconsider His planned destruction of the city and spare the place should He discover fifty righteous people in Sodom (18:24). Abraham basically **repeated the key phrase** “destroy the righteous with the wicked” three times (18:23-25) and urged the LORD twice that such action should be “far” away from Him. Abraham questioned, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (18:25). **Believe the truth** that the LORD is Judge of all the earth and that He is indeed right in all His judgments. **Follow the example** of Abraham and appeal to God’s character when communicating with Him.

The LORD affirmed that He would spare Sodom if fifty righteous persons were found (18:26). Abraham’s continued questioning showed a proper understanding of His relationship to God. He recognized the delicate position of being “dust and ashes” yet speaking to the Lord as he continued to bargain w(18:27-28). He asked to speak again (18:29). He acknowledged the LORD’s right to be angry with him (18:30). He noted his excess and pleaded for the Lord not to be angry (18:31-32). In increments of fives and tens, Abraham lowered the requests from fifty to ten righteous ones for whom the LORD would spare the city. Each time the LORD agreed. Following His pledge not to destroy the city for the sake of ten righteous individuals, the LORD went His way and Abraham returned home (18:33).

Conclusion

In this contact with Abraham, the LORD related two primary messages. **First**, the long-awaited promised child would come within the year to Abraham and Sarah despite their inability to have children. Such a thing is not too hard for God. **Second**, the LORD is a righteous judge. He listens to the cries against sin, is aware of sin, and carries out what is right justice. It is not too hard for God to spare the righteous while punishing the wicked.

Apply It

- **Follow the example** of Abraham and . . .
 - be hospitable.
 - appeal to God’s character when communicating with Him.
- **Believe the truth** that the LORD
 - is Judge of all the earth and that He is indeed right in all His judgments.
 - expects His friends to lead their households in the ways of the LORD.
 - is powerful and that nothing is too hard for Him.
- **Avoid the error** of doubting His message.

PROTECTING THE RIGHTEOUS WHILE PUNISHING THE WICKED

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Nine: Protecting the Righteous while Punishing the Wicked Genesis 19:1-38

Part One: _____ Fell on Sodom (19:1-14)

A. Time for an _____ meal (19:1-3)

B. Time to _____ the cry against Sodom (19:4-14)

1. “Where are the men?” (19:4-7)

2. “Take my daughters” (19:8-9)

3. But the men shut the door (19:10-11)

4. The men said to Lot (19:12-14)

Part Two: _____ Arose in Sodom (19:15-29)

A. Morning arose (19:15-22)

B. When the Sun was risen (19:23-26)

C. Abraham got up (19:27-28)

D. The LORD _____ Abraham (19:29)

Lesson Nine: Protecting the Righteous while Punishing the Wicked Genesis 19:1-38

Aim: The will understand that God can protect the righteous while punishing the wicked.

Introduction

Does it seem that many criminal and immoral activities occur at night? Crime statistics released by law enforcement agencies consistently indicate drunkenness, murder, and sexual assaults occur under cover of darkness. Such was the case in Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:1-14 **repeats** the word “night” as it records what happened just as the sun went down in Sodom until the sun came up on the city’s final morning (Genesis 19:15-19).

In the **immediate context** of this lesson, three men visited Abraham and shared with him that Sodom would be destroyed. The LORD responded to Abraham’s request that the city would be spared if ten righteous people were found in the city (Genesis 18:16-33). Abraham’s nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom. The probability of Sodom’s destruction likely concerned Abraham greatly. In 2 Peter 2:6-10, a **related passage**, the author described Lot as a righteous man and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning to those who would live ungodly lives.

Part One: Nighttime Fell on Sodom (19:1-14)

A. Time for an evening meal (19:1-3)

Genesis 18:22 records that two of the three men visiting Abraham left for Sodom. The LORD, the third visitor, remained and spoke with Abraham. According to 19:1, the two men were angels who arrived in Sodom in the evening as Lot sat in the city’s gate. When Lot saw them, he stood to meet them and bowed himself to the ground. Notice the similarity in how Abraham treated his visitors (18:1-2).

Whereas the men visited Abraham at noon (18:1), they arrived in Sodom just before dark (19:1). Lot insisted that the angels come into his house for the night. They could then get up early and go on their way. In **contrast** to staying in his home, the angels declined his offer and indicated that “we will abide in the street all night” (19:2).

Lot “pressed upon them greatly” (19:3a). This means he urged or insisted that they stay in his home. Notice the **cause and effect**. His insistence caused them to turn in Lot’s direction and enter his house (effect). Lot prepared a feast that included unleavened bread, something made and eaten with haste. Lot must have sensed their urgency. They ate the meal.

B. Time to verify the cry against Sodom (19:4-14)

1. “Where are the men?” (19:4-7)

In the **immediate context**, the LORD told Abraham of His plan to visit Sodom and “see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it” (18:21). In other words, He planned to verify the wickedness of Sodom. In 19:4, the angels experienced the reality of Sodom’s sin. Before the angels and Lot’s family

could lay down for the night, a crowd of men surrounded Lot's house. The crowd included both young and old. The **key word** young could refer to boys or girls aged from infancy to adolescence. In 19:4, the word is used specifically of boys. The **key word** old referred to elderly men. The key phrase "all the people from every quarter" is masculine and understood as referring to men from every part of Sodom. This verifies what the men of Sodom did altogether.

The men called to Lot and asked, "Where are the men which came in to thee this night?" and demanded that he "bring them out unto us, that we may know them" (19:5). The **key phrase** "that we may know them" has long been understood as a reference to perverted sexual relations (i.e., homosexuality). It is true that the original Hebrew wording of the word "know" can refer broadly from simple acquaintance to sexual relations. For example, Jacob asked some men "Do you know Laban?" They responded with "We know him" (Genesis 29:5). However, the same word is used when Adam "knew" his wife Eve and she conceived their first son (Genesis 4:1).

The context of Genesis 19 seems obvious that the men of Sodom intended to "know" the angels in a sexual sense. In 19:6, Lot went outside and shut the door behind him. He pled with the men, "I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly" (19:7). If the men of Sodom simply wanted to get acquainted with the visitors, Lot could hardly call such an act wickedness. Further verification of the sexual context appears in 19:8-9.

2. "Take my daughters" (19:8-9)

What Lot did next is disturbing, to say the least. In fact, it is inexcusable. He offered his virgin daughters to the men. Just as he had pled with the men not to act wickedly toward the angels, Lot pled for them to "let me, I pray you, bring them [my daughters] out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing" because "came they under the shadow of my roof" (19:8). The **key phrase** "good in your eyes" means "whatever gives you pleasure." Ironically, Lot ignored his fatherly obligation to protect his daughters, also under the shadow of his roof.

The men of Sodom showed no interest in Lot's daughters. They became aggressive and demanded that Lot stand back. They ridiculed him as a sojourner or foreigner who came to live in their city and continually act as their judge or lawgiver. They threatened to "deal worse" with Lot than with the angels. Clearly, this confirms their intent to harm the angels. They pushed so hard against Lot that the door was about to break (19:9).

3. But the men shut the door (19:10-11)

But the men reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door (19:10). They struck those men of Sodom near the door with blindness. From the small or least significant to the great or most influential, each was dazed and blinded so that they "wearied" themselves trying to find the door (19:11). Even in blindness, they persisted in their attempts to act wickedly.

4. The men said to Lot (19:12-14)

The scene intensified when the men/angels asked Lot about others in his

family. They urged Lot to “bring” or take sons-in-law, sons, daughters, and any others “out of this place” (19:12). Notice the **causes and effects**. Lot should take his family (effect) “for we will destroy this place” (cause). Also, the destruction is an **effect caused** by the “waxen” or increasingly great cry of Sodom’s wickedness before the face of the LORD. The angels *repeated* that the LORD has sent us to “destroy” the city (19:13).

Lot seemed to comprehend the seriousness of the situation. He went out and spoke or pleaded to his sons-in-law to get up and get out of the place. Lot repeated the warning, “the LORD will destroy this city!” But they thought he was joking and did not heed the warning (19:14).

Part Two: Morning Arose in Sodom (19:15-29)

A. Morning arose (19:15-22)

When morning arose, the angels urged Lot to hurry, get up, and leave town with his wife and two daughters. Being consumed or swept away during the punishment of the city’s iniquity was the consequence of not fleeing (19:15). Remarkably, after all that happened during the night, Lot still hesitated to leave. The angels took a strong hold of his family’s hands (19:16a). The angels’ insistence was a pure act of “the LORD being merciful to him” and they brought Lot out of the city (19:16b). **Avoid the error** of Lot who hesitated at responding to God’s instruction. **Praise God** that He may mercifully take strong hold of you!

The angels gave four commands to Lot and his family: (1) Escape for your lives, (2) Do not look back, (3) Do not stay in the plain, and (4) Escape to the mountains to avoid being consumed (19:17). Again, Lot hesitated by pleading with the angels, “Oh, not so!” (19:18). He appealed to the grace he had found with them and their increased mercy upon him shown by saving his life. He exclaimed, “I cannot escape to the mountains” because some evil could overtake [him] and “I die” (19:19).

Lot urged them to consider allowing him to flee to a small city where “my soul shall live.” He **repeated** the city was “a little one” (19:20). In reply, one of the angels granted the request and pledged not to overthrow the city of which Lot spoke (19:21). Again, he urged Lot to hurry and escape. Notice the **cause and effect**, “I cannot do anything” (effect) until Lot arrived in the city (cause). Also, the city in question, named Zoar, means “a small place” (19:22).

B. When the Sun was risen (19:23-26)

Sunlight fell upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar (19:23). At this point, the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. **First**, He rained brimstone (i.e., sulfur) and fire from heaven upon the cities (19:24). **Second**, He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants, and all that grew from the ground (19:25). The Bible does not explain why Lot’s wife disobeyed the angel’s warning and “looked back” to see the destruction. As a result, however, she became a pillar of salt (19:26). **Avoid the error** of Lot’s wife, who disobeyed the warning of God’s messenger.

C. Abraham got up (19:27-28)

Much occurred between Abraham’s meeting with three visitors at noon (Genesis 18) and later that night in Sodom (Genesis 19). Early the next morning,

Abraham got up and went to the place where he had stood with the LORD the day before (19:27). There, he had asked the LORD a key question, “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (18:23). The LORD promised not to destroy Sodom if He found ten righteous people in the city (18:32). However, ten were not found. Abraham looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, the entire plain, and saw a tremendous amount of smoke rising from that area (19:28).

D. The LORD remembered Abraham (19:29)

At the time He destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham’s concern for the righteous in Sodom. God delivered Lot from the overthrow of the city where he lived (19:29). **Praise God** that He keeps His promises.

Conclusion

A key to Bible study is letting Scripture interpret Scripture. The New Testament provides much help in understanding Genesis 19:1-29. Despite his imperfections, the Bible identifies Lot as a “righteous man.” Second Peter 2:6-10, a **related passage**, recognized the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as examples (i.e., warnings) to those choosing to live ungodly lives. What made Lot “just” or “righteous?” **First**, Lot was distressed by the filthy ways of living in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7). **Second**, Lot was daily tormented by the unlawful deeds he saw and heard in Sodom (2 Peter 2:8). **Believe the truth** that what happened in Genesis 19:1-29 provides evidence that the Lord knows how to protect the righteous while punishing the ungodly (2 Peter 2:9-10). **Avoid the error** of breaking God’s laws.

Apply It

- **Avoid the errors of**
 - hesitating in response to God’s instruction.
 - disobeying the warning of God’s messenger.
 - breaking God’s laws.
- **Praise God**
 - for His mercies that may take strong hold of you!
 - that He keeps His promises.
- **Believe the truth** that the Lord knows how to protect the godly and righteous while punishing the ungodly.

Epilogue (19:30-38)

Lot had pled with the angels to let him avoid the mountains and flee to Zoar. Ironically, Lot left Zoar and went to the mountains for fear of being harmed (19:30). Lot had offered his daughters for rape by the wicked men of Sodom. In 19:31-38, the daughters arranged to intoxicate their father at night and then incite him to commit incest, preserving the family line. What a contrast from Abraham and Sarah who trusted the LORD’s promise to bring about a child although they were physically incapable. Also, notice the contrast between Genesis 13:5-13 and 19:30. Lot went from wealth equal to that of Abraham to living in a cave with basically nothing. Such was the sad end to Lot.

FATHER ABIMELECH?

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What cause/effect relationships appear in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Ten: Father Abimelech? Genesis 20:1-18

Part One: Abraham _____ (20:1-2)

Part Two: God and Abimelech _____ in a Dream (20:3-7)

A. God came and said to Abimelech (20:3)

B. Abimelech responded to God (20:4-5)

C. God said to Abimelech (20:6-7)

Part Three: _____ Meets with Servants and Abraham (20:8-16)

A. Abimelech called his servants (20:8)

B. Abimelech called Abraham (20:9-16)

1. Abimelech's questions and _____ for Abraham (20:9-10)

2. Abraham's response (20:11-13)

3. Abimelech Restores (20:14-16)

Part Four: _____ Prayed to God (20:17-18)

Lesson Ten: Father Abimelech? Genesis 20:1-18

Aim: The learner will recognize that God protected Abraham and Sarah to fulfill His promise that they would bear a son.

Introduction

Have you ever felt close to the Lord one day and then far from Him the next? I wonder if Abraham felt that way as a result of the events in Genesis 18-19, the **immediate context**. One day, he literally visited with the LORD and two angels who confirmed that the long-foretold promise of a son would come to pass within the year (Genesis 18:14). However, the next morning, Abraham saw the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction rising from the plain below (Genesis 19:27-28). Abraham had pleaded on behalf of Sodom and the LORD agreed to withhold destruction if ten righteous people were found in the city. The smoke told Abraham that ten righteous ones could not be found. Abraham's nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom. Although the LORD had delivered Lot, the one righteous man and his family, the Bible does not tell us if Abraham knew of Lot's deliverance. Again, I wonder how Abraham felt going from the promised certainty of a child to the uncertainty regarding his nephew.

Part One: Abraham Journeyed (20:1-2)

The Bible gives no specific reason for why Abraham did what came next. Genesis 20:1 simply indicates that Abraham "journeyed" or pulled out from that place (i.e., the plain or oaks of Mamre). According to the **immediate context**, both before and after Genesis 20, this journey must have occurred within three months of Sodom's destruction since Sarah would conceive soon afterward (Genesis 21:1-2) and the promised birth would come within the year (17:21; 18:10). Where did Abraham go? He traveled southward (also identified as the Negev). He dwelt between Kadesh and Shur and "sojournd" or stayed in a place named Gerar. This was about 50 miles southwest from the plains of Mamre and near the region of Gaza, the land of Philistines.

Abraham spoke of Sarah as "my sister" rather than "my wife" (20:2). Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent for and took Sarah. Scholars understand this to mean that Abimelech made her part of his harem. The passage provides no reason as to why Abimelech wanted her. The name "Abimelech" meant "father is king" and may have been used as a title for Philistine kings.

Part Two: God and Abimelech Meet in a Dream (20:3-7)

A. God came and said to Abimelech (20:3)

But instead of allowing him to keep Sarah, God came to Abimelech in a dream by night (20:3a). The dream included a conversation between God and the king. God said to him, "Behold," a **key word** meaning to pay attention. Notice the **cause and effect**. "Thou art but a dead man" (effect) "for the woman which thou hast taken . . . is a man's wife" (cause; 20:3b). The **key phrase** "thou art but a dead man" implies that Abimelech was already dying.

B. Abimelech responded to God (20:4-5)

The Bible makes it clear that Abimelech had not come near to Sarah (20:4a). This is critical to the story. Think of the implications for the covenant promise that Abraham and Sarah would have a child within the year. What if Abimelech had come near to Sarah and she conceived a child through him? The LORD's promise from 18:14 would have been eliminated and His plan of redemption defeated. Father Abimelech would have replaced Father Abraham. Also, conception between Abraham and Sarah would be impossible if separated. **Praise God** that He protected the redemptive plan from such hypotheticals.

Abimelech asked a question that appears somewhat like Abraham's question regarding Sodom (18:23). Abraham asked if the LORD would destroy the righteous along with the wicked? Abimelech asked the Lord if He would slay or destroy a "righteous" nation? (20:4b). He believed the people of Gerar to be innocent of his error. The **key word** righteous means just or innocent. Although Abimelech alone was guilty of taking Sarah, he saw his actions as having a consequence for his people. Those in authority should have a similar *attitude* regarding their actions.

Although he will admit the error in 20:5, Abimelech continued by presenting a defense to the Lord. **First**, he questioned, did not Abraham say "unto me" that "She is my sister?" **Second**, he simply declared that even Sarah herself said, "He is my brother" (20:5a). **Third**, he affirmed that "in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this" (20:5b). While he admits having taken Abraham's wife, Abimelech believed that both his intentions and actions were free of guilt. The **key phrase** "integrity of my heart" means the integrity of his inner mind or will. The **key phrase** "innocency of my hands" means he never touched her.

C. God said to Abimelech (20:6-7)

God affirmed His knowledge that Abimelech had acted "in the integrity of thy heart," a **repeated phrase** (20:6a). **Believe the truth** that God knows the intent of each human heart. (Jeremiah 17:10). Not only did God know Abimelech's heart, but He restrained the king from "sinning against me" (20:6b). The **key word** sinning means to miss the mark and commonly refers to missing the mark of God's righteousness. Interestingly, God viewed Abimelech's potential sin, intimate relations with another man's wife, as a personal offense against Himself rather than against Abraham or Sarah. **Believe the truth** that adultery is a sin against God. Notice the **cause and effect**. Because of the potential sin against Him, God did not allow Abimelech to touch or come near Sarah (effect; 20:6c). **Praise God** when He intervenes and stops people from sinning against Him.

Although God considered Abimelech's intentions and actions free of guilt, a wrong still needed to be made right. Notice other **causes and effects**. "Now therefore restore [or return] the man his wife" (effect), because he (Abraham) "is a prophet, and he shall pray for" you (causes) and you "shalt live" (effect; 20:7a). The **key phrase** "thou shalt live" meant Abimelech would remain alive. Even with his integrity and innocence, the situation remained extremely serious for Abimelech; in fact, his very life depended upon correcting his error even though some may consider what he did an "honest mistake."

Part Three: Abimelech Meets with Servants and Abraham (20:8-16)

A. Abimelech called his servants (20:8)

In response to the dream, Abimelech rose early the next morning and called all his servants together. He told them about “all these things” God had told him. Notice the **cause and effect**. Sharing with the servants caused his men to become sore or very much afraid (effect; 20:8).

B. Abimelech called Abraham (20:9-16)

Abimelech then called for Abraham. Their conversation likely occurred in the presence and hearing of Abimelech’s servants.

1. Abimelech’s questions and rebuke for Abraham (20:9-10)

First, Abimelech basically asked Abraham, “What have you done to us?” (20:9a). The king blamed Abraham. **Second**, Abimelech then basically asked Abraham, “What have I done to offend or sin against you that caused you to bring this great sin upon me and my kingdom?” (20:9a). The **immediate context** verifies that both God and Abimelech knew his integrity and innocence (20:5-6). Abimelech’s next words implied a rebuke to Abraham’s lack of integrity and innocence, “thou [Abraham] has done deeds unto me that ought not to be done” (20:9b). **Third**, Abimelech asked Abraham to explain what he had seen that would cause him to do “this thing” (i.e., to identify Sarah as his sister rather than his wife; 20:10). For example, had Abraham seen men in Gerar harming husbands and taking their wives?

2. Abraham’s response (20:11-13)

Abraham presented three reasons for his actions toward Abimelech. **First**, Abraham made an assumption. He said, “Because I thought, ‘Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake’” (20:11). **Avoid the error** of making assumptions and prejudgments based upon your own opinions rather than verified facts. One might also ask why Abraham journeyed to Gerar without knowing its view of God? Had Abraham forgotten the consequences of Lot’s move to wicked and ungodly Sodom? Why would he put himself in a situation potentially like that of Lot’s? Abraham’s actions seem to demonstrate a lack of trust in the LORD to keep His promises regarding a child, a promise that necessitated an intimate relationship between Abraham and Sarah.

Second, Abraham revealed that Sarah truly was his half-sister, the daughter of his father but not his mother (20:12). However, Abraham’s clear intent was to deceive by holding back the truth that Sarah was fully his wife. Approximately 25 years earlier, Abraham had used this same “She is my sister” line with Pharaoh in Egypt (Genesis 12:13). In both Genesis 12 and 20, Abraham’s actions seem dishonest and unethical.

Third, Abraham attempted to justify his actions by revealing a strategy he made 25 years earlier “when God caused me to wander from my father’s house” (20:13a). He encouraged Sarah to show him kindness by saying “He is my brother” in every place they would come during their journey (20:13b). Even after a 25-year journey with many direct communications with God and the receipt of His covenant and promises, Abraham fell back to a self-made strategy to handle what he “thought” would be a constant problem.

Grammatically, the **key phrase** “when God caused me to wander” could be translated as “when the gods caused me to wander without purpose.” Some

scholars believe this was an attempt by Abraham to accommodate Abimelech's belief in many gods and basically cast blame elsewhere (i.e., toward "the gods").

3. Abimelech Restores (20:14-16)

Although wronged by Abraham and innocent of sin, Abimelech sought to make things right with Abraham and Sarah. **First**, Abimelech gave sheep, oxen, and servants to Abraham. He also returned Sarah his wife (12:14). **Second**, Abimelech encouraged Abraham to look at his land and invited Abraham to dwell anywhere that pleased him (20:15). **Third**, Abimelech spoke directly to Sarah and explained his efforts to vindicate her by compensating for the wrong. This involved his giving "thy brother" a thousand pieces of silver and Abraham's being a "covering of the eyes." The **key phrase** is figurative, meaning the wrong cannot be seen by anyone with Sarah or any others. This covering created a **cause-and-effect** relationship. These actions by Abimelech (causes) resulted in Sarah's being reproved (20:16). The **key word** reproved means things were set right.

Some scholars notice that Abimelech seemed to come across as more repentant and generous than Abraham. **Follow the example** of Abimelech who made matters right with those involved, even after an "honest mistake."

Part Four: Abraham Prayed to God (20:17-18)

Notice the **cause and effect** that closes Genesis 20. Abraham prayed to God (cause) and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his maidservants (effect). What healing occurred? The **key phrase** "and they bare" implies improved health for both the men and women to have children (20:17).

Another **cause-and-effect** is revealed. The LORD had "closed up" all the wombs of Abimelech's house (effect) because of the events surrounding Sarah, Abraham's wife (20:18).

Conclusion

Sadly, Genesis 20 recorded how God's man showed less integrity and innocence than did a pagan king. In this case, learners should follow Abimelech's example of making restoration even after making an honest mistake or being misled by those who have prejudged them. Mostly, God should be praised for intervening to protect Abraham and Sarah. Such actions ensured the fulfillment of His promise that Abraham would indeed become a father of many nations and ultimately of Jesus Christ.

Apply It

- **Praise God**
 - that He protected the redemptive plan.
 - when He intervenes and stops people from sinning against Him.
- **Believe the truth that**
 - God knows the intent of each human heart.
 - adultery is a sin against God.
- **Avoid the error** of making assumptions based upon your own opinions rather than verified facts.
- **Follow the example** of Abimelech who made matters right with those involved, even after an "honest mistake."

FATHER ABRAHAM

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. Is there a contrast in the passage?
3. What cause/effect relationships appear in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. How is the passage affected by its historical background?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there a sin to confess?
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Eleven: Father Abraham Genesis 21:1-34

Part One: The Birth of _____ (Genesis 21:1-8)

A. As the LORD said (Genesis 21:1-2)

B. Abraham called (Genesis 21:3-5)

C. Sarah said (Genesis 21:6-7)

D. Isaac grew (Genesis 21:8)

Part Two: Casting Out the _____ (Genesis 21:9-21)

A. The problem with the bondwoman (Genesis 21:9-11)

B. The perspective of God (21:12-13)

C. The perspective of the New Testament (Galatians 4:22—5:1)

First, from God's perspective, these two women represent two covenants.

Second, even today, people are born of either the flesh or the Spirit.

D. The _____ of God (21:14-21)

1. Hagar's cry (21:15-16)

2. God heard (21:17-21)

Lesson Eleven: Father Abraham

Genesis 21:1-34

Aim: The learner will understand that God sovereignly caused Abraham to father Isaac as the son through whom He would bless all families of the earth.

Introduction

Twenty-five years after the LORD's covenant with Abraham, the man whose name means "father of many nations," finally fathered the promised son. The original covenant, recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, foretold how Abraham's descendants would be great in number and he would be a blessing to "all families of the earth." The LORD renewed the covenant in Genesis 13:14-17 and 17:1-4.

In His perfect timing, the LORD God demonstrated His sovereignty by causing Abraham and Sarah to conceive when they were beyond human ability to have a child. Similarly, the LORD would cause a young virgin to conceive many years later. Through her promised son, Jesus Christ the seed of Abraham, people of every language and nation are eternally blessed (Revelation 5:9)!

Part One: The Birth of Isaac (21:1-8)

A. As the LORD said (21:1-2)

Notice the **repeated** words regarding what the LORD had "said" or "spoken." These show His power to declare beforehand what will come to be, a **truth to believe**. The LORD declared these in Genesis 18:10, the **immediate context**. **First**, the LORD "visited" or was gracious to Sarah as He had "said" (21:1a). **Second**, the LORD did unto Sarah as "he had spoken" or as He had promised (21:1b). **Third**, according to 21:2, Sarah conceived and gave birth to Abraham's son at the appointed time of which "God had spoken to him" approximately one year earlier as recorded in Genesis 17:21. The **key phrase** "old age" refers to Abraham's extremely old age. Hebrews 11:12, a **related passage**, identified Abraham, "as good as dead" due to his age. Why is this key? It showed God's power to cause a miraculous birth when physically it was impossible. This act foreshadowed the miraculous virgin birth of Christ.

B. Abraham called (21:3-5)

Abraham responded by calling or naming his son "Isaac" (21:3) in obedience to God's command (Genesis 17:19). The name "Isaac" means "he laughs." When Isaac turned eight days old, Abraham circumcised his son "as God had commanded him" (17:12; 21:4). Again, the passage emphasizes Abraham's age. He was a hundred years old at Isaac's birth (21:5).

C. Sarah said (21:6-7)

A year before, Sarah had laughed in disbelief at hearing that she and Abraham would have a child during their old age (18:12-13). She even denied the laughter (18:15). The LORD affirmed that nothing is too difficult for Him and that the promised child would be born (18:14). In **contrast** to her earlier laughter, 21:6 records Sarah's confession that "God hath made me to laugh" (i.e., caused her to rejoice; a **cause and effect**). Sarah further believed that "all" others hearing her good news "will laugh with me" (21:6).

Indeed, it is quite easy at least to smile when thinking of Sarah's obvious joy (21:7). She basically asked, "Who would have thought it?" She recognized a **cause-and-effect** relationship. She basically said, "I have born him a son in his old age" (cause), "Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah would nurse a child?" (effect).

D. Isaac grew (21:8)

Genesis 21:8 simply indicates that Isaac grew and was weaned. According to **historical background**, children in that day were typically weaned off their mother's milk close to the age of three years. When this happened, Abraham responded by hosting a "great feast." This was a large event.

Part Two: Casting Out the Bondwoman (21:9-21)

The events of Genesis 16, a **related passage**, occurred approximately 15 years before those of Genesis 21. Genesis 16 recorded how Sarai encouraged her husband Abram to take Hagar, her handmaid, to be a second wife. Why? They attempted to accomplish by human means what God had promised and would Himself miraculously fulfill in Genesis 21. Sarai regretted the decision almost immediately (Genesis 16:1-5). Hagar conceived and when Abraham was 86 years old, she gave birth to Ishmael (16:15,16).

A. The problem with the bondwoman (21:9-11)

Perhaps during the great feast (21:8), Sarah saw "the son of Hagar the Egyptian" mocking (21:9). Interestingly, Genesis 21 never identifies "the son" directly by his name. In the Hebrew language, the **key word** mocking is similar to the name "Isaac," regarding laughter. However, the word "mocking" is worded grammatically to imply cruel play and possibly improper touch. In other words, Sarah may have seen the approximately 16-year-old Ishmael inappropriately touching the three-year-old Isaac. The New Testament indicates that Hagar's son "persecuted" Isaac. (Galatians 4:29, a **related passage**). "Persecuted" means to harass or molest. It is simply wrong to harm or molest others. **Confess the sin** if your actions resemble those of Hagar's son. Seek help from those in authority if you or others you know have been "mocked" as was Isaac.

The son of Hagar's actions caused Sarah to speak with Abraham and insist that he "Cast out this bondwoman and her son" (effect; 21:10a). Sarah declared that "the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac" (21:10b). The **key phrase** "cast out" carries an intensive meaning to drive away or expel. This created another **cause and effect**. The situation was "very grievous" or unpleasant in the sight of Abraham (effect) because of his son (21:11). Clearly, Abraham loved his son, the son of Hagar.

B. The perspective of God (21:12-13)

It is unclear as to whether Sarah comprehended the full meaning of her statements about Hagar and the son but God agreed with her. God spoke to Abraham and commanded him not to grieve because of the lad or the bondwoman (21:12a).

God also commanded Abraham to "hearken" or listen and obey the voice of Sarah in all that she had said about casting out Hagar and her son. Why would God agree with casting out a mother and son? Notice the **cause and effect**.

Abraham should obey Sarah (effect) because “in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (21:12b). This passage confirms God’s view that Isaac is the promised son rather than Abraham’s steward Eliezer (Genesis 15:2-3) or the bondwoman’s son Ishmael. This is about more than Abraham’s physical descendants. There is also a spiritual descendancy born through faith. According to Romans 9:6-8, a **related passage**, “children of the flesh” (i.e., those born as Israelites) are not “children of God.” They are not the descendants God had in mind. Rather “children of the promise” (i.e., children who believe the promise) are those counted as “seed” or “descendants.” God intended to bless the son of the bondwoman. Notice the **cause and effect**. God promised to make the son a nation (effect) because he was Abraham’s son (21:13). **Historical background** reveals that the Arab people became descendants of Abraham through Ishmael.

C. The perspective of the New Testament (Galatians 4:22 —5:1)

A general rule of Bible study is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. In this case, Galatians 4:22—5:1, a **related passage**, provides essential insight for understanding Genesis 21. Paul’s letter to the Galatians recognizes two spiritual meanings represented by the two women.

First, from God’s perspective, these two women represent two covenants. Hagar, the bondwoman represents a covenant of flesh (i.e., human efforts) to keep the biblical law and gain eternal life. Such efforts lack faith and are insufficient. They simply create spiritual bondage for those seeking to please God by works of the flesh (Galatians 4:23-25). In contrast, Sarah, the freewoman, represents a covenant of promise and rejoicing. It is a covenant of faith rather than works. For believers, “we” are “children of promise” just as was Isaac (Galatians 4:23, 26-28).

Second, even today, people are born of either the flesh or the Spirit. Those born after the flesh attempt to persecute those born after the Spirit just as Ishmael mocked and persecuted Isaac, the promised son (Galatians 4:29). People continue to mock God’s promised Son, Jesus Christ, and those who believe in Him. The New Testament verifies that the bondwoman and her son (i.e., those attempting to please God by human works and mock His promised Son) should be “cast out.” Those represented by the bondwoman’s son “shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman” (Galatians 4:30). They will not inherit eternal life.

Praise God that those saved and born of the Holy Spirit (via faith) are “not children of the bondwoman, but of the free” (Galatians 4:31). The free covenant points to the truth that “Christ hath made us free” and believers should stand fast in such liberty (Galatians 5:1).

D. The provision of God (21:14-21)

Abraham rose early the next morning, gave food and water to Hagar, put it on her shoulders, and sent her away (21:14). Although the text reads almost like her son is a very young boy, remember that Hagar’s son was at least 16 years old. Rather than placing the boy on Hagar’s back, it is more likely that he put food and water on both their backs. This seems to be all they could carry. Hagar departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

1. Hagar’s cry (21:15-16)

After an unspecified amount of time, they used up Abraham’s provisions of

food and water. Hagar “cast” or left the child under a shrub (21:15). She could not bear to see him suffer, went a distance, sat down and said, “Let me not see the death of the child.” There she “lift up her voice and wept” which means she cried loudly (21:16).

2. God heard (21:17-21)

Although Hagar cried loudly, God heard “the voice of the lad” (21:17a). The “angel of God” called to Hagar out of heaven and basically asked, “What’s the problem?” Notice the **causes and effects**. The angel commanded her not to fear (effect) because God had heard the lad’s voice from “where he is” (21:17b). The angel further commanded her to get up and care for the lad (effect) because “I will make him a great nation” (21:18).

Then God opened her eyes so that she could see a well of water nearby. **Praise God** when He opens our eyes to see His provision in our great need. Hagar went and filled the bottle and gave her son to drink (21:19). God was with the child. The boy grew, lived in the wilderness, and became an archer (21:20). His mother “took” or arranged for him to get a wife from Egypt, her homeland, and he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran (21:21). Paran is northeast of Beersheba.

Conclusion

Even today strife exists between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael. If Abraham had simply waited upon the Lord to fulfill His promise, much conflict could likely have been avoided. Although God promised blessings upon all descendants of Father Abraham, He chose Isaac to be the descendant through whom He would bless all families of the earth. The New Testament helps us understand that the blessing for all families does not come through physical but spiritual descendancy. It comes through new birth granted to those who believe by trusting in Jesus Christ.

Apply It

- **Believe the truth** that God is able to declare beforehand what will happen.
- **Confess the sin** if your actions resemble those of Hagar’s son.
- **Praise God**
 - that those saved and born of the Holy Spirit (via faith) are “not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”
 - when He opens our eyes to see His provision when we are in great need.

Epilogue (21:22-34)

Genesis 21:22-34 records a covenant made between Abraham and Abimelech. Because he recognized God’s constant presence with Abraham, Abimelech asked that Abraham “swear” not to deal falsely but to act kindly toward him and his descendants. Abraham said, “I will swear” (21:22-24).

Abraham then “reproved Abimelech” repeatedly because of a well of water that Abimelech’s servants had violently taken. Abraham had dug the well! Although Abimelech denied knowing about the violence, the two made the covenant. Abraham provided an additional seven ewe lambs and explained to Abimelech their meaning as “a witness unto me, that I have digged this well” (21:30).

Abraham called the place “Beersheba” which means “a well of seven” or a “well of oath.” Abraham planted a grove of trees and called there “on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God” and sojourned in the Philistines’ land “many days.”

ABRAHAM’S GREATEST FEAR

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson’s Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What cause/effect relationships appear in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?

Outline for Lesson Twelve: Abraham's Greatest Fear

Genesis 22:1-19

Part One: “_____” . . . “Here I am” (22:1-6)

God spoke to Abraham (22:1b)

A. God _____ Abraham (22:2)

God issued three commands to Abraham.

First, to “take now thy son.”

Second, God told Abraham to “get” himself to the land of Moriah.

Third, God told Abraham to “offer” Isaac as a “burnt offering” upon one of the mountains.

B. Abraham rose up and went (22:3-6)

C. Abraham took the wood (22:6)

Part Two: “My _____” . . . “Here I am” (22:7-10)

A. Abraham’s answer (22:7-8a)

B. Abraham’s act of obedience (22:8b-10)

Part Three: “_____ , _____” . . . “Here I am” (22:11-19)

A. The angel’s first call (22:11-14)

B. The angel’s second call (22:15-19)

Lesson Twelve: Abraham's Greatest Fear

Genesis 22:1-19

Aim: The learner will be inspired to follow Father Abraham's examples of fear, faith, and obedience to God and His Word.

Introduction

What is a parent's greatest fear? It is likely the fear that harm will come to one of his or her children, particularly an "untimely" death. How quickly life can change when tragedy strikes a family. May the Lord provide the peace that passes understanding to those who have experienced such things.

We can only imagine how Abraham felt when God commanded him to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Although Genesis 22 does not describe Abraham's feelings, it does reveal the intent and devotion of his heart. Father Abraham demonstrated a fear even greater than that of losing his son—reverence, and awe of God.

Part One: "Abraham" . . . "Here I am" (22:1-6)

Sometime after the birth of Isaac, the sending away of Hagar and her son, and Abraham's covenant with Abimelech, "God did tempt Abraham" (22:1a). The **key word** tempt is best understood as a test. Remember that God cannot be tempted and neither does He tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13). However, at times God does allow or even sends testing to strengthen His people or to verify their genuineness. God allowed His own Son, Jesus, to be tested in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Genesis 22 records God's testing of Abraham.

A. God spoke to Abraham (22:1b)

God simply spoke His friend's name, "Abraham" to which Abraham replied, "Behold, here I am" (22:1b). The **key phrase** literally reads "Behold, me." I have often wondered, "Would Abraham have responded as quickly and positively if he knew what God was about to require of him?" Regardless, Abraham provides readers with an **example to follow** by committing themselves to answer God's call, even before knowing His will for them.

B. God commanded Abraham (22:2)

God issued three commands to Abraham. **First**, "take now thy son." Notice how God emphasized the relationship between father and son. Indeed, Isaac was Abraham's son, but also his only son, and the son he loved! Remember from the **immediate context** of Genesis 21:10-12 that God affirmed Isaac as the child of promise and called upon Abraham to "cast out" the bondwoman, Hagar, and her son. God chose Isaac alone to be Abraham's heir.

Second, God told Abraham to "get" himself to the land of Moriah. The name "Moriah" appears only in one other place in Scripture (2 Chronicles 3:1). This **related passage** records that King Solomon began to build the LORD's house in Jerusalem upon Mount Moriah. Solomon built the house upon the exact location where the LORD appeared to his father David. Although no one can verify that the events of Genesis 22 occurred at the exact spot where Solomon built the temple, it was close!

Third, God told Abraham to “offer” Isaac as a “burnt offering” upon one of the mountains. God would let him know which one. The **key word** offer means to ascend or climb upward. The **key phrase** “burnt offering” refers to an act of worship that completely burns something to ashes. In other words, God commanded Abraham to send his only son upward by a complete and consuming fire.

C. Abraham rose up and went (22:3-6)

One of the most important rules of Bible study is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. In a **related passage**, Hebrews 11:17 tells readers that Abraham responded to God’s commands in faith. This is key to understanding Genesis 22. Abraham did not delay in obeying God. He “rose up early in the morning,” prepared his donkey, and took his son and two other young men. He “clave” or split wood for the burnt offering. This implies they had enough wood to burn an entire animal. He rose up again and went to the place God had told him (22:3).

On the third day of travel, Abraham looked up and saw the place off in the distance (22:4). He told the young men to stay with the donkey (22:5a). Abraham told the young men, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (22:5b). Although most Bible translations use the word “lad” when referring to Isaac, the term comes from the same root word used of the young men. Scholars believe Isaac was likely at least in his late teens.

Notice Abraham’s incredible expression of faith. “I and the lad will . . . come again to you” (22:5c). Hebrews 11:17-19 reflects upon this very event and credits Abraham’s faith in that he believed “God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19a). Abraham would sacrifice Isaac, but he believed God would bring him back to life! In a figurative sense, that is exactly what happened (Hebrews 11:19b). **Can you comprehend such faith?** It should make us tremble! Simply writing and encouraging readers to **follow the example** of Abraham by having such faith in God seems so inadequate.

D. Abraham took the wood (22:6)

Abraham took the wood and laid it upon Isaac. Similarly, Jesus Christ bore the wood of His cross (John 19:17). Isaac’s ability to carry the wood demonstrates he was not a child. Abraham took the fire in his hand along with a knife. The father and son went together.

Part Two: “My father” . . . “Here I am” (22:7-10)

A. Abraham’s answer (22:7-8a)

Genesis 22:7 records the first words readers see from Isaac. He simply says, “My father” as he prepares to ask an important question. The one God promised to be a father of many nations responded with “Here am I, my son.” Abraham **repeated** the phrase “Here am I” or “Behold me” from 22:1. Isaac observed the presence of “fire and wood” but the absence of a lamb to sacrifice. He asked, “where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” (22:7).

Abraham’s answer establishes one of the greatest theological **truths to believe** in all of Scripture, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (22:8a).

B. Abraham's act of obedience (22:8b-10)

The response seems to have satisfied Isaac. Again, “they went both of them together” (22:8b). They arrived at the designated location and Abraham built an altar, laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid Isaac on the altar and wood (22:9). The **key word** bound referred to the binding of an animal's legs when preparing it for sacrifice. Abraham must have bound Isaac's hands and feet.

Remember that Isaac was a young man and Abraham was probably near 120 years of age. This story not only demonstrates Abraham's faith but also Isaac's! **Follow the example** of this young man who likely could have escaped but instead entrusted himself to his father's faith in God's provision. Isaac's actions foreshadow those of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Jesus could have prayed and been helped by tens of thousands of angels against those attempting to arrest and crucify Him (Matthew 26:53). Instead, Jesus prayed and submitted to His Father's will concerning the “cup” of crucifixion when He said, “nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

With no apparent delay or further words, Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son (22:10). He was obeying the Lord's command and likely planned to slit his son's throat, the typical means by which an animal would be sacrificed. The implication is clear. In Abraham's heart and mind, he was committing the act. He was sacrificing his only son.

Part Three: “Abraham, Abraham” . . . “Here I am” (22:11-19)

A. The angel's first call (22:11-14)

With emphasis, the “angel of the LORD” called out to stop the sacrifice by repeating “Abraham, Abraham!” As he had done twice before in Genesis 22, Abraham responded without delay, “Here am I” (22:11). What an incredible moment it must have been for Abraham, and perhaps Isaac, to hear the angel's voice. Although argued by scholars, many believe that this “angel of the LORD” is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ. If so, imagine the amazing implications of this visit as the only Son and Lamb of God stops the sacrifice.

The angel told Abraham not to lay his hand upon Isaac or do anything else to him (22:12a). Why did the angel stop the sacrifice? Notice the **cause and effect**. Stopping (effect) occurred because “now I know” that you fear God. The **key word** fear means a profound reverence and serious comprehension that God is sovereign and should be trusted and obeyed. Abraham's actions demonstrated his greatest fear, reverence for God, which was above his care for Isaac. By not withholding his son, his only son, from God (22:12b), Abraham passed God's test (22:1).

At that moment, Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. As Abraham predicted in 22:8, God provided for Himself a lamb. Abraham got the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering “in the stead of his son” (22:13). Abraham named the place “Jehovah-jireh” which means “the LORD will provide.” Moses wrote Genesis 22 approximately 600 years after this event. Even so, Moses noted that the mountain's name remained similar at the time of his writing (22:14).

The **key phrase** “in the stead of” refers to a substitution. Instead of sacrificing Isaac, Abraham substituted the ram in Isaac's place. Related passages from the New Testament help tremendously in recognizing that God substituted

Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for our sins. According to 1 Peter 2:21-25, the sinless Christ “bare our sins in his own body.”

Abraham’s act of obedience resembles that of the Heavenly Father. **First**, God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). **Second**, God loved the world so much that “he gave his only begotten Son” so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Genesis 22:13 presents a major **truth to believe**, the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for sins.

B. The angel’s second call (22:15-19)

For a second time, the angel of the LORD called out of heaven (22:15). Notice the **cause and effect**. The angel shared the LORD’s words, “By myself have I sworn” (effect) because Abraham had “done this thing” and not withheld “thy son, thine only son” (22:16a). Hebrews 6:13, a **related passage**, indicates that God swore by Himself “because he could swear by no greater.” The **key word** sworn refers to an oath.

The LORD repeated His covenant promise that He would bless Abraham and multiply his descendants as much as the stars of heaven and the sand upon the seashore. Additionally, Abraham’s seed would possess the “gate” or cities of his enemies (22:17). Again, the covenant includes the promised blessing that all nations of the earth would be blessed by Abraham’s seed because of Abraham’s obedience to the Lord’s voice, a **cause and effect** (22:18).

Just as he promised and believed he would (22:5), Abraham returned to the young men, both he and Isaac. They “went together” to Beersheba where Abraham continued to dwell (22:19).

Conclusion

Abraham obeyed the commandment given him by the LORD. He did so with fear and faith. Today, the LORD still gives commands through His written Word, the Bible. Our faithful obedience to His Word demonstrates our appropriate “fear” of God. **Follow the examples** of Abraham, Isaac, and Jesus who each submitted themselves to God’s will for their lives. Above all, fear the LORD!

Apply It

- **Follow the example . . .**
 - of Abraham’s faith, fear, and obedience.
 - of Isaac’s submission to his father.
- **Believe the truths that . . .**
 - God will provide.
 - Jesus Christ is the substitutionary sacrifice to pay the penalty for your sins.

Epilogue (22:20-24)

Abraham later received word that Milcah had born children to his brother Nahor (22:20). Genesis 22:21-24 simply lists Nahor’s children. However, one of Nahor’s grandchildren is mentioned, a granddaughter. Her name was Rebekah (22:23). She would become a significant figure in God’s fulfillment of His covenant promise to Abraham. She will become Isaac’s wife.

LAND FOR FATHER ABRAHAM

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
2. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there an example to follow?

Outline for Lesson Thirteen: Land for Father Abraham

Genesis 23:1-20, Genesis 24:1-9, Genesis 25:1-10

Part One: Abraham Buried Sarah . . . “in the land of _____” (23:1-20)

A. The years of the life of Sarah (11:31-21:10)

B. Sarah died (23:1-2)

C. Abraham buys a _____ place (23:3-18)

D. Abraham buried Sarah (23:19-20)

Part Two: Unto _____ . . . “will I give this land” (24:1-9)

A. Abraham instructs his servant (24:1-4)

B. Abraham insists that Isaac _____ in the land of Canaan (24:5-9)

Part Three: His Son’s Buried Him . . . “in the cave of _____” (25:1-9)

A. Abraham took a wife (25:1-6)

B. Abraham died and buried (25:7-10)

Lesson Thirteen: Land for Father Abraham

Genesis 23:1-20; 24:1-9; 25:1-11

Aim: The learner will recognize Abraham's faith in God's promises regarding land for his descendants.

Introduction

Most scholars agree that his willingness to offer Isaac as a burnt offering is the climax of Abraham's extraordinary life (Genesis 22:1-18). Genesis 23-25 describes Abraham's final years and serves to transition the book's focus from Abraham to Isaac.

The biblical story of Abraham began in Genesis 11 where he is listed as "Abram" in the genealogy of Noah's son, Shem (11:27). Although his name meant "exalted father," Abram and his wife Sarai had no children. Abram's father, Terah, took Abram, Lot, and Sarai from Ur of the Chaldees "to go into the land of Canaan" but only made it as far as Haran (11:31). Later, Abram obeyed the LORD's command to leave his home country and father's house "unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1).

Throughout their journey, the LORD reminded Abram and Sarai of His covenant promise to bless Abram, his descendants, and all families of the earth (12:2-3). The LORD renewed His promise throughout Genesis. He promised to give Abram multiple descendants (13:16; 17:4-7) and land for both Abram/Abraham and his descendants (13:14-15, 17; 17:8). The LORD changed their names to Abraham and Sarah (17:5, 15) and verified that Sarah would give birth to the son of promise, Isaac (Genesis 17:16, 19).

Again, the covenant also included the promise that Abraham's descendants would possess the land in which he lived as a stranger, "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:8). The **repeated** use of land makes it a **key word**.

Hebrews 11:8-16, a **related passage**, verifies that by faith Abraham obeyed the command to leave his homeland for a place he did not know but would later inherit (Hebrews 11:8). He lived in tents as a stranger in a strange land (Hebrews 11:9). He looked for a city with "foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham could have returned home; however, his actions regarding Sarah's burial, the search of a wife for Isaac, and his own burial demonstrate his faith in God's promise to give his descendants "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" and to be "their God."

Part One: Abraham Buried Sarah . . . "in the land of Canaan" (23:1-20)

A. *The years of the life of Sarah* (11:31 –21:10)

Sixty-two years before Genesis 23:1, Abram and Sarai left Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan (11:31). Although Genesis 12-22 focuses mostly upon her husband, Sarah is also a prominent figure throughout those chapters. Her apparent beauty attracted the attention of both the Egyptian Pharaoh (12:15) and the king of Gerar (20:2). Her inability to conceive a child led her to encourage Abram to seek a child through relations with her maid Hagar (16:1-3). She quickly regretted that

decision (16:4-5).

The LORD changed her name and declared His promise that she would be a “mother of nations” and kings (17:15-16). At 90 years old, Sarah laughed in disbelief when the LORD visited and promised that she would bear a child within the year (18:10-12). Soon after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, she relocated with her husband to Gerar (20:1). Then, the LORD did as He had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son (21:1-2). At some point, her disbelief turned to faith. She considered the Lord “faithful who had promised” that she would bear a son when past the age of childbirth (Hebrews 11:11).

She called upon Abraham to send away both Hagar and Hagar’s son, declaring rightly that “the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac” (21:10). The New Testament recognizes Sarah as a “freewoman” who gave birth through God’s promise rather than through the flesh (Galatians 4:22-23).

B. Sarah died (23:1-2)

Abraham’s beloved wife and companion on his incredible journey, died at the age of 127 years (23:1). She died in the city of Arba (Kirjah-arba), which had been renamed “Hebron” at the time Moses wrote Genesis 23:2. Abraham must not have been present when she died because he “came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her” (23:2b). The word “mourn” means that he beat his chest. “Weep” means he cried over her passing.

C. Abraham bought a burial place (23:3-18)

Abraham stood up before his wife’s body and spoke to “the sons of Heth” (23:3). **Historical background** indicates that these “sons” were also known as Hittites, descendants of Heth. They were the predominant people group in Hebron.

Although the LORD had promised him the land of Canaan (17:8), Abraham addressed the group and referred to himself as a “stranger and a sojourner” with them (23:4a). This characterization is consistent with Hebrews 11:9, a **related passage**. The **key word** stranger refers to a temporary resident. The **key word** sojourner refers to one without rights of citizenship. **Cultural background** indicates that Abraham had no legal right or status, but he asked to be given property to possess as a burial place (23:4b).

In **contrast** to being a stranger and sojourner, the children of Heth declared that Abraham was a “mighty prince” among them (23:5-6a). The **key phrase** means “prince of God” or “God’s elect.” They appear to have respect for Abraham; however, it is difficult to determine their amount of sincerity. Regardless, they spoke the truth. Abraham was God’s elect. The children of Heth offered Abraham “the choice of our sepulchers” and insisted that no one would withhold it from him (23:6b). Again, their level of sincerity is uncertain.

Cultural background determined what happened next. A matter of such sensitivity demanded a mediator. Abraham stood and bowed himself to the people of the land, the children of Heth (23:7). The **key phrase** “in the audience of the people” is repeated several times in this passage and verifies the legitimacy of the business transaction. Abraham spoke and asked the people to mediate on his behalf with Ephron, the son of Zohar (23:8), regarding the “cave of Machpelah...

which is in the end of his field.” Abraham offered to pay for the cave’s full value (23:9).

Ephron was present when Abraham mentioned him and the cave. In the presence of everyone (23:10), he told Abraham, “I give it thee in the presence of the sons of my people” (i.e., “I have already given it to you” or “consider it done”). Ephron added the “field” along with the cave (23:11). Although he said “I give,” he apparently saw an opportunity to make more money by selling more property.

Abraham agreed to pay for the field also as a place to “bury my dead,” a **repeated phrase** (23:13). Ephron stated that the land was worth 400 shekels of silver and acted as though such a price was no big deal by asking basically, “What is that between me and you?” (23:14-15). Shekels refer to a measure of weight rather than coins. Abraham weighed out 400 shekels in the presence of the crowd and with the assistance of a merchant to verify the payment’s accuracy (23:16). The final purchase included a field, cave, and trees in the field (23:17). The purchase was “made sure” or deeded over to Abraham in the presence of the children of Heth (23:17-18, 20).

D. Abraham buried Sarah (23:19-20)

Abraham buried Sarah in the cave which was “in the land of Canaan” (23:19-20). By this, Sarah became the first of Abraham’s family to “rest” in the land. Perhaps Abraham could have taken Sarah back to their homeland. By faith, he decided to stay in the land of promise.

Part Two: Unto Isaac . . . “will I give this land” (24:1-9)

A. Abraham instructed his servant (24:1-4)

Another occasion through which Abraham demonstrated faith in God’s promise for the land of Canaan to become his descendants’ possession occurs in 24:1-9. Abraham was advanced in years and the LORD had blessed him in “all things” (24:1). Abraham spoke to his eldest servant, the one who ruled over all Abraham’s possessions, and said, “Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh” (24:2). The reason for this action is unclear but only someone extremely close and trusted would be instructed to put himself in such a position.

Abraham apparently recognized a sense of urgency to find Isaac a wife. Abraham determined that she must not be a Canaanite. Although Abraham dwelt in Canaan, he insisted that his servant swear by the LORD, God of heaven and earth, not take a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the Canaanites (24:3). In **contrast**, Abraham instructed him to “go unto my country, and to my kindred” to find Isaac a wife (24:4).

B. Abraham insisted that Isaac remain in the land of Canaan (24:5-9)

The servant expressed concern that the woman might not be willing to make the move to “this land” of Canaan. If such was the case, the servant asked if he should bring Isaac back to Abraham’s homeland (24:5). In response, Abraham insisted that his servant “beware” or be on guard that Isaac not be brought to his homeland (24:6).

Notice the **cause and effects** in 24:6-7. Isaac was not to return to Abraham’s homeland (effect; 24:6) *because* the LORD God of heaven, which took

Abraham from his father's house and the land of his kindred, spoke and swore unto him that "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Hebrews 11:15-16, a **related passage**, states that faithful believers, such as Abraham and Isaac, chose to stay in the land because they desired a heavenly country more than they desired a return to their homeland. Abraham stressed to his servant the belief that an angel would go before him and that he would take a wife from there for Isaac (24:7).

Abraham freed his servant from fulfilling the oath if the woman would not willingly follow him back to Canaan. He repeated that "my son" should not be brought to the homeland (24:8). The servant put his hand under his master's thigh and swore as Abraham requested (24:9).

Part Three: His Sons Buried Him . . . "in the cave of Machpelah" (25:1-11)

A. Abraham took a wife (25:1-6)

Abraham took a wife named Keturah (25:1). The passage does not verify when Abraham remarried; however, it indicates that God continued to bless him with the ability to father children after the miraculous birth of Isaac. Genesis 25:2 lists the six sons born to Keturah. Genesis 25:3-4 lists grandsons also descending from Abraham and Keturah.

"Abraham gave all he had unto Isaac" (25:5). However, he did give gifts to the sons of his concubines. Scholars believe the term "concubines" refers to Hagar and Keturah. He also sent his sons away towards the east, away from Isaac (25:6).

B. Abraham died and was buried (25:7-11)

Abraham lived 175 years (25:7). Genesis 25:8 records several things about Abraham's death. **First**, he "gave up the ghost" or breathed his last breath. **Second**, he "died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years" which reflect a good and satisfying life. **Third**, he "was gathered to his people" (i.e., gathered with his fathers who already died). God had promised such an end for Abraham (15:15). Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham "in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron" (25:9). This was the field Abraham purchased to bury Sarah his wife (25:10). After Abraham's death, the immediate context turns toward God's blessing of Isaac (25:11) as He continues the story of redemption through Abraham's descendants.

Conclusion

Abraham hoped for more than a piece of land. He hoped for what God was building and had in mind for the land of Canaan. He longed to know how God would use the land to bless all families of the earth through his descendants. How did God use Abraham, his descendants, and the land to bless all families of the earth? Jesus Christ is the answer.

Apply It

- **Follow the example** of Abraham
 - who acted by faith according to the LORD's promises
 - by investing in earthly things useable for God's kingdom



Baptist Expositor

Father Abraham

Genesis 12—25



Baptist
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House

Leader

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Teacher/Leader's Guide

Please note: The purpose of the leader's guide is to provide teachers/leaders with direction in teaching the Bible passage. **It is designed to be flexible enough to be used in varied formats (Sunday school, small group, individual or family).** This leader's guide contains everything found in the student book plus answers and teaching plans. The *Guided Bible Study* questions are answered with content from the comments in the lesson. Directions and additional comments are highlighted for leaders. **The teacher does not have to cover all the material presented for each lesson. Choose the format or method that agrees with your teaching style.**

Bible Study is Not Just for Sunday Morning!

This Bible Study curriculum can be used in different ways. Consider the following opportunities:

Sunday School (Matthew 28:18-20)

This curriculum can be used in a Sunday school class. Using the *Guided Bible Study*, the learner should read the passage, answer the *Guided Bible Study* questions, read the lesson in the student book, and participate in the class session. The class session can either (1) review the learner's answers to the *Guided Bible Study* or (2) study the student book commentary in class or (3) review the *Lesson Outline* option contained in the leader's guide. This page presents the verse-by-verse teaching outline and asks discussion questions. The *Lesson Outline* may also be copied as a handout for learners.

Small Groups (Romans 12:3-8)

Small groups that meet any day of the week can use this curriculum as described above. Interaction with the inductive questions and/or discussion questions from the *Lesson Outline* encourages active learning in the small group setting. A single lesson can be divided into two sessions: the first interacting with the *Guided Bible Study* and the second studying the student-book comments in depth.

DiscipleWay Groups (2 Timothy 2:2)

Those who are familiar with DiscipleWay will easily see the *Guided Bible Study* questions are taken from the complete list of inductive questions. *DiscipleWay* groups can study the passage using all the questions and use the student book as a trustworthy reference.

One-on-one Mentoring (Proverbs 27:17)

Individuals in mentoring relationships can use the curriculum for joint study. Mentors can use the curriculum to teach the discipline of effective Bible study. The *Guided Bible Study* can encourage discipleship relationships.

Family or Individual Devotions (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

The curriculum can be used on a daily basis for personal or family devotional study. The Bible study lessons can be studied in parts throughout the week. Use the *Daily Bible Study Guide* to find your own daily Bible readings by reading the context of the passage being studied and locating related passages. Parents can use the *Guided Bible Study* questions to model love and appreciation for God's Word before their children. As children grow older, they can participate in reading and answering questions.

Introduction to Genesis

Authorship

Both Jews and Christians accept Moses as the human author of Genesis. He was the great leader of Israel who led the people out of Egypt and known as the great law-giver. New Testament writings confirm Moses's authorship of Genesis. Jesus describes Moses's writings as the "book of Moses" in Mark 12:26, and the "law of Moses" in Luke 24:44.

Date and Place of Writing

The forty years of wilderness wandering is a likely time frame for the writing of Genesis. Many scholars believe 1446 BC to be an accepted date of the "exodus," when Moses led Israel out of Egypt. This would place the wilderness wanderings from 1446 to 1406 BC.

Type of Literature

Genesis is one of the five Old Testament books known as the Law. The Law, also known as the Pentateuch (PEN-tuh-tyook) meaning "five-volume book" (Genesis-Deuteronomy) contains the laws given by Moses to Israel. Other portions of the Law contain narrative sections which involve major characters with their failures and successes, from which lessons can be learned. Key names and their stories in Genesis include Adam and Eve, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Genesis 12–25 focuses on Abraham and the arrival of Isaac, the promised son.

Purpose of Genesis

The purpose of Genesis can be summed up in the phrase, "a book of beginnings." Genesis 1:1 begins with the phrase, "In the beginning," which is one word in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament. God used Genesis to record the beginning of the world and universe through Creation and the beginning history of man. This particular study will cover *Genesis 12–25: Father Abraham*, a key figure in the line of humanity through whom the Messiah would come.

Unit Aim

There is a strong emphasis in Genesis 12–25 on God's covenant with Abraham. The covenant involved Abraham becoming a blessing to the nations, God blessing Abraham with many descendants, and God blessing his descendants with the land of Canaan. "Father Abraham" and his wife Sarah would have a son named Isaac, through whom God's everlasting covenant would continue.

A key verse comes in Genesis 15:6, which highlights the faith of Abraham. The climax of Abraham's story comes in Genesis 22 where Abraham, by faith and fear of the LORD, was willing to sacrifice his promised son. The LORD, however, stopped him and provided a sacrifice. In this unit, *the learner will understand that through Abraham, God's covenant blessing and plan of redemption for the world would move forward.*

Instructions for Using this Curriculum

Prepare to Lead: Teacher/Leader Preparation (Leaders should prepare to lead before every lesson.)

Overview

Read the passage to be studied before every lesson. Review the Introductions to Genesis included here or in the study Bible of your choice. Review the previous lesson's aim and look ahead to the next lesson's aim.

Take Aim

The aim is what the learners should *know*, *feel*, or do as a result of the learning experience.

1. The **general aim** for *Baptist Expositor* is to expound the passages studied and for learners to know how to study the Bible for themselves.
2. The **unit aim** for this study: The learner will understand that through Abraham, God's covenant blessing and plan of redemption for the world would move forward.
3. A **lesson aim** is supplied for each lesson as a specific way to achieve the overall unit aim.

Keep in mind that "learning experience" is much more than the time spent in a study session. Learning experience includes what the learner does before, during, and after a session together. For example, the learner should read the passage, do the *Guided Bible Study*, read the lesson in the student book, participate in the class session, and do homework. This can be done in a traditional Bible study class, a small group, or even family devotions with few modifications.

Do Your Own Inductive Bible Study

As teacher/leader it is important for you to study the Bible passage better than the most prepared learner. Do a complete inductive study of the passage – not just the selected questions in the student book. You will then be better equipped to lead learners in the Guided Bible Study section. *DiscipleWay Inductive Bible Study Briefly Explained*, with the complete list of inductive questions, is included on the following pages. Use the questions for your study. (You may make copies and distribute to learners.)

DiscipleWay Inductive Bible Study Briefly Explained

(This explanation is condensed from the *DiscipleWay Bible Study Lessons 3, 4, and 5*).

The process of inductive bible study is accomplished by answering basic inductive questions. These questions appear below along with explanation that will aid you in answering them. Although every question should be asked in every study, **not all the questions will have an answer**. In this event **do not force an answer, simply move to the next question**.

Observation

The inductive method of Bible study involves three major steps with the first being *Observation*. The purpose of *Observation* is to gain a sense of what the passage is saying without getting into the details.

1) *Who is the author of the book being studied?* At times the answer to this question appears within the text itself in what is referred to as the "salutation." At other times the author's identity is not specifically stated in the text. In instances such as these, the author's identity may be determined by consulting reference works outside the Bible. Even then, however, you may find no definite answer, but that is ok. Just move to the next question.

2) *When was the book written and under what circumstances?* As with question one this information can often be found in the salutation of the book you are studying. For example, many of the prophets identify what king was in power during the time of the prophet's writing. In other cases, you may be forced to find

the answer to these questions within the book itself.

3) *Who is involved in the passage being studied?* To answer this question, simply identify the main characters that appear in the passage to be studied. Look for the names of individuals and/or groups of individuals (disciples, Pharisees, etc.).

4) *Who is speaking and being addressed in the passage?* Although the answers to these questions can also be found in the opening verses (salutation) of many books of the Bible (1 Corinthians 1:1-2 for example), narratives such as those found in the Gospels may require you to read the verses which precede the passage you are studying to acquire pertinent information.

5) *What are the key words and/or phrases in the passage?* When answering this question identify those nouns, verbs or descriptive phrases which play a major role in shaping the author/speaker's original intent in a passage. Give special attention to those which are repeated as well as those whose meaning is not readily apparent or obvious.

6) *What words or phrases are repeated?* By answering question 5, you will have more likely answered this question. However, for the sake of being thorough, scan through the passage again identifying those terms or phrases used two or more times.

7) *What is being compared and/or contrasted in the passage?* A *comparison* occurs when word, thought, truth, or action is being likened to something else in order to make a point more clear. Although they are not always a definite sign of a comparison, the terms "like" and "as" are good indicators to watch for. In Psalm 1:3, for example, the "blessed man" is described as being "*like a tree planted by rivers of water.*" *Contrasts* occur when a word, thought, truth, or action is set alongside its opposite. Conjunctions such as "but" are often (but not always) good indicators to look for.

8) *What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?* Cause and effect relationships occur when one portion of a passage (cause) leads to or results in another portion of the passage (effect). Cause and effect relationship are often (but not always) indicated by the following terms: *therefore, for, that, for this reason, etc.*

9) *What literary form is used in the passage?* Literary forms can be divided into two main groups: poetry and prose. Prose includes historical narrative, gospel, letter, and prophecy. Poetry includes psalms and wisdom literature.

Interpretation

The purpose of *interpretation* is to determine what a passage of scripture means. As with the step of observation, this purpose is accomplished by addressing certain inductive Bible study questions. Those questions appear below along with explanation and examples that will provide you with help in answering them.

1) *How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?* As timeless as the message and meaning of the Bible is, one must not ignore the fact that it was addressed to specific people who lived in specific places during specific periods in human history. Because certain cultural, social, geographical, and political factors often exerted an influence on what biblical writer's both had to say and meant to say, Bible students must be mindful of those factors when interpreting scripture. Although background information is at times implied in the text being studied, familiarizing oneself with it usually requires the use of reference materials outside the Bible such as commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and works devoted to historical-cultural issues of Bible lands.

2) *What is the immediate context of the passage?* When referring to “context,” we mean the “setting” in which a passage occurs. The context of a passage can be as broad as the entire Bible and as narrow as the paragraph in which the passage occurs. Here the concern lies with identifying the “immediate” context of a passage of scripture. Steps which should always be taken to identify the immediate context of a passage include: 1) reading the chapter which precedes and follows the passage being studied (or the entire book if it is only a few chapters), and 2) conducting a thorough observation of the passage. Be especially vigilant of repeated words and/or phrases that might indicate an ongoing theme.

3) *What key terms or ideas need to be researched?* Here you will work to identify the precise meaning of key terms or phrases from your observation whose meaning influences the author’s intent and/or whose meaning is not readily apparent. Like question one above, this type of research requires the use of reference materials outside the Bible such as an exhaustive concordance and/or a Bible dictionary.

4) *How does the passage relate to its immediate context?* Here you will utilize all the knowledge you have acquired from observation and interpretation to determine how the passage you are studying *specifically* contributes to the major issue being addressed by the author or speaker.

5) *Are there any related passages which need to be studied?* A long-standing rule of Bible study is that one should “always allow scripture to interpret scripture.” One way this is accomplished is by studying passages “related” to your primary text of consideration. One of the best ways to identify related passages is by cross referencing scripture with scripture. Some Bibles also provide cross references in their margins that can be helpful.

6) *Summarize the passage in your own words.* With the steps of observation and interpretation complete, you simply put into your own words what the passage means.

Application

The purpose of *application* is to determine how to put into practice the meaning of a given passage of scripture.

1) *Is there a promise to claim or a truth to believe?* When answering this question look for specific promises or truths that are stated obviously in the text.

2) *Is there an example to follow?* The answer to this question lies in identifying specific examples alluded to in the passage that are worthy of following.

3) *Is there an error to avoid?* In contrast to the previous question, this one requires you to identify specific examples in the text that God would have you not imitate.

4) *Is there an attitude to change or a sin to confess?* This question must be answered in two ways. In one sense you must deal with it objectively by determining if the passage you are studying reveals a specific attitude or behavior that is unacceptable before God. With these things in mind you would then examine your own heart and determine if your attitude needs adjustment or if there is an area of sin in your life that you need to acknowledge before God and turn from.

5) *Is there a command to obey?* A command is a verb in the imperative/volitional mood used by an author/speaker to call for a deliberate course of action. Some commands appear in the form of a prohibition and call for abstinence or cessation from certain attitudes or activities.

6) *Is there something to praise God for?* Here you are simply identifying anything you view as a motive for praising God.

Suggestions for Leading the Lesson

Read the Scripture Passage.

Leaders know that the passage of scripture should be read at the beginning of the session. It should be done in such a way that recognizes the Word of God is valued and clear.

Read the Lesson Aim.

The leader should construct an aim for the lesson that “sets up a target” for the learning experience. Everything the leader does should contribute to the aim. It is helpful for learners to know the aim as well. The aim is what the learners should know, feel, or do as a result of the learning experience. Most lessons will have a knowledge aim but some may include feeling or doing. Application at the end of the lesson should “hit the target” set up by the aim.

Lead the Lesson.

There are **three options** for teachers/leaders. Leaders may use any, either, or a combination of options. The teacher does not need to do all three in a single lesson.

Option One: Guided Bible Study

Teachers/leaders have the option to use the class session to review the *Guided Bible Study* alone. This is basically a discussion format that focuses upon facts given in the Bible passage being studied. Leaders should avoid asking “What does this passage *mean to you*?” That becomes very subjective or opinionated. Your goal is to focus a learner’s attention upon the Bible through observing what it actually says, and considering its context, and it’s intended application. Learners should be encouraged to answer the guided questions in advance and the class session can be a stand-alone study used to discuss their answers. The commentary in the student book can be used for reference and help learners discover answers to the Guided questions.

Option Two: Lesson Outline

Follow the *Lesson Outline* page included for each lesson. The one-page outline matches up with the lesson commentary (usually the last four pages of a lesson), discussion questions, and main points of the Bible passage. Learners can use the lesson commentary to find answers to the outline’s fill-in-the-blanks. Learners should still be encouraged to answer the *Guided Bible Study* questions in advance of the class session.

Option Three: Commentary

Follow the **Explore the Commentary in the Student Book** in this leader’s guide.

Leaders may conduct a more traditional class session using the **Lead the Lesson** directions. Students should be encouraged to study their lessons by answering the *Guided Bible Study* questions in advance of the class session. The leader may refer to the questions and answers during the traditional class session that examines the commentary in the student book.

Get Attention.

Learning readiness is especially important for the traditional classroom model. Learners may not come to class ready to learn. An opening illustration, example, or activity will help them get ready. A **Get Attention** activity is provided for each lesson or leaders may create one of their own.

Use the Lesson Outline

You may use the optional *Lesson Outline*. Leaders may use the one-page outline, Lesson Outline, which provides a verse-by-verse outline of the main points of the Bible passage and discussion questions to ask learners. Leaders can present the outline in a method that is appropriate for them (lecture, discussion, or small groups).

Explore the Commentary in the Student Book

This leader's guide is designed to assist the leader in helping learners compare their answers to the *Guided Bible Study* with the commentary. Ask learners to answer bolded questions found in the in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to the *Guided Bible Study* questions. In the Student Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in **bold print**, key words will be underlined, *related passages*, *context*, etc. will appear in italics. Additional comments and suggestions for leaders are found only in the Leader's Guide.

Make Application

Only after observation and proper interpretation, can appropriate application be made. Review the application questions from the *Guided Bible Study* and suggestions made for specific application at the end of the lesson. Ask learners to make application personal in their lives.

Daily Bible Study Guide

Specific Daily Bible Readings are not prescribed in this curriculum. Instead, a *Daily Bible Study Guide* is offered to teach learners how to use context and related passages to create their own daily readings. Direct learners to fill in the guide as they prepare for the upcoming lesson. If the lesson is on Sunday, instruct learners to follow instructions on the chart beginning the Monday before the lesson. If the lesson is on any other day of the week, instruct them to begin 6 days before the lesson.

Daily Bible Study Guide

Following a Daily Bible Reading guide is a good method of Bible intake.
A Daily Bible Study guide is even better!

Find your own daily Bible readings by reading the context of the passage
being studied and locating related passages.

This page is intended for reuse with each lesson. So, making copies or finding your own method to journal answers may work well for you.

Day of the Week	What to Read.	Fill in Bible Reference
Day 1 (Monday)	Immediate Context: Read the preceding verses or chapter of the passage to be studied. (If no verses or chapter precedes the passage being studied, read the passage itself.)	
Day 2 (Tuesday)	Immediate Context: Read the verses or chapter which follows the passage being studied.	
Day 3 (Wednesday)	Read a related passage. (Study Bibles usually provide cross references in their margins.)	
Day 4 (Thursday)	Read a related passage. (Find where a key word or phrase is used elsewhere in the Bible. Words can be found in a concordance.)	
Day 5 (Friday)	Read a related passage. (Read a related passage referenced in the lesson comments.)	
Day 6 (Saturday)	Read the passage in context. (Read the preceding verses, the passage, and the following verses.)	

Suggestion for a Wednesday evening service (or a mid-week Bible Study): If teaching the lesson on Sunday, instruct learners to follow instructions on the chart beginning the Monday before the lesson. For a **Wednesday evening service**, review the student's progress on Days 1 and 2, when they found and read the *Immediate Context* of the passage being studied. Wednesday is Day 3 so find and discuss related passages. Practice finding *related passages* using cross references and concordances. Instruct students to continue to search out *related passages* on Days 4 and 5.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson One: Promises and Blessings

Read Genesis 12:1-9

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that the Lord promised to bring untold blessings to the world through the obedience of Abraham, the forefather of the Hebrews and the Christ.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 12:1-9

Lesson 1

PROMISES AND BLESSINGS

GUIDED BIBLE STUDY

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. Who is speaking and being addressed in this passage?
The LORD Spoke to Abram (12:1-3).
2. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
Bless, families, seed, south/
3. What is being contrasted in this passage?
Blessing in contrast to cursing (12:3).
4. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?
God promised to bless those (effect) who bless Abram (cause) and to curse (effect) those cursing Abram (cause; 12:3).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
The land of Canaan was already occupied by people groups (12:5b).
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
Abram is introduced in Genesis 11:26-32. This passage tells us of Terah, who fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

→ Bless means to endow one with the ability to prosper. Families refers to different ethnicities and nations. Seed in this context refers to one's offspring. South refers to the Negev or south country.

→ Paul refers to Abraham as the father of those who believe (Romans 4:16). God redeems people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a promise to claim or a truth to believe?
Believe that all families of the earth have been blessed through Abram (12:3).
2. Is there an example to follow?
of Abram who (1) obeyed the Lord's command (12:4); (2) followed God's plan for his life (12:4-5a); (3) called upon the name of the Lord (12:8).
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
That He has a plan to bless the earth (12:3b).

Get Attention: Review the Introduction to Genesis and the Unit Aim for this series of lessons: There is a strong emphasis in Genesis 12—25 on God's covenant with Abraham. The covenant involved Abraham becoming a blessing to the nations, God blessing Abraham with many descendants, and God blessing his descendants with the land of Canaan. "Father Abraham" and his wife Sarah would have a son named Isaac, through whom God's everlasting covenant would continue.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson One: Promises and Blessings Genesis 12:1-9

Part One: The LORD Spoke to Abram (12:1-3)

A. The LORD gave a command to Abram (12:1)

B. The LORD promised to Abram (12:2-3)

Part Two: Abram Obeded the LORD (12:4-6)

A. Who and what Abram took (12:4-5a)

B. Where Abram went (12:5b-6)

Part Three: The LORD Appeared to Abram (12:7)

A. The LORD promised the land (12:7a)

B. Abram built an altar (12:7b)

Part Four: Abram continued His Journey (12:8-9)

A. Abram journeyed to the mountain (12:8)

B. Abram journeyed to the south (12:9)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson One: Promises and Blessings Genesis 12:1-9

Aim: The learner will understand that the Lord promised to bring untold blessings to the world through the obedience of Abraham, the forefather of the Hebrews and the Christ.

Introduction

Have you ever decided to go on a trip with your family but had no clue about your ultimate destination? While some may enjoy such an adventure, most people prefer mapping out the details of their trip. The LORD called upon Abram to go on such an unmapped journey. The LORD certainly knew where Abram's journeys would lead him, but Abram had no such details when he left home.

We were first introduced to Abram in Genesis 11:26-32, the **immediate context**. This passage tells us of Terah, who fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. They lived in Ur of the Chaldees, part of modern-day southern Iraq. Haran died in this land leaving behind his son Lot. Abram and Nahor took wives named Sarai and Milcah, respectively. Terah took his family and settled in Haran (In Hebrew, the place name is pronounced kuh-rah-n). The mention of Abram in this passage is important as the opening of Genesis 12 begins to recount the story of Abram, which becomes the focus of the thirteen lessons contained in this book.

Abram's name means "exalted father," which is ironic since the Scripture declared his wife Sarai as barren (11:30). Barrenness carried a stigma of shame in their culture, which likely added stress to their lives. God will later change Abram's name to Abraham (Genesis 17:5), which means, "father of a multitude." The name change signifies the many descendants who would eventually come from Abraham, including those of the faith of Abraham. In Romans 4:16, a **related passage**, Paul refers to Abraham as the father of those who believe. Father Abraham would indeed have many descendants, both physical and spiritual.

This first lesson focuses upon God's initial contact with Abram when He gave him pertinent information about his future and the future of his descendants. These opening verses of Genesis 12 help to propel forward God's story of redemption. It is a story that permeates the whole of Scripture, as the LORD recounts promises and blessings to Abram that would eventually impact the world.

Part One: The LORD Spoke to Abram (12:1-3)

A. The LORD gave a command to Abram (12:1)

Abram's first recorded encounter with the LORD involved a command to leave his home country, a place where he had settled down with his wife Sarai. Notice carefully how God's command moves from broad to narrow. Abram was to leave: (1) his country, (2) his relatives, and (3) his father's house (12:1). This was God's way of saying that He wanted Abram to leave behind a familiar place and people and go to a new place that God would show him. How difficult it must have been to leave the familiar surroundings of home and his relatives. Can you imagine God telling you to leave everything and everyone familiar to you for an unknown destination? This was God's command to Abram.

Leader's Guide: Abram's name is changed to Abraham in Genesis 17:5. This study will refer to him as Abram until we get to 17:5.

Leader's Guide: Here is a pronunciation guide for the names mentioned in this paragraph: Terah (tare-uh); Nahor (nay-hore); Chaldees (kal-dees); Sarai (sar-eye); Milcah (mill-cuh).

Leader's Guide: In English, the word *Haran* is both spelled and pronounced the same. It can refer to a person or a place. In Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament), the personal name is pronounced **huh-rah-n**, while the place name is pronounced *kuh-rah-n*.

Leader's Guide: You will notice in your English Bible that the term "LORD" is in all capital letters. This is the way that modern English texts signify the personal name of God that is sometimes referred to as Jehovah or Yahweh.

Leader's Guide: The Bible does not identify what form God used to address Abram, whether it was a dream, vision, or direct encounter.

Leader's Guide: The *Baptist Expositor* teaches you to look for commands to obey in a passage. While there is a command in this passage, it is specific to Abram and not one that is intended to be repeated by believers today.

Leader's Guide: There are several components to a covenant, but this is intended to be a simple definition. Other components of God's covenant with Abram will be noted in later lessons.

Leader's Guide: The other major covenants we see in Scripture include God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:9-17), Moses (Exodus 19:4-6), David (2 Samuel 7:8-17), and the New Covenant secured through Christ's death (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:7-13).

B. The LORD promised to Abram (12:2-3)

The LORD's command for Abram to leave his country, relatives, and father's house was not all that the LORD said when He **addressed** him. God had big plans for Abram. What follows is often understood as the Abrahamic Covenant. While the word "covenant" does not appear in this text, other Scriptures such as Leviticus 26:42 refer to it as a covenant. What is a covenant? A covenant is when one party promises to do something for another party. There are two types of covenants described in Scripture. **First**, "conditional" covenants occur when the party receiving a promise must meet certain obligations, such as God's covenant with Israel in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 28-29). **Second**, "unconditional" covenants, such as the one God made with Abram, occur when no conditions must be met to receive the promises. This covenant God made with Abram appears as a series of promises with a command in between them.

1. A covenant promise to make him a great nation (12:2a)

God first promised to make Abram a great nation (12:2). Abram would have been familiar with the concept of nations as he was surrounded by many nations such as Egypt and the ones in Canaan. What an impressive promise to become a nation, but not just any nation, a "great" nation! Of course, to become a nation, Abram would need many descendants. To have many descendants, Abram would need to have his first son, but Sarai was barren (11:30).

2. A covenant promise to bless him (12:2b)

Secondly, God promised to bless Abram personally (12:2b). The **key word** bless means to endow one with the ability to prosper. God's blessings upon a person can come in all shapes and sizes. God can choose to prosper us materially and/or spiritually. For Abram, it would certainly include both as he would have many descendants (15:5), receive God's righteousness (15:6), and accumulate goods (14:16). **In what ways has God blessed you?**

3. A covenant promise to make his name great (12:2c)

Not only did God promise to make Abram a great nation, but the third promise included making his name great (12:2c). One's name is often tied to one's reputation. Scripture mentions his name 311 times, with 69 of those occurring in the New Testament. Jews, Christians, and even Gentile groups consider Abram (or Abraham) a great figure from history. **What sort of reputation does your name bear?**

4. A covenant promise of blessing and cursing (12:2d-3a)

Before mentioning the final three promises, God inserted a second command. God **first** commanded Abram to leave his country (12:1). The **second** command involved Abram being a blessing (12:2d). This command could be translated, "and so you must be a blessing." Why is it that Abram must be a blessing? God's plans for Abram will dictate God's blessings upon the world through the coming of the Messiah. What happens with and through Abram will impact the world. The command that Abram must be a blessing leads to God's next three promises.

Promises four and five will be considered together. As a **cause and effect**, God promised positively to bless those (effect) who bless Abram (cause; 12:3a). The same promise of God's prospering Abram will be for those who treat Abram well. As a **contrast**, however, from a negative standpoint and stated as another **cause and effect**, those who curse Abram (cause) will be cursed by God (effect; 12:3a). Two different Hebrew words are translated "curse" in this verse. The first Hebrew word for curse means to treat lightly or with contempt. The second word means to place under a ban or to remove one from the power of blessing. Those who treat Abram lightly or with contempt will have God's favorable hand removed from them. This reinforces the fact that these promises involve God's protection for Abram to ensure that he will indeed be a blessing.

Leader's Guide: Many have interpreted this verse to mean that even the nation of Israel today should be included in this promise of cursing and blessing, thus we should bless Israel so as not to fall under God's curse or ban. However, this promise is singular (as observed in the Hebrew grammar) to Abram and God's protection for him. The true descendants of Abram are his spiritual descendants of the faith (i.e., believers).

5. A covenant promise to bless the families of the earth (12:3b)

The sixth and last promise involves a blessing to the families of the earth. The **key word** families refers to different ethnicities and nations. God's blessing to Abram would impact the nations of the world, a great **truth to believe**. The Messiah would eventually come through Abram's family line (Matthew 1:1-2; Luke 3:34). Jesus's death and resurrection would mean untold blessings for the world in terms of eternal redemption. In Revelation 5:9 a **related passage**, God redeems people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." **Praise God** for His plan to bless the earth in this way!

Part Two: Abram Obeyed the LORD (12:4-6)

A. Who and what Abram took (12:4-5a)

A command is only as good as the recipient who obeys it. Stated as a **cause and effect**, Abram departed (effect) as the LORD commanded him (cause; 12:4a). What perfect obedience we witness by Abram! His complete obedience is emphasized in three ways: (1) His willingness to do what God said; (2) His willingness to go despite his age of 75 years; and (3) His taking all which he possessed. Abram was not going on a short-term journey, but he was departing permanently, thus he took his wife, nephew, and all the substance or goods they acquired in Haran along with other people as well. **Are you willing to follow Abram's example of following God's plan for your life?**

B. Where Abram went (12:5b-6)

Their journey would take them to the land of Canaan (12:5b). According to the **historical context**, this land was already occupied by people groups. This mattered not to God, for the land belonged to Abram and his descendants based upon God's covenant promise. In the land of Canaan, Abram makes it as far as Sichem (syeh-come) or Shechem (sheh-come) and the plain or oak of Moreh (12:6a). The word plain actually refers to a tree, thus some translations have it as the "oak of Moreh." According to the **historical context**, pagan gods were worshipped under such trees. With the addition that the Canaanite was "then in the land" (12:6b), this lets the reader know that Abram and his people were now in enemy territory.

Leader's Guide: Many scholars refer to this as the terebinth tree of unknown species. It seemed to have been a large tree that spreads out wide, thus some modern translations refer to it as an oak (see the Holman Bible Dictionary, "Terebinth," p. 1334).

Leader's Guide: The **key word** seed in some contexts refers to plant life such as in Genesis 1:11, 29; 8:22. In other contexts, such as the one in 12:7a, it refers to descendants or offspring. The same word for seed was also used in Genesis 3:15 to refer to the promised seed that would crush the serpent's head.

Leader's Guide: The King James Version mentions this as "Hai," other versions refer to this place as "Ai." This would be a place eventually conquered by the people of Israel after entering the land of Canaan (Joshua 8:18).

Leader's Guide: The original Hebrew word is pronounced Negev in English.

Part Three: The LORD Appeared to Abram (12:7)

A. The LORD promised the land (12:7a)

Now that Abram was in the land, God appeared to him and promised that He would give this land to his seed or descendants (12:7a). The **key word** seed in this context refers to one's offspring. Promise upon promise and blessing upon blessing, God was certainly revealing His favor toward Abram and his descendants.

B. Abram built an altar (12:7b)

How does one respond to God after hearing of such wonderful promises and blessings? The best way to respond is through worship. In the form of a **cause and effect**, after Abraham heard the LORD's promise of land (cause), he built an altar (effect; 12:7b). In Genesis 8:20, a **related passage**, Noah also built an altar to the LORD after God saved him and his family during the worldwide flood. **What are some reasons you should worship God today?**

Part Four: Abram Continued His Journey (12:8-9)

A. Abram journeyed to the mountain (12:8)

Abram's time of sojourning through the land of Canaan was not over. From Shechem and Moreh, he traveled to the mountain between Bethel and Hai or Ai. There the Bible says that he pitched his tent and built another altar to the LORD. Added to this, it also says that he "called upon the name of the LORD," a phrase first mentioned in Genesis 4:26. May we **follow this example** of Abram of calling upon the name of the LORD daily.

B. Abram journeyed to the south (12:9)

Abram, knowing that this land did not belong to him yet, continued his journey as he headed farther south. The **key word** south refers to the Negev or south country. This would take Abram closer to the area of Egypt, which becomes the setting for the next lesson.

Conclusion

Abram stepped out in faith when the LORD told him to leave his country, relatives, and father's house. Abram could have objected and told the LORD that he was living comfortably with his family in Haran. Abram, however, obeyed when he heard God's command and of the promises and countless blessings that awaited him and his descendants, the Hebrews. Through Abram's obedience, God's plan for bringing a blessing to the world, including the coming Christ, was underway as God's plan always prevails.

Apply It

- **Believe the truth** that all families of the earth have been blessed through Abram (12:3).
- **Praise God** that He has a plan to bless the earth (12:3b).
- **Follow the example** of Abram who . . .
 - obeyed the Lord's command (12:4).
 - followed God's plan for his life (12:4-5a).
 - called upon the name of the Lord (12:8).

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: “Little Lies” Create Big Problems

Read Genesis 12:10-20

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that it is better to trust completely in the Lord than to lie to protect oneself.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 12:10-20

Lesson 2

“LITTLE LIES” CREATE BIG PROBLEMS

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson’s Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
grievous, fair, I pray thee, commended, entreated, plague, behold
2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
Abram feared the Egyptians would kill him but, in **contrast**, allow her to live (12:12)
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Grievous famine (caused) Abram's journey to Egypt (effect; 12:10); The purpose for the lie (cause) was so that it would go well for Abram and allow him to live (effects; 12:13). Pharaoh “entreated Abram well (effect) for her [Sarai’s] sake” (cause; 12:16a).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
The Nile River's water supported Egypt's food supply during famines elsewhere.
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Abram heard some wonderful words from the LORD (Genesis 12:1-3); The LORD promised Abram that he would become a great nation.

Grievous means heavy or oppressive. Fair means handsome or beautiful. “I pray thee,” shows Abram’s desperation as it literally means to plead with someone. Entreated means to treat kindly or graciously.

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
Lying to protect yourself (12:13).
2. Is there an attitude to change or a sin to confess in this passage?
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage:
His protection of Abram and his wife to ensure His redemptive plan for them and the world would move forward (12:17).

Jesus said Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44); Proverbs 6:16-17, 19 declares that God hates a lying tongue and a false witness that speaks lies.

Confess if you have lied. **Change your attitude** from fear to complete trust in the Lord if you find your trust in Him to be lacking (12:18).

Get Attention: Ask learners if they have ever told a lie. (Do not require a public confession, just personal reflection.) If so, what reasons did they have for lying? Did they have selfish reasons?

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

**Outline for Lesson Two: “Little Lies” Create Big Problems
Genesis 12:10-20**

Part One: Famine in the Land (12:10)

Part Two: Abram Planned a Lie (12:11-13)

A. The motivation for the lie (12:11-12)

B. The content and cause of the lie (12:13)

Part Three: Events in Egypt (12:14-16)

A. The Egyptians noticed Sarai (12:14)

B. Sarai taken into Pharaoh's house (12:15)

C. Pharaoh treated Abram well (12:16)

Part Four: Pharaoh and His House Plagued (12:17)

Part Five: Pharaoh Questioned Abram and Released Him (12:18-20)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Two: "Little Lies" Create Big Problems Genesis 12:10-20

Aim: The learner will understand that it is better to trust completely in the Lord than to lie to protect oneself.

Introduction

Abram heard some wonderful words from the LORD in Genesis 12:1-3, the **immediate context**. The LORD promised Abram that he would become a great nation with a great name, father multiple descendants, become a blessing to the nations, and have the LORD's protection from those who might curse him. After hearing such wonderful words, Abram should have known that God was for him. But like so many who receive the promises of God, a lack of faith combined with trying circumstances can cause believers to forget the promises and blessings of God. The believer should never forget to maintain complete trust in the Lord.

Part One: Famine in the Land (12:10)

A trying circumstance developed in Abram's life following the LORD's promises and blessings. Abram found himself having a mountain-top experience following this word from the LORD. We might call this a spiritual "high" which fills a person with great confidence. What often follows a spiritual high is a test of one's faith. Many believers can relate to such testing after a great moment in their spiritual journey with the Lord. Abram's test came in the form of a famine.

The **immediate context** reminds us that Abram journeyed to the south (12:9), where he experienced a great famine. Famines occurred from a long period of little-to-no rain which would cause the wheat and barley to stop growing. These crops were necessary to sustain people's main food supply. Stated as a **cause and effect**, because the famine was "grievous in the land," Abram journeyed to Egypt (effect; 12:10). The **key word** grievous means heavy or oppressive. This famine marked a serious situation and Abram had to decide to find necessary food. According to the **historical background**, Egypt was a prime place to go during a famine as its food supply remained fairly constant due to the Nile's water supply. This famine set up a test regarding Abram's trust in God. ***What situation has come into your life recently that resulted in a test of your faith?***

Part Two: Abram Planned a Lie (12:11-13)

A. The motivation for the lie (12:11-12)

Sometimes a lie is not planned but happens in the heat of the moment. A pressure situation develops and a lie becomes the immediate reaction. On other occasions, a person might plan out a lie ahead of time, which is what Abram did. As Abram approached Egypt, he spoke to Sarai about her beauty. He mentioned to her that she was "a fair woman to look upon" (12:11). The **key word** fair means handsome or beautiful. It can be used both of women or men. The same Hebrew word is used to describe David's eyes in 1 Samuel 16:12.

Normally, having a beautiful woman at one's side is not a problem for a man. But for Abram, he perceived her beauty as problematic when entering Egypt. Abram feared that if the Egyptians knew that Sarai was his wife, they would kill him

Leader's Guide: Remind your learner(s) that both Elijah and Jesus faced times of testing following spiritually "high" moments in their lives. After a great showdown with the prophets of Baal, after God consumed Elijah's sacrifice, he found himself on the run from the wicked Jezebel (1 Kings 18:30—19:3). Jesus faced temptations from Satan after the Spirit anointed Him at His baptism (Matthew 4:1-11).

Leader's Guide: Remind your learners from lesson one that the word translated "south" from the Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, is pronounced *Negev* in English. Some English versions use the word "Negev" in place of "south."

but, in **contrast**, allow her to live (12:12). Abram seemed more concerned about his own life and well-being than for Sarai's, who might very well become another man's wife.

B. The content and cause of the lie (12:13)

In response to his fear, Abram asked Sarai to lie to the Egyptians about their relationship and say that she was his sister (12:13). The **key phrase**, "I pray thee," shows Abram's desperation as it literally means to plead with someone. It would be similar to asking, "Would you please do this for me?" Abram developed a scheme to keep him out of trouble and then he included his wife by asking her to lie. There is a popular saying which states, "Desperate times call for desperate measures." Those who place their trust in the Lord, however, do not have to resort to desperate measures. Abram trusted his wife's lie more than placing full trust in the LORD. Complete trust in the Lord should be the believer's first response to pressure-filled situations. As a **cause and effect**, the purpose for the lie (cause) was so that it would go well for Abram and allow him to live (effects; 12:13).

One might argue that in Abram's situation this was not really a lie. In Genesis 20:2, we are told that Abraham (this is after his name is changed) lied to Abimelech and said that Sarah was his sister. After Abimelech found out the truth, Abraham told him that Sarah was his sister, the daughter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother (20:12). So, Sarai was indeed Abram's half-sister. Thus, to report to the Egyptians that they were half-siblings was technically not a lie. While it is true that the biblical record states they were half-siblings, they were fully married, and this is what they lied about. It is important to note that Abram's intent to claim Sarai as his sister was to deceive, and deception, especially with an evil motive, is a form of lying. Resorting to deception demonstrates a lack of faith.

Jesus said that Satan is a liar and the father of lies in John 8:44, a **related passage**. In Proverbs 6:16-17, 19, another **related passage**, the Bible declares that God hates a lying tongue and a false witness that speaks lies. Therefore, to do something God hates is a sin, which makes lying a definite **error to avoid**. Abram should have trusted in the LORD instead of lying to save himself. The LORD's protection would be there for Abram as the LORD had already promised to bless him and not cause harm to befall him.

Part Three: Events in Egypt (12:14-16)

A. The Egyptians noticed Sarai (12:14)

Just as Abram predicted, when they entered Egypt, the people noticed that Sarai was fair (12:14), a **repeated word** from 12:11. It did not take long for Abram's fear to manifest itself. The **key word** beheld is from the same Hebrew root word translated "see" in 12:12. This word means to perceive, consider, or enjoy looking at someone or something. The fact that others beheld her beauty confirmed the truth of Abram's observation about his wife.

B. Sarai taken into Pharaoh's house (12:15)

Not only did the Egyptian people take notice of Sarai, but the princes of Egypt did as well (12:15a). These princes, who served as officials before Pharaoh,

Leader's Guide: Genesis 20:13 notes that Abram told Sarai after they left his father's house in Ur of the Chaldees to say they were sister and brother at "everywhere we go." This demonstrates Abram's plan from the beginning regarding his wife.

Leader's Guide: Not all deception is necessarily lying. In baseball, a fielder might deceive a runner into thinking that he is about to throw the ball with the intent of pulling the runner off the base. In times of war, soldiers attempt to outwit the enemy through various forms of deception.

Leader's Guide: Here are some other passages that speak against deceit (deception) and lying: Psalm 101:7; Proverbs 12:22; Colossians 3:9; 1 Peter 3:10.

Leader's Guide: It is important to note that the narrative in Genesis 12:10-20 is descriptive of what happened and not prescriptive of what Abram should have done or what we should do. We often do not get moral teaching in the narrative about what went wrong with the situation, just simply stating the facts of what happened. Other Scriptures make it clear lying and deception are wrong; however, the Bible does not declare it to be wrong in the narrative. The passage only describes what happened.

were in a position to convey news about Sarai's beauty to him. The Bible says they "commended her before Pharaoh" (12:15b). The **key word** commended comes from a Hebrew word that means to praise. In this context, and stated as a **cause and effect**, when the princes saw her beauty (cause), they commended or praised her to Pharaoh (first effect) and she was taken into Pharaoh's house (second effect). The word "saw" comes from the same Hebrew root word as found in 12:12 (translated "see") and 12:14 (translated "beheld").

C. Pharaoh treated Abram well (12:16)

In response to Pharaoh's pleasure with Sarai, and noted as a **cause and effect**, "he entreated Abram well (effect) for her sake" (cause; 12:16a). The **key word** entreated means to treat kindly or graciously. This kindness to Abram came in the form of animals and servants. The animals included sheep, oxen, donkeys, and camels. The servants included both male and female servants. One might interject and say, "Well, it looks like Abram's lie is paying off!" Abram receiving wealth from Pharaoh should in no way be perceived as God's blessing upon Abram for his lie. God hates lying and would not reward him for sinning. God does not reward sin, but judges it. What seemed to be a "little lie" was about to create a big problem.

Leader's Guide: The Baptist Publishing House acknowledges that there are no "little" lies or "big" lies before God. The focus on "little" in this lesson emphasizes the deception in Abram's lie since he and Sarai were much more than siblings.

Part Four: Pharaoh and His House Plagued (12:17)

Quite possibly, Abram felt good about the situation with Sarai in Pharaoh's house because of the wealth he accumulated from Pharaoh. Clearly, however, the LORD was not happy. The LORD demonstrated his unhappiness with this situation by bringing great plagues upon Pharaoh and his house (12:17). Another **cause and effect** is noted as the LORD brought these plagues (effect) because of Sarai, Abram's wife. The **key word** plague refers to affliction or skin disease. The text does not specify what kind of plagues God brought, just that He plagued Pharaoh and his house.

Leader's Guide: This would not be the last time God would plague a Pharaoh and the people of Egypt. During the days of Moses, roughly 600 years past the time of Abram, God would bring multiple plagues upon the Egyptians until Pharaoh released the children of Israel (see Exodus 7-12).

Notice how the text emphasizes Sarai as Abram's wife. This could be to emphasize that God's promises and blessings to Abram involved both of them. In due time, God would bring about their first descendant, but this could not happen if Sarai remained a part of Pharaoh's harem. Even though Abram sinned by lying, the LORD intervened to ensure that the promises and blessings would come to pass according to His will. **Praise God** for his protection of Abram and Sarai for their role in His redemptive plan for the world!

Leader's Guide: Remind your learner(s) that God's covenant with Abram was "unconditional" meaning that, despite Abram's sin, God still intended to bring about His covenant promises and blessings.

Part Five: Pharaoh Questioned Abram and Released Him (12:18-20)

The text does not tell us how Pharaoh came to know that Abram and Sarai were married. Maybe the plagues came shortly after he took Sarai into his house and he put two and two together. Maybe the LORD revealed this information to him in a dream. However it happened, Pharaoh got the message and approached Abram with a series of questions after he found out that Sarai belonged to Abram (12:18). To paraphrase, Pharaoh asked him: (1) What have you done to me? (2) Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? (3) Why did you indicate she is your sister? One must wonder if Pharaoh was also thinking, "Who are these people that plagues would come upon us for taking this woman into my house?" This may have been the Egyptians' first encounter with the LORD, but it would certainly not be their

last (see Exodus 7—12)!

Pharaoh then told Abram, to “behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way” (12:19). The **key word** *behold* here is meant to bring serious attention to the situation. Pharaoh presented Abram’s wife to him and gave two commands—“take her” and “go.” Pharaoh definitely wanted to be rid of these plagues, and since Sarai was the source of them, she and Abram must go. Pharaoh commanded his men to make sure these commands were carried out (12:20). So, in a last **cause and effect**, Pharaoh gave the command (cause) and his men escorted them away (effect). Abram and Sarai were back together as husband and wife along with all their belongings.

Conclusion

Sir Walter Scott, an early 19th century English poet, coined the all-familiar phrase, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.” It came from his poem entitled, *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field*, which entails a young man who gets involved with a mistress and together they concoct a scheme to accuse her fiancé of treason. It did not go so well for them, just as it did not go so well for Abram and Sarai, and their scheme to fool Pharaoh. Abram believed this was the only way to protect him. Their lie brought trouble to Pharaoh’s house and interrupted God’s plan for Abram. From the text, it does not appear that it dawned on Abram to trust solely in God during a difficult circumstance. Certainly, God’s protection would have been there for Abram as God had big plans for him and his descendants.

Apply It

- **Avoid the error** of lying to protect yourself (12:13).
- **Confess the sin** of lying if there is something you have lied about in your life.
- **Change your attitude** from fear to complete trust in the Lord if you find your trust in Him to be lacking (12:18).
- **Praise God** for his protection of Abram and his wife to ensure His redemptive plan for them and the world would move forward (12:17).

NOTES

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Three: Conflict Resolution

Read Genesis 13:1—14:16

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will recognize the importance of making wise decisions to resolve conflict and understand that the Lord will provide strength to handle conflicts regardless of their magnitude.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the student book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself -- but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as desired.

The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.

Genesis 13:1—14:16

Lesson 3

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
Called on the name of the Lord, we be brethren, seed, joined battle, trained servants
2. What is being compared and/or contrasted in this passage?
The well-watered plain **compares** to the garden of the LORD/Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10); also **compared** to the land of Egypt as one goes toward Zoar.
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
Abram and Sarai returned to Canaan after their ordeal in Egypt where they lied to Pharaoh about being brother and sister (Genesis 12:10-20).
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?
The statement about the men of Sodom stands as a precursor to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
That the LORD did not forget His plans for Abram and his descendants.
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?
Abram's calling on the name of the Lord in worship (13:4, 18), looking for solutions to family conflict (13:9), and helping a brother in need (14:16).

Abram returned to the altar he made the first time he lived there (cause) and he again "called on the name of the LORD" (effect; 13:4); Abram spoke to Lot, called for no strife between them, and for no strife between their herdsmen (effect) because "we be brethren" (13:8). "If you go to the left (cause), then I will go to the right" (effect; 13:9).

"Called on the name of the LORD" is repeated from 12:8 and refers to Abram's worship of the LORD. "We be brethren" (13:8) emphasized that they were family. Seed refers to Abram's descendants, and is **repeated** from 12:7.

Get Attention: Read James 4:1-3. Ask learners to consider the source of conflict. Can they sum up the cause in one word? (Selfishness, lust, desire, etc.) This lesson demonstrates a solution to conflict.

Learning Option Two:

Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Three: Conflict Resolution Genesis 13:1—14:16

Part One: Abram Returned to Bethel (13:1-4)

Part Two: Abram and Lot Experienced Conflict (13:5-13)

A. The reason for the conflict (13:5-7)

B. The solution to the conflict (13:8-13)

Part Three: The LORD Reminded Abram of Blessings (13:14-18)

A. The specifics of the blessings (13:14-17)

1. The blessing of land (13:14-15, 17)

2. The blessing of descendants (13:16)

B. Abram responded to the promise of blessing (13:18)

Part Four: Nations Experienced Conflict (14:1-12)

A. Those involved in the conflict (14:1-3)

B. The reason for the conflict (14:4)

C. The effects of the conflict (14:5-12)

Part Five: Abram Rescued Lot (14:13-16)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Three: Conflict Resolution Genesis 13:1—14:16

Aim: The learner will recognize the importance of making wise decisions to resolve conflict and understand that the Lord will provide strength to handle conflicts regardless of their magnitude.

Introduction

Most people do not enjoy conflict, especially when that conflict involves family. Such conflicts have the potential for creating emotional damage that can last for generations. Some conflicts, not necessarily involving family, can seem so big and dangerous that getting involved could prove detrimental. Abram got involved with two different kinds of conflict in 13:1—14:16—a family squabble and a war of nations. Both conflicts involved Abram's nephew, Lot, and Abram knew he needed to get involved with both to bring peace with Lot and to rescue Lot. Conflict resolution includes wisdom both to make the best decisions for a good and peaceable outcome and complete trust in the Lord when the conflict seems too great.

Part One: Abram Returned to Bethel (13:1-4)

Abram and Sarai went back to the land of Canaan after their ordeal in Egypt where they lied to Pharaoh about being brother and sister (see the **immediate context** of Genesis 12:10-20). They, along with Lot, moved back into the "south" country or the Negev (13:1). According to the **immediate context** in 12:16, Pharaoh blessed Abram with much livestock and servants under the guise that Abram and Sarai were brother and sister. The current text reminds us that Abram possessed riches of cattle, silver, and gold (13:2).

Beyond the south country, they returned to Bethel where they once lived between Bethel and Hai (pronounced hah-eye) (13:3). Note the **cause and effect**. Abram returned specifically to the altar he made the first time he lived there (cause) and he again "**called on the name of the LORD**" (effect; 13:4). This **key phrase** is repeated from 12:8 and refers to Abram's worship of the LORD. Worshipping the LORD was a great response by Abram, especially in light of how God protected them in Egypt even though they lied to Pharaoh. **Follow** Abram's **example** of calling on the name of the LORD in worship.

Part Two: Abram and Lot Experienced Conflict (13:5-13)

Now that Abram and his family were back at home, one might expect the "happily ever after" end to the story. But, conflict arose. Genesis 13:5-13 marks the first of two conflicts.

A. The reason for the conflict (13:5-7)

The text mentioned Abram's wealth in 13:2, but Lot also possessed his fair share of wealth which consisted of flocks, herds, and tents (13:5). Stated as a **cause and effect**, both Abram and Lot possessed so much wealth and goods individually (cause) that it became difficult for them to dwell together (first effect; 13:6). This difficulty manifested itself with strife between Abram's and Lot's

→ **Leader's Guide:** Remind your learner(s) that the word "south" refers to the south country or the Negev. Some English translations use the word "south" while others use "Negev." The word "Negev" is the English pronunciation of the Hebrew word, the original language of the Old Testament. From Egypt, they went north to go to the south country.

→ **Leader's Guide:** Some English versions translate Hai as Ai. The difference between the two spellings likely reflects the prefixed article in the original Hebrew which is literally translated as "the ruins."

→ **Leader's Guide:** The phrase, "call upon the name of the LORD," was first mentioned in Genesis 4:26 where men began to call upon the name of the LORD after Enosh, Seth's son, was born.

→ **Leader's Guide:** The text does not say how Lot accumulated his wealth. Possibly Abram shared his wealth with his nephew or he received his father Haran's share after his father died in Ur (11:28).

herdsmen (second effect; 13:7a). The **key word** strife refers to a dispute or lawsuit. Based on the context, it appears the dispute revolved around territory needed for grazing animals. The text reminds us that Abram and Lot were not the only inhabitants, as the Canaanite and Perizzite also dwelled in the land (13:7b).

B. The solution to the conflict (13:8-13)

A resolution is needed when conflict arises. In the form of a **cause and effect**, Abram spoke to Lot and called for no strife between them and for there to be no strife between their herdsmen (effect) because “we be brethren” (13:8). This **key phrase** does not mean they were actually brothers, but rather it emphasized that they were family. It is a shame when families experience strife, especially over land and possessions. Abram pleaded with Lot when he said, “I pray thee,” a **repeated phrase** from 12:13, when he pleaded with Sarai to tell the Egyptians she was his sister.

Abram wisely came up with a solution to avoid further strife. He told Lot that there was much land available in this area. In a series of **cause-and-effect** relationships, Abram said, “If you go to the left (cause), then I will go to the right,” or vice versa (13:9). The plan to separate made sense, a **key word** meaning to branch off. In this plan, we see Abram’s generosity toward his nephew. As the patriarch of the family, Abram had every right to choose the best land for himself, but he deferred to his nephew. What an unselfish act by Abram! **Follow** Abram’s **example** of looking for wise solutions to family conflict.

Lot took advantage of Abram’s generous spirit by choosing the best land for his flocks (13:10-11). Lot “lifted up his eyes” and beheld the plain of Jordan. The text describes this plain as well watered and **compares** it to the garden of the LORD, a reference to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10). This was before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It was also **compared** to the land of Egypt as one goes toward Zoar. Egypt possessed a great watering system because of the Nile River. Likewise, the Jordan River provided good water for the plain providing lush vegetation. Abram dwelled in Canaan while Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain (13:12).

Lot’s decision to pitch his tent toward Sodom would eventually prove to be a not-so-wise decision. The text declares that the men of Sodom were wicked men and sinners (13:13). This statement about the men of Sodom stands as a precursor to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, a **related passage**.

Part Three: The LORD Reminded Abram of Blessings (13:14-18)

At this point, Abram possibly believed that God’s promise of land for his descendants lay in jeopardy. Lot chose the best part of the land, so where would this leave Abram’s descendants in the future? The LORD reminded Abram that the promise of blessings still remained.

A. The specifics of the blessings (13:14-17)

1. The blessing of land (13:14-15, 17)

The first blessing mentioned by the LORD to Abram included the promise of land. Just as Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the plain of Jordan, now the LORD told Abram to lift up his eyes and look in every direction of the compass (13:14).

Leader’s Guide: The word “separate” in 13:9 comes from the same Hebrew root word translated “parted” in Genesis 2:10 referring to the river in the Garden of Eden that “parted” into four other rivers.

Leader’s Guide: The modern-day plain of Jordan is no longer lush, but is more desert.

Every place Abram could see forever belonged to him and his seed (13:15). God gave this promise of land the first time in 12:7, the **immediate context**. The **key word** seed refers to Abram's descendants and is a **repeated word** from 12:7. One of Abram's descendants would be the promised seed of Genesis 3:15, the Messiah or Jesus Himself! God even encouraged Abram to walk the length and breadth of the land (13:17). Basically, God said to Abram, "Go ahead, check out your inheritance!"

2. The blessing of descendants (13:16)

The LORD further described the blessing of Abram's many descendants through the use of simile or **comparison**. He told Abram, "If a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (13:16). This use of comparison is meant to emphasize the large multitude of Abram's descendants.

Leader's Guide: The LORD uses other comparisons such as the sand of the sea (Genesis 22:17) and the stars of the sky (Genesis 15:5) to speak of the multitude of Abram's descendants.

B. Abram responded to the promise of blessing (13:18)

Abram eventually settled in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron (13:18a). Now that he was in a new place, he built a new altar unto the LORD (13:18b). With the reminder of blessings, Abram kept his focus on the LORD. May we **follow** Abram's **example** by keeping our focus on the Lord.

Part Four: Nations Experienced Conflict (14:1-12)

A. Those involved in the conflict (14:1-3)

After Abram and Lot settled their conflict, a much larger conflict developed that would involve them both. Sometime after Abram built his altar in Hebron (13:18), four kings went to war with five other kings in the valley of Siddim (*sih-deem*), which is near the Dead Sea (14:1-3). The four kings controlled the lands of Babylonia and the lands northeast and southeast of Babylonia. The five kings controlled Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim (zuh-boy-eem), and Bela or Zoar—cities in the plain of Jordan.

Leader's Guide: Shinar is considered the area of Babylonia. Ellasar is a town within Babylonia. Elam is an area southeast of Babylon. The king of nations or Goiim (pronounced goy-eem) is an area northeast of Babylon.

B. The reason for the conflict (14:4)

For twelve years, the five kings in the plain of Jordan served Chedorlaomer (ked-ore-lay-ah-mer) (14:4a). The **key word** served likely refers to the kings of Jordan paying a tribute of money and/or food to Chedorlaomer. However, in the thirteenth year, the five kings chose to rebel (14:4b), meaning they gave no tribute in this year, which would not set well with Chedorlaomer.

Leader's Guide: The reason why one country would pay tribute to another is to avoid war. As long as the tribute continued to be paid, the country receiving the tribute would not attack the country paying the tribute.

C. The effects of the conflict (14:5-12)

The **first** main effect involved Chedorlaomer conquering kingdoms on his way to confronting the five kings who stopped paying tribute. Chedorlaomer began his campaign in the north and worked his way south by smiting or defeating the Rephaims in the Golan Heights east of the Sea of Galilee, the Zuzites further south in Transjordan (east of the Jordan), the Emims east of the Dead Sea, and the Horites south of the Dead Sea (14:5-6). Chedorlaomer took the lead in this campaign and the three kings allied with him (Amraphel, Arioch, and Tidal) fought as well (14:5a). Chedorlaomer and his allies then turned their attack against the Amalekites and Amorites southwest of the Dead Sea, conquering them as well (14:7).

Leader's Guide: For a concise map of these areas and their locations See *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*, Carl Rasmussen, p. 94.

The **second** main effect involved confronting the five kings. Knowing that Chedorlaomer and his allied kings were coming, the five kings of the Jordan “joined battle” with them in the valley of Siddim (14:8-9). This **key phrase** means that they prepared themselves for battle by organizing their troops. The four kings (led by Chedorlaomer) caused the five kings (who stopped paying tribute) to flee. Some of the fleeing troops fell in the slime or tar pits located in the Siddim Valley, while those who escaped fled to the hills (14:10).

The **third** main effect involved the four kings taking possession of Sodom and Gomorrah’s goods and victuals or food (14:11). They also took possession of Lot, who was now living in Sodom, along with his possessions (14:12). Notice how Lot went from pitching his tent toward Sodom in 13:12 to living there in 14:12.

Part Five: Abram Rescued Lot (14:13-16)

Abram received word from one who escaped the battle of the kings that Lot had been captured (14:13a). At this time, Abram lived near Mamre the Amorite who had two brothers, all confederate (allied) with Abram (14:13b). In the form of a **cause and effect**, when Abram heard his nephew was taken captive (cause), he gathered 318 trained servants born in his house and began his pursuit (effects; 14:14).

Abram, using stealth by attacking at night, smote the armies of the four kings led by Chedorlaomer and continued to pursue them near Damascus, a long way to pursue from where the conflict began (14:15). Just as Chedorlaomer smote those whom he attacked (14:5, 7), now Abram and his men smote him. With great success, Abram brought back the goods, Lot and his possessions, along with the women and other people (14:16). **Follow** Abram’s **example** of helping a brother in need.

Conclusion

The Bible reminds us in Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Conflict resulted between Abram and Lot, but Abram made a wise decision to resolve this conflict so that the quarreling would cease between their herdsmen. After Abram and Lot parted ways, God reminded Abram of the promised land and multiple descendants. As bigger political conflicts arose, Lot got swept up in the conflict. Abram gathered his courage and strength, no doubt with God’s promises and blessings in mind, and rescued his family member even though the situation was dangerous. This story of the conflict between these warring kings reminds us of God’s promise to Abram to curse those who curse him and bless those who bless him.

Apply It

- **Follow** Abram’s **example of . . .**
 - calling on the name of the Lord in worship, (13:4, 18).
 - looking for solutions to family conflict, (13:9).
 - helping a brother in need, (14:16).
- **Praise God** that the LORD did not forget His plans for Abram and his descendants.

Leader’s Guide: The **key phrase** “trained servants” is only found here in the Old Testament. This key phrase is one word in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament. In other extra-biblical ancient texts, it refers to those trained to take up arms.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Four: Encountering Two Different Kings

Read Genesis 14:17-24

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that true blessings come from God, not from the world..

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 14:17-24

Lesson 4

ENCOUNTERING TWO DIFFERENT KINGS

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. Who is involved in the passage being studied?
Abram, the King of Salem, the King of Sodom
2. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
The most high God, blessing, tithes, I have lifted mine hand
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Abram is met by the King of Sodom (effect), following Abram's defeat of Chedorlaomer and the three kings (cause; 14:17a). Abram's response to this word of blessing (cause) was to give this priest "tithes of all" (effect; 14:20b). Abram took nothing from the king (cause) so that the king of Sodom could not say he made Abram rich (effect; 14:23b).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the cultural/historical background of this passage?
Lifting one's hand toward heaven was an ancient practice for declaring a solemn oath to God (Deuteronomy 32:40; Revelation 10:5-6).
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
Abram rescued Lot and others from Chedorlaomer (14:16).
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

"The most high God" combines two words in the Hebrew— "God" and "upper" or "high." Blessing, when used in relation to people, refers to a bestowal of power for success. Tithes refers to a tenth portion. "I have lifted up my hand" means that Abram made a firm oath to the LORD.

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
The LORD is God Most High. God Most High is possessor of heaven and earth.
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?
of Abram who gave a tithe of his possessions.
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
That He delivered Abram's enemies into his hands.

God is the creator and owner of all (Psalm 24:1). Jesus mentioned the tithe as something not to be neglected (Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42). God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Get Attention: Read Hebrews 7:1-10 where we find the fullest treatment of Melchizedek as a type of Christ. Remind learners to keep Hebrews 7:1-10 in mind as you study the lesson.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Four: Encountering Two Different Kings Genesis 14:17-24

Part One: Abram and the King of Salem (14:17-20)

A. Identification of this king (14:18)

B. Blessings from this king (14:19-20a)

1. Blessing upon Abram (14:19)

2. Blessing upon the most high God Most (14:20a)

C. Abram's response to this king (14:20b)

Part Two: Abram and the King of Sodom (14:21-24)

A. The king's request (14:21)

B. Abram's response (14:22-24)

Apply It

Believe the truths

Follow the example

Praise God

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Four: Encountering Two Different Kings Genesis 14:17-24

Aim: The learner will understand that true blessings come from God, not from the world.

Introduction

Have you ever had an encounter with royalty? Most of us have probably never experienced such an encounter. What would you even say to a king or queen? I would likely be a bundle of nerves if I were to encounter royalty. Abram, in Genesis 14:17-24, encountered two different kings, who will be the focus of this study. In 14:13-16, the **immediate context**, Abram had already encountered kings in battle and won! Now he is about to engage in conversation with two different kings. One of these is quite mysterious and holds the key to understanding the priesthood of Jesus, the Messiah.

Part One: Abram and the King of Salem (14:17-20)

At the outset of this passage, and noted as a **cause and effect**, Abram is met by the King of Sodom (effect) following Abram's defeat of Chedorlaomer (ked-ore-lay-ah-mer) and the three kings with him (cause; 14:17a). This meeting took place in the valley of Shaveh (shah-vay), which is known as the king's dale or valley (14:17b). This valley was likely to the east of Jerusalem. Abram's encounter with the King of Sodom is detailed later in 14:21-24, but another king comes forward, who is heavily **involved in this passage**, and we see Abram's encounter with him first.

A. Identification of this king (14:18)

The text notes the name of this king as Melchizedek (mel-key-zeh-dek). His name means "my king is righteousness" or "king of righteousness." At this time, he served as the king of Salem, a shortened form of Jerusalem (see Psalm 76:2). Not only was he a king, but he served as priest of "the most high God." This **key phrase** combines two words in Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament)—"God" and "upper" or "high." This phrase stands as a designation for God as the most supreme being, a great **truth to believe**. For several chapters in Genesis, the focus has been upon Abram and God's blessings to him and the world. The blessings to the world through Abram allude to the redemption of mankind through his descendant, namely Jesus. It seemed all hope rested upon Abram. And, in a way it did, as God possessed big plans for Abram and his descendants. However, the entrance of an interesting figure like Melchizedek reminds us that God possessed others who served him faithfully as well during this time.

Melchizedek serves as a "type" of Christ in Scripture. A type is a person or thing which prefigures someone or something else. In this case, the entrance of Melchizedek points to someone greater, Jesus, who is the fulfillment of the type. The Bible mentions Melchizedek by name a total of eleven times in Scripture – twice in the Old Testament (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 110:4) and nine times in the New Testament (Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21).

Leader's Guide: The King's Dale or Valley is mentioned again in 2 Samuel 18:18, where Absalom set up a pillar because he had no son as an heir.

Leader's Guide: The "type" is the person or thing which prefigures another, while the "antitype" is the fulfillment of what the type prefigures. The "anti" in the second word does not mean against but rather opposite. The antitype is opposite the type.

Leader's Guide: Based on some ancient Greek manuscripts, some modern Bible versions do not contain the phrase "after the order of Melchisedek" at the end of Hebrews 7:21.

Leader's Guide: Hebrews 7 is where we find the fullest treatment of Melchizedek as a type of Christ.

Leader's Guide: According to scholars, some conjecture that Melchizedek's use of "most high God" and "possessor of heaven and earth" could be a reference to the primary Canaanite deity. This would make Melchizedek a Canaanite priest-king. However, his own association of this God with Abram and Abram's own reference to these phrases as referring to the LORD (14:22) would seem to indicate that Melchizedek was a true priest of the one true God. Furthermore, it is unlikely that God would use a pagan king as a type of Christ.

Leader's Guide: Here are a couple of instances where to bless God means to praise Him or not to forget His goodness. In Genesis 24:27, to bless God means to praise Him for His loving kindness and divine grace. In Psalm 103:1-2, blessing the Lord includes not forgetting his benefits and blessings.

Leader's Guide: Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, has the singular word "tithe" instead of the plural.

Leader's Guide: A parallel account is when two or more verses in different books discuss the same event. This happens quite often between the Gospels. Leader's Guide: In the New Testament, the tithe is also mentioned one other time in Luke 18 and five times in Hebrews 7. In Luke 18:12, Jesus has the Pharisee bragging about giving the tithe in His parable about the Pharisee and the publican. In Hebrews 7, the context involves the writer of Hebrews discussing Abram giving the tithe to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:5, 6, 8, 9[2x]).

The writer of Hebrews refers to Melchizedek as a type of Christ. The Bible declares Christ to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20). Melchizedek is noted by the author of Hebrews as having no genealogy which means that there is no father, mother, or a family line of descendants mentioned anywhere in Scripture for him (Hebrews 7:3). By this, the author of Hebrews presents Melchizedek as having no beginning or ending, thus speaking of Christ's eternal nature. The Levitical priesthood performed sacrifices pertaining to the Law of Moses that could not fully atone for or take away sins. Therefore, another type of priest was needed who could fully atone for sins, and that person is Jesus Christ. The Levitical priests sacrificed animals, but Jesus sacrificed Himself so that mankind's redemption could be fully realized. Melchizedek is a great figure who points us to these wonderful truths about Jesus!

B. Blessings from this king (14:19-20a)

1. Blessing upon Abram (14:19)

Melchizedek first spoke a word of blessing to Abram (14:19a). God already spoke words of blessing to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17. Melchizedek referred to Abram's relationship to "the most high God," a **repeated phrase** from 14:18, the One who is the possessor of heaven and earth, a **truth to believe** (14:19b). God is the creator and owner of all things as stated clearly in Psalm 24:1-2, a **related passage**. This king and priest speaking words of blessing to Abram served as a great reminder that the true blessings of life come from God. **What blessings from God have you enjoyed recently?**

2. Blessing upon the Most High God (14:20a)

Melchizedek also spoke a word of blessing to God. The **key word** blessing, when used concerning people, refers to a bestowal of power for success. When the word is used concerning God, it speaks of praise to God, for no one needs to ensure God's success! The main praiseworthy item noted is that God delivered Abram's enemies into his hands (14:20a). Abram's success in battle came from the LORD. Praise God that He delivered over Abram's enemies! **When was the last time you praised God for His deliverance in your life, whether physical or spiritual?**

C. Abram's response to this king (14:20b)

In the form of a **cause and effect**, Abram's response to this word of blessing (cause) was to give this priest "tithes of all" (effect; 14:20b). The **key word** tithes refers to a tenth portion. Abram knew his blessings came from God and that Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God. In a form of worship, he gave a tenth of the spoils of war to this priest who represented God.

Abram's giving a tenth was done before the Law of Moses made it a requirement. Prior to the law, there was already an expectation of giving unto God. This can be seen as far back as Cain and Abel who brought offerings unto the Lord (Genesis 4:3-4). Jesus even mentioned the tithe in the New Testament as something not to be neglected in the parallel accounts of Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42, **related passages**. Avoid approaching the tithe from a legalistic standpoint, which means, attempting to calculate ten percent to the penny from each paycheck

and then giving no more than that. For it also says in the New Testament, to those under the covenant of grace, that God loves a cheerful giver in 2 Corinthians 9:7, a **related passage**. The tithe is a good baseline or place to start, but a cheerful giver will likely learn to give more.

Abram stands for all time as an **example to follow** when it comes to giving a tithe. Giving should be a part of our regular worship of God. ***Are you prepared to give a tithe or offering to the Lord with a cheerful heart this Sunday in your church?***

Part Two: Abram and the King of Sodom (14:21-24)

The king of Sodom reappears on the scene as another king involved in this passage. This king stands in contrast to Melchizedek. Whereas the king of Salem wanted to offer a blessing to Abram, this second king wanted to barter with Abram. How would Abram respond to this second king?

A. The king's request (14:21)

The King of Sodom offered a dual request to Abram—give me the people and you can keep all the goods for yourself (14:21). When Abram rescued Lot from Chedorlaomer, he also rescued women and other people according to 14:16, the **immediate context**. These are likely the people the king of Sodom ruled. He now wanted the people back but was willing to allow Abram to keep the goods, which likely refers to the spoils of war. On the surface, this seemed like a decent proposal by the king of Sodom. However, Abram's response lets the reader know that this was not the case at all.

B. Abram's response (14:22-24)

The remainder of the passage for this study deals with Abram's response to the king of Sodom. In his response, Abram said, "I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD" (14:22a). This **key phrase** means that Abram made a firm oath to the LORD. According to the **cultural background**, lifting one's hand toward heaven was a practice in the ancient world for declaring a solemn oath to God (Deuteronomy 32:40; Revelation 10:5-6). We are never told in the biblical text when Abram made such an oath, but it is reasonable to assume that he made it before going into battle. Abram even borrowed from the phrases spoken by Melchizedek—"the most high God" and "possessor of heaven and earth" (14:22b). Notice carefully that Abram equated these phrases with the LORD.

Abram made it quite clear to the king of Sodom that he intended to take nothing that belonged to him and his people, not even items so minute as a thread or "shoelatchet" (shoe-latch-it) which refers to the strap of a sandal (14:23a). This king ruled a city of wicked people as noted in Genesis 18:20, a **related passage**. Abram likely wanted nothing to do with their riches. But, stated as a **cause and effect**, the real reason why Abram wanted to take nothing from the king (cause) was so that the king of Sodom could not say he made Abram rich (effect; 14:23b). Abram knew that his true riches and blessings would come from God. ***When was the last time you acknowledged that your true blessings come from God?***

Abram further explained to the king of Sodom that he would take nothing except what had already been consumed, such as the food eaten by his men

Leader's Guide: This concept of blessing vs. bartering comes from Allen P. Ross in his commentary entitled, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 295.

Leader's Guide: This is obviously archaic grammar, better rendered "I have lifted up my hand."

Leader's Guide: The learner might speculate that Abram did not want anything from the king of Sodom because of the wickedness of the city he ruled. While it may be reasonable to think this, the text gives us the real reason why Abram did not want it – so the king could not say, "I made Abram rich!"

(14:24a). Nor would he take the portions or shares belonging to the men who aided him in battle. He mentioned their names as Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. These men are mentioned in 14:13 as allies with Abram. In a spirit of generosity, Abram wanted nothing for himself, but he wanted to make sure his allies were rightly rewarded for their assistance.

Conclusion

Abram experienced a great victory when he defeated the four kings led by Chedorlaomer and rescued his nephew Lot. Follow that with the appearance of Melchizedek who vocalized blessings upon Abram and God. Connect all of this to the previous blessings and promises given to Abram by the LORD Himself, and Abram knew that God was on his side. Abram did not need any blessings from a pagan king like the king of Sodom, for Abram knew the King of all the earth intended to bless him! He would be content to wait on God's blessings as God is the source of all true blessings.

Apply It

- **Believe the truths** that . . .
 - The LORD is the Most High God.
 - The Most High God is the possessor of heaven and earth.
- **Follow the example** of Abram who gave a tithe of his possessions.
- **Praise God** that He delivered Abram's enemies into his hands.

NOTES

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Five: Repetition and Revelation

Read Genesis 15:1-21

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that the LORD reminds His people of past promises, reveals His plan for them, and ensures His plan's ultimate fulfillment.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 15:1-21

Lesson 5

REPETITION AND REVELATION

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
Vision, shield, steward, seed, Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age, covenant.
2. What comparison do you note in this passage?
Number of Abram's descendant compared to number of stars.
3. What contrasts are noted in this passage?
Abram's heir would not be Eliezer, but one born from his own bowels or body (15:4).
4. What cause/effect relationships are noted in this passage?
God told Abram in the vision not to fear (effect) *because* the LORD would be a shield to him *and* reward him greatly (15:1).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
Genesis 14 will help when studying Genesis 15.
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?
Abram previously demonstrated faith in the LORD when he left his father's house (Hebrews 11:8; Genesis 12:4).

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
He judges those who oppress His people (15:14).
2. Is there an example to follow or error to avoid in this passage?
Avoid doubting God's promises (15:3). **Follow** Abram who believed in the LORD (15:6).
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
That He does not forget His promises (15:7, 18).

→ Steward is literally the word for son or grandson and likely refers to a non-relative living in Abram's house. Seed refers to one's descendants; a **repeated word** from Genesis 3:15 and 12:7. "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age" means that Abram would have a long life with little conflict. Covenant refers to one's pledge to do something for another.

Get Attention: ARead the other major covenants in Scripture: God’s covenant with Moses (Exodus 19:4-6), David (2 Samuel 7:8-17), and the New Covenant secured through Christ’s death (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:7-13). This lesson will reveal the covenant that the LORD made with Abram.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Five: Repetition and Revelation Genesis 15:1-21

Part One: The LORD Reminded Abram of His Descendants (15:1-6)

A. Abram received a vision (15:1)

B. Abram received a new revelation (15:2-4)

C. Abram reminded of his many descendants (15:5)

D. Abram believed in the LORD (15:6)

Part Two: Abram Prepared a Sacrifice (15:7-11)

A. Abram reminded of the promised land (15:7)

B. Abram obeyed the LORD (15:8-11)

Part Three: The LORD Revealed the future to Abram (15:12-16)

A. The future concerning Abram’s descendants (15:12-14, 16)

B. The future concerning Abram himself (15:15)

Part Four: The LORD Made a Covenant with Abram (15:17-21)

A. The conclusion of the sacrifice (15:17)

B. The details of the covenant (15:18-21)

Lesson Five: Repetition and Revelation Genesis 15:1-21

Aim: The learner will understand that the LORD reminds His people of past promises, reveals His plan for them, and ensures His plan's ultimate fulfillment.

Introduction

The key to learning is often accomplished through repetition, known as the "father of learning" (although some might call it the "mother of boredom"). People are often forgetful, and so repetition can be a valuable tool to help one's memory. In 1 Corinthians 11:24-25, Paul reminded his readers of what Jesus said about doing the Lord's Supper "in remembrance of me." The repetition of observing the Lord's Supper reminds believers of the importance of Christ's sacrificial death, a much-needed reminder.

More than repetition, we see that information not previously known needs to be revealed. In Genesis 15:1-21, God repeated information previously given to Abram but also revealed to Abram new information for him and his descendants. Even today, believers need to be reminded of God's wonderful truths and understand His revelation made known through His completed, written Word.

Part One: The LORD Reminded Abram of His Descendants (15:1-6)

Keeping a few things in mind regarding the *immediate context* of Genesis 14 will help when studying Genesis 15. **First**, Abram fought with kings who attacked the region and took Lot captive (14:13-16). **Second**, after defeating these kings, Abram encountered Melchizedek who blessed him (14:18-20). **Third**, Abram conversed with the King of Sodom and refused any riches from him (14:21-24). Now the LORD reminds Abram of His blessings and reveals new truth to him.

A. Abram received a vision (15:1)

After the vast experiences encountered in Genesis 14, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. The **key word** vision here refers to a genuine supernatural state generated by the LORD. God often spoke to people in the Old Testament through dreams (eyes closed) and visions (eyes open).

From the text, it would appear that the LORD knew Abram was afraid. In a **cause-and-effect** relationship, God told Abram in the vision not to fear (effect) *because* the LORD would be a shield to him and reward him greatly (15:1). The **key word** shield can refer to an actual shield used in battle. Here, the LORD used it as a metaphor regarding His protection for Abram. God would protect him and ensure his reward would be great.

B. Abram received a new revelation (15:2-4)

Abram responded with a question about this promised great reward. Abram asked the Lord GOD, "What wilt thou give me, since I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer (el-ee-eh-zer) of Damascus" (15:2). The **key word** steward is literally the word for son or grandson and likely here refers to a non-relative living in Abram's house. Abram continued to express doubt before God when he stated, "thou hast given no seed" (15:3). The **key word** seed refers to one's descendants

Leader's Guide: When Peter wrote his second epistle, he let his readers know that he was writing to remind them of truth (2 Peter 1:12-15).

Leader's Guide: Some claim to have visions from the Lord when they have not. An example of this is in Ezekiel 13:6-7 where the prophet Ezekiel exposed false prophets who claimed to receive visions from the LORD, when in fact they did not.

Leader's Guide: Some versions translate the last phrase of 15:1 to read that the LORD would be Abram's reward. However, a literal reading of the original Hebrew reads, "and great is your reward."

Leader's Guide: Notice that "GOD" is in all caps in the King James Version while "Lord" is in lowercase in Genesis 15:2. Here the term "Lord" is Adonai, while "GOD" refers to the name Jehovah. Not all English versions have GOD in all caps.

Leader's Guide: The **key word** steward is translated as "heir" in other English translations. The original Hebrew word translated as "steward" or "heir" literally refers to a son or grandson. The word, as used in the context of 15:2, refers to one living in a house as a servant.

Leader's Guide: The particular Hebrew root word for "believed" focuses more on the sequence of events. Abram believed, and the next item in the sequence was God crediting it to Abram as righteousness.

Leader's Guide: After Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4:3, he made the point that one does not work to receive righteousness (i.e., salvation) in Romans 4:5, but it is credited through belief.

Leader's Guide: Grammatically, the word "counted" is understood as a past act with continued results.

Leader's Guide: God placing righteousness in one's account should not be viewed as a bank account where funds can be deleted. The righteousness God gives believers does not diminish.

and is a **repeated word** from Genesis 3:15 and 12:7. God had already promised to Abram many descendants in Genesis 12:2 and 13:16. Naturally, to have "many" descendants, one must have the "first" child. **Avoid the error** of doubting God's promises.

The LORD reminded Abram, in **contrast**, that his heir would not be Eliezer, but one born from his own bowels or body (15:4). Abram will have a natural son of promise! This promise of a natural-born son was a new revelation to Abram.

C. Abram reminded of his many descendants (15:5)

The LORD took Abram outside and told him to observe the stars. The LORD **compared** the number of stars to Abram's descendants, if indeed he could number them. Scientists have estimated that there are at least 100 billion stars in our Milky Way Galaxy alone, not to mention other galaxies and clusters of stars that exist in them. God is not giving an estimated amount of Abram's descendants with this comparison, but rather emphasizing the large number of descendants that would come from him. This promise of many descendants is followed by one of the greatest moments in history.

D. Abram believed in the LORD (15:6)

According to Hebrews 11:8, a **related passage**, Abram previously demonstrated faith in the LORD when he left his father's house (Genesis 12:4). His belief in the LORD mentioned in Genesis 15:6 relates specifically to the promise of many descendants in 15:5. Abram believed in the LORD and God graciously responded by crediting it to Abram as righteousness, a great moment indeed! Since Scripture interprets Scripture, we have the benefit of what Paul and others say about 15:6. All people need to have such faith in the Lord since righteousness comes by faith, not by works (Romans 4:3, 5, 9, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). Abram also likely believed that God could bring life where there was only death regarding his and Sarai's ability to have children (Hebrews 11:11-12).

The **key word** counted means to reckon, consider, or put to one's account. Figuratively, God put righteousness in Abram's account when he believed in the LORD. Genesis 15:6 marks the first use of the concept of "belief" in Scripture. Noah was marked as just and perfect in Genesis 6:9. Scripture notes Abram as the father of all those who believe (Romans 4:11). The many descendants promised to Abram are not just physical, but spiritual as well. **Follow the example** of Abram by believing in the LORD if you have not done so.

Part Two: Abram Prepared a Sacrifice (15:7-11)

A. Abram reminded of the promised land (15:7)

The LORD further reminded Abram, in the form of a **cause and effect**, that He was the one who called him out of Ur (cause) to give him a land to possess (effect; 15:7). Abram lived in Ur with his father before the Lord called him to leave and sojourn in the land of Canaan (Genesis 11:31). God promised the land of Canaan to Abram and his descendants. **Praise God** that He does not forget His promises!

B. Abram obeyed the LORD (15:8-11)

Abram, looking for assurance of the promised land, asked the LORD,

“whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it” (15:8). The LORD responded by having Abram prepare a sacrifice of a three-year-old heifer, female goat, and ram, along with a turtledove and a young pigeon (15:9). Abram obeyed as the LORD commanded, an **example to follow**, by bringing these animals to the LORD and cutting all but the birds in half (15:10). The slaughtered animals lay there so long that the birds of prey came to consume them causing Abram to drive them away (15:11). The LORD would answer Abram’s 15:8 question after revealing something new in 15:12-16. The LORD then used these animals to answer the question in 15:17-21.

Part Three: The LORD Revealed the Future to Abram (15:12-16)

A. The future concerning Abram’s descendants (15:12-14, 16)

In the form of a **cause and effect**, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Abram and “an horror of great darkness fell upon him” (15:12). God spoke to Abram previously through a vision (15:1), but now God may have shown him something in a dream, or more accurately, a nightmare as the terms “horror” and “darkness” would suggest. No one wants to think that bad things will happen to their descendants, but this is what God revealed to Abram.

The horror and darkness the LORD revealed involved Abram’s descendants being enslaved by a foreign nation for 400 years (15:13). This is a long time for any one group to be enslaved by another. This enslavement took place sometime after the death of Joseph (Exodus 1:8-11). However, after those 400 years, God would judge that foreign nation, and Abram’s descendants would come away with many possessions (15:14). **Praise God** and **believe the truth** that He judges those who would dare oppress or persecute His people! The timeframe of 400 years and the statement about the iniquity of the Amorites running full (15:16) demonstrates God’s perfect timing in all things. The Amorites, here used as a synonym for the Canaanites in general, lived in the promised land in Abram’s day. Israel would defeat the Amorites when they took possession of the land during the days of Joshua some 600 years after Abram’s day (Joshua 10:12). God would punish the Amorites by allowing Israel to defeat them.

B. The future concerning Abram himself (15:15)

The LORD reassured Abram that he himself would not experience the enslavement of his descendants. The LORD told him, “thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age” (15:15), a **key phrase** meaning that Abram would have a long life with little conflict. God would continue to bless this great patriarch with a good life.

Part Four: The LORD Made a Covenant with Abram (15:17-21)

The Lord had not yet answered Abram’s question from 15:8. That answer came through the completion of the sacrifice and wording of a covenant in 15:17-21. Roughly a full day had passed since God told Abram to count the stars in 15:5 and the completion of the sacrifice the next evening (15:12, 17).

A. The conclusion of the sacrifice (15:17)

An unusual sight ensued when a smoking furnace and burning lamp passed between the animals Abram cut in half (15:17). As the sun had already set, the most

Leader’s Guide: In such a formal covenant ceremony, it was apparently customary for both parties to pass between “cut” animals (see Jeremiah 34:18-19), perhaps symbolizing what would happen if the person broke the agreement. Whether or not Abram was asleep (15:12ff.) when the covenant was ratified, both the smoking oven and the flaming torch (15:17) symbolized the Lord’s presence in promising the land unilaterally.

Leader’s Guide: The phrase “deep sleep” is a **repeated phrase** from Genesis 2:21 when God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and God created a woman from one of his ribs.

Leader’s Guide: Stephen quoted Genesis 15:13-14 in Acts 7:6-7.

Leader’s Guide: The smoking furnace is a reference to a fire pot or oven that the ancients used for baking.

Leader's Guide: The other major covenants we see in Scripture include God's covenant with Moses (Exodus 19:4-6), David (2 Samuel 7:8-17), and the New Covenant secured through Christ's death (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:7-13). The same Hebrew word is used of the covenant or treaty between Abraham and his Amorite neighbors in Gen. 14:13.

noticeable thing in the darkness would have been the flames from this oven and lamp. This signified God's presence and guarantee to Abram that He would fulfill the promises previously spoken. God often revealed Himself in the form of smoke and fire in Scripture such as in Exodus 19:18. In the form of fire, God alone passed through the pieces to emphasize that He alone would fulfill the obligations made to Abram.

B. The details of the covenant (15:18-21)

God not only answered Abram with the symbolic gesture of the fire passing through the sacrifices, but with His spoken word as well in the form of a covenant. The **key word** covenant refers to one's pledge to do something for another. This word has not been used with God as the subject since God made His covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18; 9:9, 11-13, 15-17.

Through this covenant, God obligated Himself to Abram and his descendants. God's covenant to Abram here is unconditional, meaning that God Himself will fulfill it without asking Abram to meet any conditions. The details of this covenant involve the land God would give to Abram's "seed" or descendants that extends from the River of Egypt (a likely reference to the Nile River) to the Euphrates River (15:18). The Euphrates runs from Turkey through Syria (as the northern boundary) down past Iraq. This territory included the groups mentioned in 15:19-21, that occupied the promised land at the time of God's covenant to Abram.

Conclusion

The LORD told Abram at the beginning of this passage not to fear. Maybe Abram was fearful after his encounter with the kings he fought, wondering what other conflicts might arise. God reassured Abram by reminding him of past blessings foretold and revealing to him what lay ahead for his descendants. Abram himself was told that he would die in peace at a good old age. That word from the LORD was no doubt comforting to him.

God is a promise-keeping God. Believers should remember that God's promises revealed to them in His Word will come to pass because He Himself will fulfill all things. Thanks to Jesus Christ, who was one of Abram's descendants, those who believe in His death and resurrection have great hope in a future with Him in the new heaven and earth!

Apply It

- **Avoid the error** of doubting God's promises (15:3).
- **Follow the example** of Abram who believed in the LORD (15:6).
- **Praise God** that He does not forget His promises (15:7, 18).
- **Praise God** and **believe the truth** that He judges those who oppress His people (15:14).

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Six: They Did it Their Way

Read Genesis 16:1-16

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that God's will must be accomplished His way as man's way can lead to much trouble.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 16:1-16

Lesson 6

THEY DID IT THEIR WAY

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
Go in unto my maid, despise, Beerlahairoi
2. What comparison do you note in this passage?
Ishmael compared to a wild donkey.
3. What cause/effect relationships are noted in this passage?

Sarai's idea for Abram to have sexual relations with Hagar (cause) so that they might have children through her (effect; 16:2b). When Hagar conceived (cause), she then began to despise her mistress (effect; 16:4b).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the cultural/historical background of this passage?
Ancient near eastern customs allowed for a female slave to be used for bearing children if the wife was barren.
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
In Genesis 15:4-5, God told Abram that he would have a child or heir from his own body which would result in many descendants.
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?

Despise means to consider a person of no account or to look down upon someone. "The LORD judge between me and thee" marks an expression of hostility or conflict with another. *Beerlahairoi* means "the well of the Living One who sees me."

4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?
Genesis 11:30 first records Sarai's barrenness.

Abram and Sarai's attempt to fulfill God's will by devising their own way (16:2-4a). Hagar who despised/looked down on another (16:4b). Sarai's revenge by treating another person harshly (16:6).

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
2. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
That He "hears" our affliction, "sees" our plight, and shows us mercy (16:11,13).

Get Attention: Ask learners if, when putting something together that warns “assembly required” do they: 1. Find the instruction sheet first and follow step-by-step directions? Or 2. begin instinctively putting it together and only look at instructions as a last resort? Instructions are important!

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Six: They Did it Their Way Genesis 16:1-16

Part One: Sarai's Plan (16:1-4a)

A. The reason for the plan (16:1)

B. The details of the plan (16:2a-b)

C. The completion of the plan (16:2c-4a)

Part Two: Sarai's Problem (16:4b-6)

A. Her problem with Hagar (16:4b)

B. Her problem with Abram (16:5)

C. Her problem with herself (16:6)

Part Three: The Angel of the Lord Appeared to Hagar (16:7-14)

A. He inquired of her (16:7-8)

B. He instructed her (16:9)

C. He informed her (16:10-12)

D. Hagar named the LORD (16:13-14)

Part Four: The Birth of Ishmael (16:15-16)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Six: They Did it Their Way Genesis 16:1-16

Aim: The learner will understand that God's will must be accomplished His way as man's way can lead to much trouble.

Introduction

In 1968, Paul Anka wrote a song entitled, "My Way." Frank Sinatra made the song popular in 1969 and it continues to be a popular song today around the world. The song is about a man who charted his own course through life. One of the famous lyrics of the song includes, "I did it my way." The theme of doing life "my way" has been the theme of many people throughout history. That same theme shows up in Genesis 16:1-16 in the life of Abram and Sarai. In Genesis 15:4-5, the **immediate context**, God told Abram that he would have a child or heir from his own body which would result in many descendants. God's promise of a child did not come with a date of fulfillment. As time rolled along, Sarai became impatient and thought of a way to bring about the promised heir. The problem with her way is that it was not God's intended way to bring about the promised son.

Part One: Sarai's Plan (16:1-4a)

A. The reason for the plan (16:1)

The opening of this passage reminds the reader that Sarai could not bear children for Abram (16:1a). The Scripture first records Sarai's barrenness in Genesis 11:30, a **related passage**. Such a condition carried quite the stigma of shame for a woman in this culture and became a heavy burden for her to bear. Genesis 16:1 also introduces the reader to Sarai's Egyptian handmaid, named Hagar (16:1b). She played a crucial role in the events recorded in this chapter. Some scholars believe that Hagar's name comes from a Hebrew root word meaning "stranger." A similar Hebrew word is used in Genesis 15:13 when the LORD told Abram that his descendants would be a "stranger" in the land of Egypt. Hagar the Egyptian seems to foreshadow Israel's future trouble with Egypt, prophesied in 15:13.

B. The details of the plan (16:2a-b)

Sarai's barrenness caused her to think of a plan to correct her situation. Sarai approached her husband with an idea. She began by placing blame on the LORD for her predicament, "Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing" (16:2a). The LORD had a distinct reason for her barrenness, namely, to demonstrate His glory by giving them a son in their old age when they were unable to conceive on their own. However, Sarai perceived her barrenness as a problem. She pleaded with Abram ("I pray thee") to "go in unto my maid." Noted as a **cause and effect**, this **key phrase** refers to Sarai's idea for Abram to have sexual relations with Hagar (cause) so that they might have children through her (effect; 16:2b). According to the **historical/cultural context**, ancient near eastern customs allowed for a female slave to be used for bearing children if the wife was barren. However, God did not intend this custom to provide the answer for the promised son, not to mention that this is not God's design for marriage.

Leader's Guide: Genesis 15:2 also alludes to the fact that, up to this point, Abram remained childless.

Leader's Guide: It is reasonable to assume that Hagar was acquired when Abram and Sarai were in Egypt (Genesis 12:16).

Leader's Guide: In parts one and two of this lesson, you will notice verse designations that include letters – 2a, 2b, 2c, etc. These letters represent a different portion of a verse. For example, 2a would be the first part of a verse, 2b the middle portion, and 2c the latter part.

Leader's Guide: It is important to note that although Abram's having sexual relations with Hagar is an immoral issue, the text does not focus on this aspect, but on Abram and Sarai's impatience of not waiting on God. In other words, do not allow the lesson to become derailed on whether or not having more than one wife is permissible, for the Scripture elsewhere does not allow for it (1 Corinthians 7:2).

Leader's Guide: According to an old rabbinical or Jewish writing, a man could divorce his wife for barrenness if she produced no child after ten years (Genesis Rabbah 45.3). Some scholars wonder if something like this was on Sarai's mind when she came up with this plan.

Leader's Guide: Genesis 17 is where Abram and Sarai's names are changed to Abraham and Sarah.

Leader's Guide: This same phrase is used regarding the tension between Jacob and his father-in-law Laban in Genesis 31:53.

C. The completion of the plan (16:2c-4a)

Abram listened to his wife's plan (16:2c). In the form of a **cause and effect**, Sarai took her handmaid (cause) and gave her to Abram that she might become his wife (effect; 16:3). The Scripture also notes that Abram had lived in Canaan now for ten years. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran to sojourn in Canaan, and now he was eighty-five. God promised Abram many descendants when he left Haran, but still, they possessed no firstborn child. Sarai and Abram were getting anxious. Abram was told he would have a child from his own flesh in Genesis 15:4. It is not until 17:16 that God told Abraham that this child would be through Sarah (see also 17:19, 21). According to the Scriptural record, Sarah did not hear that she would bear this son until Genesis 18:10. When God makes a promise, regardless of the amount of time that has expired, He will fulfill it in His perfect timing and in His way. **Avoid the error** of attempting to fulfill God's will through devices of your own making.

Abram did as Sarai told him. Stated as a **cause and effect**, he had relations with Hagar (cause) and she conceived (effect; 16:4a). Sarai's plan had worked, or so she thought.

Part Two: Sarai's Problem (16:4b-6)

A. Her problem with Hagar (16:4b)

One would think that Hagar's conception would bring great delight to Sarai, but it only brought problems. The first problem she experienced involved Hagar. In the form of a **cause and effect**, when Hagar saw that she conceived (cause), she then began to despise her mistress (effect; 16:4b). The **key word** despise means to consider a person of no account or to look down upon someone. The Hebrew word translated "mistress" refers to a lady or queen mother. Here it refers to Sarai as the queen mother of the household. Hagar now had the upper hand as she produced a child when Sarai could not. No matter the circumstance, we should never look down upon another, a definite **error to avoid**.

B. Her problem with Abram (16:5)

Sarai had a problem with her handmaid, but her problems were not over. Her second problem involved her husband. Just as she blamed God for her barrenness, she now blamed Abram for her problem with Hagar, "my wrong be upon thee" (16:5a). Although this was her idea, she now blamed her husband. Sarai repeated Hagar's despising of her (16:5b). Furthermore, she said to Abram, "the LORD judge between me and thee." This **key phrase** marks an expression of hostility or conflict with another. A plan that Sarai thought would bring her joy, now brought tension in their marriage.

C. Her problem with herself (16:6)

You may have heard the expression, "you are your own worst enemy." The third problem Sarai possessed involved herself. Abram, not appreciating the blame his wife placed upon him, told Sarai concerning her handmaid, "do to her as it pleaseth thee." This **key phrase** literally means to do what is "good" in your sight. Sarai heard what she wanted to hear from Abram. What was "good" in her sight was to mistreat her handmaid, which is not good at all. She "dealt hardly" with

Hagar, meaning that she afflicted or oppressed her in some way. As a **cause and effect**, after Sarai mistreated her handmaid (cause), Hagar fled (effect). **Avoid the error** of exacting revenge on another when that person looks down on you.

Part Three: The Angel of the Lord Appeared to Hagar (16:7-14)

A. He inquired of her (16:7-8)

Sarai's treatment of her handmaid placed Hagar in a bad predicament now that she was with child and wandering in the wilderness alone. The angel of the LORD found Hagar by a fountain or spring of water near Shur, an area east of Egypt (16:7). This verse marks the first instance in Scripture of the "angel of the LORD." Many scholars believe the angel of the LORD here is a reference to a pre-incarnate state of Jesus (before He took on human flesh) as Hagar calls Him "God" in 16:13. The angel of the LORD inquired from her regarding two things, basically asking: (1) "Where have you come from?" and (2) "Where are you going?" (16:8). Notice, Hagar only answered the first question when she replied that she fled from her Sarai, her mistress.

B. He instructed her (16:9)

Notice the **cause and effect** in 16:9. After inquiring about her comings and goings, the angel of the LORD instructed or commanded Hagar to return to Sarai (cause), and to subject herself under her hands (effect). Abram told Sarai that her handmaid was in her "hand." Now, the angel of the LORD told Hagar to go back under her "hands." The wilderness was no place to have a child. Furthermore, God also had plans for her unborn son.

C. He informed her (16:10-12)

The angel of the LORD also informed Hagar of some important things regarding her son. **First**, God intended to multiply her seed so much that the number would be hard to count (16:10). This sounds very similar to God's promise to Abram in Genesis 13:16 and 15:5. God would later promise that twelve princes would come from Ishmael in 17:20, and these princes are named in Genesis 25:13-15. **Second**, the LORD informed her that she would have a son and that his name will be called Ishmael (16:11). As a **cause and effect**, the reason his name would be called Ishmael (effect) was because the LORD heard her affliction as Ishmael's name means "God hears." **Third**, the LORD informed Hagar of what kind of man her son would become. The LORD **compared** him to a wild (i.e. donkey) man, and as such, his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand will be against him. Note the **repeated** use of "hands" thus far in this passage. Hagar was in Sarai's "hand," and eventually Ishmael would place his "hand" against others as their "hand" would be against him. **Fourth**, the LORD informed her that he would dwell near his brothers (16:12).

D. Hagar named the LORD (16:13-14)

In response to the Lord's instruction and information, Hagar gave a name to the LORD. The name she gave Him is noted as a **cause and effect**. She called His name, "Thou God seest me," (effect) because she looked after the One who sees her (16:13). After Hagar conceived, she "saw" and despised Sarai her

Leader's Guide: The text does not say specifically how Sarai mistreated Hagar.

Leader's Guide: The phrase, "angel of the LORD" is mentioned 48 times in Scripture. Other instances where the phrase may also refer to Jesus include Genesis 22:11, 15, when the LORD stopped Abram from sacrificing Isaac; Exodus 3:2-4 when He appeared to Moses at the burning bush; and Judges 13:21-22 when the LORD appeared to Manoah regarding the birth of Samson.

Leader's Guide: Joseph would be sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:25-28; 39:1-2).

Leader's Guide: Some translations say at the end of 16:13, "I have remained alive after seeing Him." This places a focus on Hagar's emphasis upon seeing God and continuing to live. God told Moses, "there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). However, like Moses, Hagar did not gaze upon God's full glory.

mistress (16:4). However, when God “saw” Hagar’s plight, He showed her mercy. What a **contrast** in responses to what each one saw! **Praise God** that He both “hears” our affliction and “sees” our plight and often responds with mercy. Also, the well where she encountered the angel of the LORD was called Beerlahairoi (beh-air-lay-high-roy). This **key word** means “the well of the Living One who sees me.” Scripture states this well was located between Kadesh and Bered, northeast of Egypt.

Part Four: The Birth of Ishmael (16:15-16)

One more **cause and effect** states that Hagar bore Abram a son (cause) and Abram named him Ishmael (effect; 16:15). Both Hagar (16:11) and Abram were on the same page in the naming of their son. The Scripture further states that Abram was 86-years-old when Ishmael was born (16:16).

Conclusion

Sarai and Abram came up with a way to bring about a son, but it was not the way God intended to bring them their promised son. Their way brought about a great deal of trouble for Sarai, Abram, and Hagar. God’s will for them, however, would not be deterred as later chapters in Genesis will confirm. God’s will is best, and the way of God’s will is best. May we always seek to do God’s will according to His way.

Apply It

- **Avoid the error of . . .**
 - Abram and Sarai who attempted to fulfill God’s will by devising their own way, (16:2-4a).
 - Hagar who despised or looked down on another, (16:4b).
 - Sarai who exacted revenge by treating another person harshly, (16:6).
- **Praise God** that He “hears” our affliction, “sees” our plight, and shows us mercy, (16:11, 13).

NOTES

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Seven: The Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant **Read Genesis 17:1-27**

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that God always remains true to His covenant and requires obedience from those with whom He makes His covenant.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed.

The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.

Genesis 17:1-27

Lesson 7

THE SIGN OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
Almighty, walk before me, perfect, without blemish, seed, circumcision, token
2. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?
3. What contrast do you note in this passage?

Abram responded in humility (effect) to God's reminder of the covenant (cause; 17:2-3). God changed Abram's name to Abraham (effect) because He made him the father of many nations (17:5).

Ishmael would father twelve princes, making him into a great nation (17:20). In **contrast**, God's covenant would be established through Isaac whom Sarah would bear within a year (17:21).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
In Genesis 16, Sarai gave her handmaid to Abram as a wife and his union with Hagar produced Ishmael.
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages which need to be studied?
The word "token" or "sign" was also used of the rainbow (Genesis 9:12). Paul would warn the Jews not to think of circumcision in this way (Romans 2:25-29).

Almighty speaks of God's great magnitude and power. "Walk before me" refers to the way Abram was to live his life before God. Perfect does not mean that God commanded Abram to be sinless, but rather blameless. Seed is singular and likely refers to all Abraham's descendants. Token refers to a sign (17:11b).

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
That the LORD is the Almighty God (17:1)
2. Is there an example to follow or error to avoid in this passage?
Abram's humility before the LORD (17:3) and obedience to the LORD's command (17:23).
3. Is there something to praise God for in this passage?
His everlasting covenant with Abraham (17:7, 13). His listening to our pleas (17:20).

Get Attention: Ask learners if they know the meaning of their name(s). People are often named after family members, Biblical characters, celebrities, or a name picked out of a book or list of possible baby names. Explain that names in Biblical times usually had special meanings. This lesson involves meaningful name changes.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Seven: The Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant Genesis 17:1-27

Part One: God's Covenant with Abraham (17:1-8)

- A. *The LORD revealed Himself further to Abram* (17:1)
- B. Abram humbled Himself before the LORD (17:2-3)
- C. *God changed Abram's name* (17:4-6)
- D. *God promised an everlasting covenant* (17:7-8)

Part Two: The Sign of the Covenant (17:9-14)

- A. *God gave a command to obey the covenant* (17:9)
- B. *God gave the sign of the covenant* (17:10-13)
- C. *God gave a warning concerning the covenant* (17:14)

Part Three: Sarah's Part in the Covenant (17:15-17)

- A. *God changed Sarai's name* (17:15)
- B. *God promised to bless Sarah with a son* (17:16)
- C. Abraham laughed in disbelief (17:17)

Part Four: God's Promise Concerning Ishmael (17:18-22)

- A. *God confirmed His covenant with Isaac* (17:18-19)
- B. *God promised His blessing toward Ishmael* (17:20-22)

Part Five: Abraham's Obedience to the Sign of the Covenant (17:23-27)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Student Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Seven: The Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant Genesis 17:1-27

Aim: The learner will understand that God always remains true to His covenant and requires obedience from those with whom He makes His covenant.

Introduction

A famous saying that comes out of Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, states, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet." While that may hold true for changing the name of a rose, names and their meanings held a prominent place in Old Testament times. Genesis 17:1-27 introduces the reader to four new names: Almighty God, Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. The Scripture reveals these names in connection with both God's covenant and the sign of the covenant with Abram. While names changed in this story, God's faithfulness to His covenant remained the same.

Part One: God's Covenant with Abraham (17:1-8)

A. The LORD revealed Himself further to Abram (17:1)

In Genesis 16, the **immediate context**, Sarai gave her handmaid to Abram as a wife and his union with Hagar produced Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old at the time of Ishmael's birth (16:16). The LORD appeared to Abram thirteen years later when Abram was ninety-nine years old (17:1a). The first new name in this Genesis narrative pertains to the LORD. He revealed Himself to Abram as "Almighty God," marking the first usage of this name in Scripture (17:1b). The **key word** Almighty speaks of God's great magnitude and power. He is the One who rules over all. **Believe the truth** that God is indeed the Almighty One.

The Almighty God commanded Abram to walk before Him and be perfect. The **key phrase** "walk before me" refers to the way Abram was to live his life before God. The **key word** perfect does not mean that God commanded Abram to be sinless, but rather blameless. No person can be sinless before God, but God's people can be blameless, which means that one's character is whole or intact without any major blemishes. The Bible uses the same Hebrew word to describe Noah as perfect or blameless (Genesis 6:9). Not only did the LORD reveal something new about Himself as God Almighty, but revealed to Abram the kind of blameless character he needed to possess. May all God's people strive to have such blameless character.

B. Abram humbled Himself before the LORD (17:2-3)

The LORD reminded Abram of His covenant that He planned to confirm regarding the multiplication of Abram's descendants (17:2). Notice how God said, "my covenant." God not only initiated this covenant with Abram, but would faithfully carry it out. Noted as a **cause and effect**, Abram responded in humility (effect) to God's reminder of the covenant (cause; 17:2-3). Abram, so overwhelmed by God's promise, fell facedown before God. Believers today should **follow** Abram's **example** of genuine humility before the Lord. **When was the last time you truly humbled yourself before God?**

The name or title for the LORD, "God Almighty," was also used by or in connection with Jacob, Abram's grandson (Genesis 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25). This is the name by which God revealed Himself to the patriarchs (Exodus 6:3). Most usages for "God Almighty" show up in the book of Job.

Leader's Guide: The **key phrase** "without blemish" (i.e., perfect or blameless) was used to refer to the sacrificial animals that could contain no outward blemishes (Exodus 12:5).

Leader's Guide: God revealing Himself to Abram and the other patriarchs as the Almighty God was new information for them. This is often called progressive revelation where God reveals Himself more fully over time.

Leader's Guide: God refers to His covenant as "my covenant" nine times in this passage (17:2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 21). As a brief exercise, ask your learner(s) to find how many times they see this phrase.

C. God changed Abram's name (17:4-6)

Part of God's covenant involved Abram becoming the father of many nations (17:4). God previously told Abram he would make him a great nation (singular; 12:2), but this marks the first time God mentioned that many nations (plural) would come from him. To solidify this part of God's covenant, we come to the second new name in this narrative. As a **cause and effect**, God changed Abram's name to Abraham (effect) because He made him the father of many nations (17:5). The name Abram means "exalted father." The name Abraham means "father of a multitude." This father of a multitude even included kings (17:6), the greatest of them being Jesus Christ!

D. God promised an everlasting covenant (17:7-8)

God's covenant with Abraham was not a temporary deal, but an everlasting covenant (17:7). This covenant would extend past Abraham's day to his seed or descendants. The **key word** seed is singular and refers to the total of Abraham's descendants. As part of the covenant, God would promise to be their God and give them all the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. While Abraham remained a sojourner in the land, it would later become the possession of his descendants (17:8). Just like the covenant itself was everlasting, the specific promises within the covenant remained everlasting as well. **Praise God** for His everlasting covenant with Abraham.

Part Two: The Sign of the Covenant (17:9-14)

A. God gave a command to obey the covenant (17:9)

God called upon Abraham to keep His covenant, a **key word** meaning to guard or observe something. God called upon Abraham's seed to keep this covenant as well (17:9). The **key word** seed is singular and likely refers to Abraham's descendants as a whole. This marks the first time that God called upon Abraham to do something regarding this covenant. God promised many things to Abraham and his descendants, now they must guard this covenant and observe to do what is required of a covenant people.

B. God gave the sign of the covenant (17:10-13)

The requirement for Abraham and his descendants to observe involved the covenant sign of circumcision (17:10). When God made a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9, He gave Noah the sign of the rainbow. God's covenant with Abraham also involved a sign. The **key word** circumcision refers to the cutting away of the male foreskin (17:11a). God referred to this act as a token, which is a **key word** that refers to a sign (17:11b). The word "token" or "sign" was also used to refer to the sign of the rainbow in Genesis 9:12, a **related passage**. This sign must be administered to every eight-day-old male which included Abraham's direct descendants and any slave or foreigner bought with money (17:12-13). Just like the covenant itself was an everlasting covenant, the sign of the covenant was everlasting (17:13b). The rainbow after the flood would cause God to remember His covenant not to destroy all flesh with a worldwide flood. The sign of circumcision would now remind Abraham and His descendants of God's covenant with them.

Notice that circumcision is meant to be a sign of the covenant, not a

Leader's Guide: Although we know from history that Israel failed to conquer all the land God promised them and even today only control a small portion of that land, God's promise to His people remains intact. Remember, Abraham's many promised descendants are not just physical, but spiritual as well (Romans 9). God's people will inherit the earth and there is a new heaven and earth that await God's people (Revelation 21:1).

Leader's Guide: Depending upon the maturity of your learner(s), you may want to mention that the male foreskin is what surrounds the external male reproductive organ.

guarantee that one is right with God. The people of Israel would later equate circumcision with salvation. Even today, some circumcise for health reasons, tradition, or religious reasons, but the Bible makes it clear that circumcision does not save. The apostle Paul, in some **related passages**, would warn the Jews not to think of circumcision in this way (Romans 2:25-29). True, spiritual circumcision is of the heart within those who have faith (Galatians 5:6). Some today want to place their hopes in their baptism, church membership, or good works. Salvation only comes through grace, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. God gave a warning concerning the covenant (17:14)

Failure to observe this sign of the covenant came with serious consequences. Stated as a **cause and effect**, any male child who did not receive circumcision (cause) was to be “cut off from his people” (effect; 17:14a). This **key phrase** means to be eliminated or removed, no longer to be considered as part of the group. God clearly equated the failure to be circumcised as breaking His covenant (17:14b).

Part Three: Sarah's Part in the Covenant (17:15-17)

A. God changed Sarai's name (17:15)

The third new name in this passage involved Sarai. God changed her name to Sarah. The two names certainly resemble each other in meaning. “Sarai” means “princess,” while “Sarah” means “noble lady.” Her slight name change indicated that she, like Abraham, belonged under God's covenant.

B. God promised to bless Sarah with a son (17:16)

Sarah would play an integral part in God's covenantal plan by giving birth to the promised son. God would bless Sarah and allow her to have Abraham's son, that is, a son from both of them. This son would be the beginning of great things to come as nations and kings would come from this initial son.

C. Abraham laughed in disbelief (17:17)

Abraham could hardly believe his ears! His old, barren wife would have a son? As a **cause and effect**, when Abraham heard God speak of His blessings upon Sarah (cause), he fell upon his face before God and laughed (effects; 17:17). His laughter likely highlighted his momentary disbelief. How could a 100-year-old man and his 90-year-old wife have a son? This verse says specifically that Abraham said this in his heart, which means that he likely did not vocalize his disbelief, but thought it. Whether one vocalizes disbelief in God's promises or thinks it, a doubt is a doubt. Believers should **avoid the error** of doubting God's promises.

→ **Leader's Guide:** Some may wonder if Abraham's laughter was more laughter of praise in God's blessing. Two things might contradict this understanding. First, Abraham immediately questions how a child can be born to a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman (17:17). Second, Abraham then appealed to God concerning Ishmael, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee!” (17:18). Here, Abraham may be wondering why God's covenant could not be fulfilled through Ishmael.

Part Four: God's Promise Concerning Ishmael (17:18-22)

A. God confirmed His covenant with Isaac (17:18-19)

In Abraham's state of doubt, he expressed to God, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee!” (17:18). Abraham seemed to be saying to God, “Let the covenant come true with Ishmael.” God stressed to Abraham that Sarah would indeed have a son, and his name will be called Isaac (17:19). This marks the fourth and final new name in this passage. The name Isaac means “he laughs.” How ironic and what

a great play on words—Abraham laughed, and God named his promised son “he laughs.” Sarah would soon laugh as well when she heard that she would have a son in Genesis 18:12, the **immediate context**.

B. God promised His blessing toward Ishmael (17:20-22)

God heard Abraham’s plea for his son Ishmael. God reassured Abraham that Ishmael too would be blessed. God promised to make him fruitful and multiply his descendants abundantly. **Praise God** that He listens to our plea! Ishmael would father twelve princes making him into a great nation (17:20). In **contrast**, however, God reminded Abraham that His covenant would be established through Isaac whom Sarah would bear within a year (17:21). Abraham now knew the timing of the coming promised son. With that new information in mind, God stopped talking with Abraham and left him (17:22). The promised son would soon arrive.

Part Five: Abraham’s Obedience to the Sign of the Covenant (17:23-27)

Abraham wasted no time obeying God’s instructions about circumcision. Abraham was committed to God’s command regarding circumcision as he promptly obeyed the order. God gave instructions regarding the circumcising of every male born in his household at eight days old (17:12). However, there were already many grown men, teenagers, and possibly other male children in the household. So, in the “selfsame day” (i.e., the very same day) that God gave him the instructions, Abraham obeyed and had all the males in his household circumcised, even Abraham himself who was ninety-nine years old (17:23-24). Ishmael was thirteen years old (17:25). The text clearly emphasized again that Abraham, Ishmael, and all the males in his household received circumcision (17:26-27). Abraham serves as a great **example to follow** of perfect and whole-hearted obedience!

Conclusion

Genesis 17 marks an important moment in Abraham’s story. The LORD revealed to him that He is the Almighty God. He changed Abraham and Sarah’s names confirming to them that they played a crucial role under God’s covenant. God gave them the name of their long-awaited and promised son. God gave the sign of the covenant that would serve as a perpetual sign for the descendants of Abraham, which Abraham promptly obeyed. Spiritual descendants of Abraham (i.e., believers) should focus on the circumcision of the heart. God’s plan for redeeming mankind was alive and well because the Almighty God could and still can make the impossible come to pass!

Apply It

- **Believe the truth** that the LORD is the Almighty God (17:1).
- **Follow the example of . . .**
 - Abram’s humility before the LORD (17:3).
 - Abraham’s obedience to the LORD’s command (17:23).
- **Avoid the error** of doubting God’s promises (17:17).
- **Praise God** for . . .
 - His everlasting covenant with Abraham (17:7, 13).
 - listening to our pleas (17:20).

Leader’s Guide: The Arab people circumcise their male children at thirteen years of age to coincide with the age Ishmael was circumcised. The Arab people are descendants of Ishmael.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Eight: Nothing is Too Hard for the LORD

Read Genesis 18:1-33

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will believe that nothing is too difficult for God.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 18:1-33

Lesson 8

NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR THE LORD

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
Bowed, "According to the time of life," "It ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women," Righteous, Wicked.
2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
Righteous in contrast to wicked.
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

When Sarah heard the promise (cause), she "laughed within herself" and asked, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (effects). Sarah denied her laughter (effect) because of absolute fear (18:15a).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
Importance was placed upon hospitality, even to strangers in Abraham's day.
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
Remember that Abraham was ninety-nine years old (17:24).
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Bowed is often used in Scripture to describe an act of worship (18:2). "According to the time of life" referred to the nine months when expecting a child. "It ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" simply means that Sarah's age prevented her from conceiving a child. Righteous refers to those right, correct, and lawful. Wicked refers to those guilty of immorality and hostility toward God.

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?
Abraham's hospitality and appeal to God's character when communicating with Him.
3. Is there an attitude to change or a sin to confess in this passage?
Doubting the LORD's message.

"Through faith," Sarah conceived, delivered, and "judged him faithful who had promised." (Hebrews 11:11). God's actions toward Sodom demonstrate His ability to protect the righteous while punishing the wicked (2 Peter 2:6-9).

The LORD is Judge of all the earth, right in all His judgments, and expects His friends to lead their households in His ways. He is powerful and nothing is too hard for Him.

Get Attention: Ask learners if there has ever been a time in their life when they doubted God's plan for their life? What was the outcome? Considering what God did for Sarah, how impossible is your situation?

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Eight: Nothing is Too Hard for the LORD Genesis 18:1-33

Part One: A Child is Not Too Hard (18:1-15)

A. The LORD appeared to Abraham (18:1)

B. Abraham's response (18:2-8)

C. The LORD said (18:9-10)

D. Sarah's response (18:11-12)

E. The Lord said to Abraham and responded to Sarah (18:13-15)

Part Two: Punishing Sin and Protecting the Righteous
is Not Too Hard (18:16-33)

A. The LORD's question (18:17- 21)

1. "Shall I hide from Abraham?" (18:17-19)

2. Because the cry is great (18:20-21)

B. Abraham's questions (18:22-33)

Apply It

- Follow the example
- Believe the truths
- Avoid the error

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Eight: Nothing is Too Hard for the LORD Genesis 18:1-33

Aim: The learner will believe that nothing is too difficult for God.

Introduction

Genesis 18 records the LORD's third direct contact with Abraham. First, He told Abram to leave his father's house for an unspecified land. The LORD further promised to make Abram a great nation and name. He also promised blessing for all families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3). Second, the LORD appeared to him and established His covenant with Abram, changing his name to Abraham (Genesis 17:1-5). Now, with the third contact, the LORD appeared with two messages for Abraham that related primarily to His power and justice.

Part One: A Child is Not Too Hard (18:1-15)

A. The LORD appeared to Abraham (18:1)

During the "heat of the day" or at noon, the LORD appeared to Abraham in the "plains of Mamre" or the "oaks of Mamre" as he rested in the tent door (18:1). This is the third time Genesis **repeated** "plains of Mamre" as the location for where Abraham lived.

B. Abraham's response (18:2-8)

Abraham looked up and saw three men standing "by him" (18:2a). When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them. Upon reaching them, he "bowed himself toward the ground" (18:2b). Although the passage at first implies the men were very close to Abraham, the context makes it clear that they stood close enough for him to see them but far enough for Abraham to run and meet them. Remember that the **immediate context** tells readers that Abraham was ninety-nine years old (17:24).

Two things indicate that Abraham responded to these men as his superiors. **First**, he bowed on the ground before them. The **key word** bowed is often used in Scripture to describe an act of worship (18:2). **Second**, Abraham addressed one of the men as, "My Lord." The phrase appears in Scripture many times as a reference to one's master. Abraham also identified himself as the man's servant and pleaded with him "if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant" (18:3).

Abraham showed hospitality that was customary for that time. He offered water to wash the men's feet and invited them to rest under the tree. He pledged to fetch a "morsel [or just a little bit] of bread" as means to comfort their hearts (i.e., refresh themselves) before they left. The men encouraged him to do so (18:5). Abraham then hurried into the tent and instructed Sarah to begin baking (18:6). He ran to the herd, chose a tender and good calf, and gave it to a young man to prepare (18:7). Abraham set butter, milk, and the prepared calf before the men. They ate as he stood by them under the tree (18:8). The meal was significantly more than a mere "morsel of bread" (18:5). **Cultural background** indicates the importance placed upon hospitality, even to strangers in Abraham's day. Since

Leader's Guide: Mamre is located near Hebron, approximately 20 miles south of Jerusalem. The most accurate translation likely refers to trees rather than plains. The phrase "plains of Mamre" appears in Genesis 13:18 and 14:13).

Leader's Guide: Abraham called for Sarah to use three measures of fine meal. The term used for "measure" equaled slightly more than 10 quarts or one-third of a bushel. So, Abraham wanted Sarah to use approximately 30 quarts or one bushel of fine meal to prepare these cakes.

Leader's Guide: Customs of the day indicate it was common for a host to stand while guests ate.

restaurants and convenience stores did not exist, people depended upon hospitality from others. **Follow the example** of Abraham and be hospitable.

C. The LORD said (18:9-10)

Although hospitality is indeed a good thing, the primary focus of this passage is more significant. Abraham's visitors asked, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" to which he replied, "Behold, in the tent" (18:9). **Cultural background** reveals that a woman's presence would not be acceptable before male guests. One of the guests confirmed that "I will certainly return . . . according to the time of life . . . and Sarah thy wife shall have a son" (18:10). The **key phrase** "according to the time of life" referred to the nine months when a woman is expecting a child. The guest must have been sitting near the tent door because Sarah heard his words as she was behind him. This promise was repeated from Genesis 17:21, the **immediate context**, that Sarah would bear a son named Isaac.

D. Sarah's response (18:11-12)

Genesis 18:11 describes Abraham and Sarah as "old and well stricken in age." The **key phrase** "it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" simply means that Sarah's age prevented her from conceiving a child.

Notice the **cause and effect** in 18:12. When Sarah heard the promise of having a son (cause), she "laughed within herself" and asked, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (effects). Sarah's question demonstrates her acceptance that both she and Abraham were old, worn out, and beyond the ability to have the pleasure of bearing a child together. Sarah's response seems to express unbelief. The Bible does not tell us if Abraham had shared with her the promise given to him in Genesis 17:21. Although Sarah simply may not have known about the promise, her questions appear to reveal her doubts, knowing the lack of physical ability within both herself and her husband.

For the sixth time, Genesis **repeated** that Abraham and Sarah were advanced in years (12:4; 16:16; 17:1, 17, 24). Why did Moses repeatedly write of Abraham and Sarah as "too old?" It seems that he tried to make it completely clear that they were physically incapable of having a child. Thus, requiring the birth of Isaac to be dependent upon a genuine act of God.

E. The Lord said to Abraham and responded to Sarah (18:13-15)

For the first time in Genesis 18, the passage identifies one of the men. "And the LORD said" is a **key phrase** that revealed the personal name of God, Yahweh. God Himself appeared to Abraham in human form. He asked Abraham why Sarah had laughed at the message that she would bear a child. Sarah had asked, "Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?" (18:13). Notice again, Genesis **repeated** Sarah's age as being "old."

However, the LORD addressed her question with His own question, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" (18:14a). This is a rhetorical question, which means the expected answer should be obvious. The expected answer is "No" in that nothing is too hard or difficult for the LORD. He reemphasized that He would return within the time of life (i.e., months of pregnancy) and Sarah would have a son. It was not too hard for the LORD to start Abraham and Sarah's family. The LORD's

Leader's Guide: The passage does not reveal the identity of these men; however later chapters do. For example, Genesis 21:1-5 implies that this is the LORD speaking.

Leader's Guide: Fulfillment of the promise seemed impossible to Sarah.

Leader's Guide: It may be worth noting that while the Scripture identifies Sarah as barren (Genesis 11:30), Abraham fathered Ishmael at the age of 86 years (Genesis 16:16).

Leader's Guide: The LORD also appeared in human form to Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15).

power was the solution to Sarah's doubts and what seemed like the couple's problems related to being "old."

In response to His comments, Sarah denied her laughter. Notice the **cause and effect**, she denied (effect) because of absolute fear (18:15a). The LORD replied directly to her denial, "No, but you did laugh" (18:15b). It seems unclear as to why the LORD confronted Sarah directly, but the New Testament confirms that at some point her doubt turned to faith. Hebrews 11:11, a **related passage**, verified that "through faith" she "received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

Believe the truth that the LORD is powerful and that nothing is too hard for Him. **Avoid the error** of doubting His message.

Part Two: Punishing Sin and Protecting the Righteous is Not Too Hard (18:16-33)

The men stood up and looked toward Sodom. Abraham went to "bring" or send them on their way (18:16).

A. The LORD's question (18:17- 21)

1. "Shall I hide from Abraham?" (18:17-19)

The LORD questioned, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (18:17). Notice the **causes** that resulted in the LORD's question. **First**, He saw that Abraham would certainly become a great and mighty nation through which all nations would be blessed (18:18). **Second**, the LORD said, "I know him," a **key phrase** basically meaning "I have made Abraham My friend" or "I have chosen him" (18:19a). The LORD intended the friendship to have a purpose, that Abraham would command or direct his children and household to "keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" so that the LORD would bring about what He had spoken to Abraham (18:19b). The "way of the LORD" refers to one's moral character and course of life focused upon pleasing the LORD. The term "justice" refers to righteousness while "judgment" refers to making proper decisions. **Believe the truth** that the LORD expects no less from His friends today.

2. Because the cry is great (18:20-21)

The LORD revealed, "that thing which I do" (18:17). Notice the **causes and effect**. **First**, the "cry" of Sodom and Gomorrah is "great." The word "cry" refers to an outcry of distress by victims calling out for help. The word "great" refers to an abundance. **Second**, their sin is "very grievous" or exceedingly heavy (18:20). Because of these, the LORD declared "I will go down now and see" if the sin of Sodom truly equaled the outcry. He would know if the cries were not true (effect; 18:21). Thus, this would leave no room for Sodom to claim her innocence and His unjust punishment. His investigation of Sodom exemplifies that the LORD is fully aware of the truth when He disciplines.

B. Abraham's questions (18:22-33)

At this point in the text, the men turned their faces away from Abraham and went toward Sodom. However, Abraham remained and stood before the LORD (18:22). The close relationship detailed in 18:17-21 created a foundation upon which Abraham could address the LORD with boldness and respect.

Leader's Guide: At the time, the city named Sodom was likely located south of the Dead Sea on a plain now covered by water. Other cities of the plain included Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar.

Leader's Guide: Both terms "great" and "mighty" refer to numerical size.

Leader's Guide: Although debated, a **related passage** reported sins of pride, neglect of the poor and needy, and "detestable things" in Sodom (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

Leader's Guide: It is important to note that the flood occurred because of the corruption and wickedness of mankind. The flood was not about population control as some have proposed.

Abraham drew near to the LORD and asked "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (18:23). Abraham's question seems to demonstrate his awareness of Sodom's sinful condition. The **key word** righteous refers to those right, correct, and lawful. The **key word** wicked refers to those guilty of immorality and hostility toward God. In 2 Peter 2:6-9, a **related passage**, Peter addressed the same question and concluded that God's actions toward Sodom demonstrate His ability to protect the righteous while punishing the wicked.

Abraham continued asking the LORD to reconsider His planned destruction of the city and spare the place should He discover fifty righteous people in Sodom (18:24). Abraham basically **repeated** the **key phrase** "destroy the righteous with the wicked" three times (18:23-25) and urged the LORD twice that such action should be "far" away from Him. Abraham questioned, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (18:25). **Believe the truth** that the LORD is Judge of all the earth and that He is indeed right in all His judgments. **Follow the example** of Abraham and appeal to God's character when communicating with Him.

The LORD affirmed that He would spare Sodom if fifty righteous persons were found (18:26). Abraham's continued questioning showed a proper understanding of His relationship to God. He recognized the delicate position of being "dust and ashes" yet speaking to the Lord as he continued to bargain w(18:27-28). He asked to speak again (18:29). He acknowledged the LORD's right to be angry with him (18:30). He noted his excess and pleaded for the Lord not to be angry (18:31-32). In increments of fives and tens, Abraham lowered the requests from fifty to ten righteous ones for whom the LORD would spare the city. Each time the LORD agreed. Following His pledge not to destroy the city for the sake of ten righteous individuals, the LORD went His way and Abraham returned home (18:33).

Conclusion

In this contact with Abraham, the LORD related two primary messages. **First**, the long-awaited promised child would come within the year to Abraham and Sarah despite their inability to have children. Such a thing is not too hard for God. **Second**, the LORD is a righteous judge. He listens to the cries against sin, is aware of sin, and carries out what is right justice. It is not too hard for God to spare the righteous while punishing the wicked.

Apply It

- **Follow the example** of Abraham and . . .
 - be hospitable.
 - appeal to God's character when communicating with Him.
- **Believe the truth** that the LORD
 - is Judge of all the earth and that He is indeed right in all His judgments.
 - expects His friends to lead their households in the ways of the LORD.
 - is powerful and that nothing is too hard for Him.
- **Avoid the error** of doubting His message.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Nine: Protecting the Righteous while Punishing the Wicked

Read Genesis 19:1-38

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that God can protect the righteous while punishing the wicked. remnant.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 19:1-38

Lesson 9

PROTECTING THE RIGHTEOUS WHILE PUNISHING THE WICKED

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
young, old, all the people from every quarter, that we may know them, good in your eyes
2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
Sitting at the gate may imply that he held a leadership position or place of honor in the city.
2. What is the immediate context of the passage?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
The Lord knows how to protect the godly and righteous while punishing the ungodly.
2. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
Hesitating in response to God's instruction. Disobeying the warning of God's messenger. Breaking God's laws.
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage?
His mercies that may take strong hold of you! That He keeps His promises.

The angels' abiding in the street in contrast to staying in Lot's home (19:2). Lot went from wealth equal to that of Abraham to living in a cave with basically nothing (Genesis 13:5-13; 19:30).

Lot should take his family (effect) "for we will destroy this place" (cause). The destruction is an effect caused by the increasingly great cry of Sodom's wickedness before the face of the LORD.

Three men visited Abraham and shared with him that Sodom would be destroyed. The LORD responded to Abraham's request that the city would be spared if ten righteous people were found in the city (Genesis 18:16-33).

Young could refer to boys or girls aged from infancy to adolescence. In 19:4, the word is used specifically of boys. Old referred to elderly men. "All the people from every quarter" is masculine and understood as referring to men from every part of Sodom.

2 Peter 2:6-10 describes Lot as a righteous man and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning to those who would live ungodly lives.

Get Attention: Read 2 Peter 2:6-10, and discuss how the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a warning to those choosing to live ungodly lives.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Nine: Protecting the Righteous while Punishing the Wicked Genesis 19:1-38

Part One: Nighttime Fell on Sodom (19:1-14)

A. Time for an evening meal (19:1-3)

B. Time to verify the cry against Sodom (19:4-14)

1. "Where are the men?" (19:4-7)

2. "Take my daughters" (19:8-9)

3. But the men shut the door (19:10-11)

4. The men said to Lot (19:12-14)

Part Two: Morning Arose in Sodom (19:15-29)

A. Morning arose (19:15-22)

B. When the Sun was risen (19:23-26)

C. Abraham got up (19:27-28)

D. The LORD remembered Abraham (19:29)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Student Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Nine: Protecting the Righteous while Punishing the Wicked Genesis 19:1-38

Aim: The will understand that God can protect the righteous while punishing the wicked.

Introduction

Does it seem that many criminal and immoral activities occur at night? Crime statistics released by law enforcement agencies consistently indicate drunkenness, murder, and sexual assaults occur under cover of darkness. Such was the case in Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:1-14 **repeats** the word “night” as it records what happened just as the sun went down in Sodom until the sun came up on the city’s final morning (Genesis 19:15-19).

In the **immediate context** of this lesson, three men visited Abraham and shared with him that Sodom would be destroyed. The LORD responded to Abraham’s request that the city would be spared if ten righteous people were found in the city (Genesis 18:16-33). Abraham’s nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom. The probability of Sodom’s destruction likely concerned Abraham greatly. In 2 Peter 2:6-10, a **related passage**, the author described Lot as a righteous man and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning to those who would live ungodly lives.

Part One: Nighttime Fell on Sodom (19:1-14)

A. Time for an evening meal (19:1-3)

Genesis 18:22 records that two of the three men visiting Abraham left for Sodom. The LORD, the third visitor, remained and spoke with Abraham. According to 19:1, the two men were angels who arrived in Sodom in the evening as Lot sat in the city’s gate. When Lot saw them, he stood to meet them and bowed himself to the ground. Notice the similarity in how Abraham treated his visitors (18:1-2).

Whereas the men visited Abraham at noon (18:1), they arrived in Sodom just before dark (19:1). Lot insisted that the angels come into his house for the night. They could then get up early and go on their way. In **contrast** to staying in his home, the angels declined his offer and indicated that “we will abide in the street all night” (19:2).

Lot “pressed upon them greatly” (19:3a). This means he urged or insisted that they stay in his home. Notice the **cause and effect**. His insistence caused them to turn in Lot’s direction and enter his house (effect). Lot prepared a feast that included unleavened bread, something made and eaten with haste. Lot must have sensed their urgency. They ate the meal.

B. Time to verify the cry against Sodom (19:4-14)

1. “Where are the men?” (19:4-7)

In the **immediate context**, the LORD told Abraham of His plan to visit Sodom and “see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it” (18:21). In other words, He planned to verify the wickedness of Sodom. In 19:4, the angels experienced the reality of Sodom’s sin. Before the angels and Lot’s family

Leader’s Guide: According to **historical background**, some scholars believe that Lot’s sitting at the gate implies that he held a leadership position or place of honor in the city.

Leader’s Guide: Both Abraham and Lot sat in a door or gate, bowed themselves to the ground, called themselves servants, offered to wash their visitors’ feet, and fed them before leaving.

Leader's Guide: This also verifies that Sodom did not have ten righteous people. The Bible only notes Lot as righteous (2 Peter 2:7).

Leader's Guide: The particular Hebrew word translated here as "know" appears more than 900 times in the Old Testament referring to acquaintance or perception. It occurs 15 times in reference to sexual intimacy. As such, some scholars believe the focus of Sodom's sin was inhospitality rather than sexual perversion. However, as discussed in this lesson, such an interpretation requires one to take the passage out of its context.

Leader's Guide: Lot seemed to think his daughters provided his only option to address this conflict. He likely had more than this one option. Regardless, the "end does not justify the means." Protecting his guests (a worthy end) did not make what he did right in offering his daughters.

Leader's Guide: "Judge not" is a common saying even today by people who want to ignore the advice of Christ's followers. Also, 2 Peter 2:7-8 verifies Lot's distress over Sodom's lawlessness.

could lay down for the night, a crowd of men surrounded Lot's house. The crowd included both young and old. The **key word** young could refer to boys or girls aged from infancy to adolescence. In 19:4, the word is used specifically of boys. The **key word** old referred to elderly men. The key phrase "all the people from every quarter" is masculine and understood as referring to men from every part of Sodom. This verifies what the men of Sodom did altogether.

The men called to Lot and asked, "Where are the men which came in to thee this night?" and demanded that he "bring them out unto us, that we may know them" (19:5). The **key phrase** "that we may know them" has long been understood as a reference to perverted sexual relations (i.e., homosexuality). It is true that the original Hebrew wording of the word "know" can refer broadly from simple acquaintance to sexual relations. For example, Jacob asked some men "Do you know Laban?" They responded with "We know him" (Genesis 29:5). However, the same word is used when Adam "knew" his wife Eve and she conceived their first son (Genesis 4:1).

The context of Genesis 19 seems obvious that the men of Sodom intended to "know" the angels in a sexual sense. In 19:6, Lot went outside and shut the door behind him. He pled with the men, "I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly" (19:7). If the men of Sodom simply wanted to get acquainted with the visitors, Lot could hardly call such an act wickedness. Further verification of the sexual context appears in 19:8-9.

2. "Take my daughters" (19:8-9)

What Lot did next is disturbing, to say the least. In fact, it is inexcusable. He offered his virgin daughters to the men. Just as he had pled with the men not to act wickedly toward the angels, Lot pled for them to "let me, I pray you, bring them [my daughters] out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing" because "came they under the shadow of my roof" (19:8). The **key phrase** "good in your eyes" means "whatever gives you pleasure." Ironically, Lot ignored his fatherly obligation to protect his daughters, also under the shadow of his roof.

The men of Sodom showed no interest in Lot's daughters. They became aggressive and demanded that Lot stand back. They ridiculed him as a sojourner or foreigner who came to live in their city and continually act as their judge or lawgiver. They threatened to "deal worse" with Lot than with the angels. Clearly, this confirms their intent to harm the angels. They pushed so hard against Lot that the door was about to break (19:9).

3. But the men shut the door (19:10-11)

But the men reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door (19:10). They struck those men of Sodom near the door with blindness. From the small or least significant to the great or most influential, each was dazed and blinded so that they "wearied" themselves trying to find the door (19:11). Even in blindness, they persisted in their attempts to act wickedly.

4. The men said to Lot (19:12-14)

The scene intensified when the men/angels asked Lot about others in his

family. They urged Lot to “bring” or take sons-in-law, sons, daughters, and any others “out of this place” (19:12). Notice the **causes and effects**. Lot should take his family (effect) “for we will destroy this place” (cause). Also, the destruction is an *effect caused* by the “waxen” or increasingly great cry of Sodom’s wickedness before the face of the LORD. The angels *repeated* that the LORD has sent us to “destroy” the city (19:13).

Lot seemed to comprehend the seriousness of the situation. He went out and spoke or pleaded to his sons-in-law to get up and get out of the place. Lot repeated the warning, “the LORD will destroy this city!” But they thought he was joking and did not heed the warning (19:14).

Part Two: Morning Arose in Sodom (19:15-29)

A. Morning arose (19:15-22)

When morning arose, the angels urged Lot to hurry, get up, and leave town with his wife and two daughters. Being consumed or swept away during the punishment of the city’s iniquity was the consequence of not fleeing (19:15). Remarkably, after all that happened during the night, Lot still hesitated to leave. The angels took a strong hold of his family’s hands (19:16a). The angels’ insistence was a pure act of “the LORD being merciful to him” and they brought Lot out of the city (19:16b). **Avoid the error** of Lot who hesitated at responding to God’s instruction. **Praise God** that He may mercifully take strong hold of you!

The angels gave four commands to Lot and his family: (1) Escape for your lives, (2) Do not look back, (3) Do not stay in the plain, and (4) Escape to the mountains to avoid being consumed (19:17). Again, Lot hesitated by pleading with the angels, “Oh, not so!” (19:18). He appealed to the grace he had found with them and their increased mercy upon him shown by saving his life. He exclaimed, “I cannot escape to the mountains” because some evil could overtake [him] and “I die” (19:19).

Lot urged them to consider allowing him to flee to a small city where “my soul shall live.” He *repeated* the city was “a little one” (19:20). In reply, one of the angels granted the request and pledged not to overthrow the city of which Lot spoke (19:21). Again, he urged Lot to hurry and escape. Notice the **cause and effect**, “I cannot do anything” (effect) until Lot arrived in the city (cause). Also, the city in question, named Zoar, means “a small place” (19:22).

B. When the Sun was risen (19:23-26)

Sunlight fell upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar (19:23). At this point, the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. **First**, He rained brimstone (i.e., sulfur) and fire from heaven upon the cities (19:24). **Second**, He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants, and all that grew from the ground (19:25). The Bible does not explain why Lot’s wife disobeyed the angel’s warning and “looked back” to see the destruction. As a result, however, she became a pillar of salt (19:26). **Avoid the error** of Lot’s wife, who disobeyed the warning of God’s messenger.

C. Abraham got up (19:27-28)

Much occurred between Abraham’s meeting with three visitors at noon (Genesis 18) and later that night in Sodom (Genesis 19). Early the next morning,

Leader’s Guide: “Whatsoever” or “any others” seems to refer to any others Lot cared for in the city.

Leader’s Guide: Remember that all this took place at night. Also, some Bible versions translate 19:14 to imply that Lot’s “sons in law” were basically engaged but not yet married to his daughters. Some scholars believe this is a more accurate translation.

Leader’s Guide: Some scholars note the flammable materials and minerals that exist near the believed site of Sodom and Gomorrah and believe a natural eruption of some type occurred. Genesis 19:24 clearly points to heaven as the origin of the fire and brimstone. At a minimum, God could certainly have used the minerals but this was a literal act of God.

Leader's Guide: Sodom and Gomorrah sat approximately 1300 feet below sea level. Approximately 20 miles away, Hebron (where the Oaks of Mamre were located) is at approximately 3,000 feet above sea level. From Hebron, Abraham had a clear view.

Abraham got up and went to the place where he had stood with the LORD the day before (19:27). There, he had asked the LORD a key question, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (18:23). The LORD promised not to destroy Sodom if He found ten righteous people in the city (18:32). However, ten were not found. Abraham looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, the entire plain, and saw a tremendous amount of smoke rising from that area (19:28).

D. The LORD remembered Abraham (19:29)

At the time He destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham's concern for the righteous in Sodom. God delivered Lot from the overthrow of the city where he lived (19:29). **Praise God** that He keeps His promises.

Conclusion

A key to Bible study is letting Scripture interpret Scripture. The New Testament provides much help in understanding Genesis 19:1-29. Despite his imperfections, the Bible identifies Lot as a "righteous man." Second Peter 2:6-10, a **related passage**, recognized the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as examples (i.e., warnings) to those choosing to live ungodly lives. What made Lot "just" or "righteous?" **First**, Lot was distressed by the filthy ways of living in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7). **Second**, Lot was daily tormented by the unlawful deeds he saw and heard in Sodom (2 Peter 2:8). **Believe the truth** that what happened in Genesis 19:1-29 provides evidence that the Lord knows how to protect the righteous while punishing the ungodly (2 Peter 2:9-10). **Avoid the error** of breaking God's laws.

Apply It

- **Avoid the errors of**
 - hesitating in response to God's instruction.
 - disobeying the warning of God's messenger.
 - breaking God's laws.
- **Praise God**
 - for His mercies that may take strong hold of you!
 - that He keeps His promises.
- **Believe the truth** that the Lord knows how to protect the godly and righteous while punishing the ungodly.

Epilogue (19:30-38)

Lot had pled with the angels to let him avoid the mountains and flee to Zoar. Ironically, Lot left Zoar and went to the mountains for fear of being harmed (19:30). Lot had offered his daughters for rape by the wicked men of Sodom. In 19:31-38, the daughters arranged to intoxicate their father at night and then incite him to commit incest, preserving the family line. What a contrast from Abraham and Sarah who trusted the LORD's promise to bring about a child although they were physically incapable. Also, notice the contrast between Genesis 13:5-13 and 19:30. Lot went from wealth equal to that of Abraham to living in a cave with basically nothing. Such was the sad end to Lot.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Ten: Father Abimelech?

Read Genesis 20:1-18

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will recognize that God protected Abraham and Sarah to fulfill His promise that they would bear a son.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 20:1-18

Lesson 10

FATHER ABIMELECH?

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
behold, thou art but a dead man, righteous, integrity of my heart, innocency of my hands, sinning, when God caused me to wander, reproved
2. What cause/effect relationships appear in the passage?

“Thou art but a dead man” (effect)
“for the woman which thou hast taken . . . is a man's wife” (cause; 20:3b).
Abraham prayed to God (cause) and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his maidservants (effect).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?
God knows the intent of each human heart. (Jeremiah 17:10).

Genesis 18-19 One day, he literally visited with the LORD and two angels who confirmed that the long-foretold promise of a son would come to pass within the year (Genesis 18:14).

“Integrity of my heart” means the integrity of his inner mind or will. “Innocency of my hands” means he never touched her. “When God caused me to wander” could be translated as “when the gods caused me to wander without purpose.” Some scholars believe this was an attempt by Abraham to accommodate Abimelech's belief.

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
God knows the intent of each human heart. Adultery is a sin against God.
2. Is there an error to avoid in this passage?
Making assumptions based upon your own opinions rather than verified facts.
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage?
He protected the redemptive plan. When He intervenes and stops people from sinning against Him.

Get Attention: Read Genesis 12:10-13. Discuss the reason Abraham told the lie (Doubt and fear). Apparently, Abraham did not learn from his earlier experience.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Ten: Father Abimelech? Genesis 20:1-18

Part One: Abraham Journeyed (20:1-2)

Part Two: God and Abimelech Meet in a Dream (20:3-7)

A. God came and said to Abimelech (20:3)

B. Abimelech responded to God (20:4-5)

C. God said to Abimelech (20:6-7)

Part Three: Abimelech Meets with Servants and Abraham (20:8-16)

A. Abimelech called his servants (20:8)

B. Abimelech called Abraham (20:9-16)

1. Abimelech's questions and rebuke for Abraham (20:9-10)

2. Abraham's response (20:11-13)

3. Abimelech Restores (20:14-16)

Part Four: Abraham Prayed to God (20:17-18)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Ten: Father Abimelech? Genesis 20:1-18

Aim: The learner will recognize that God protected Abraham and Sarah to fulfill His promise that they would bear a son.

Introduction

Have you ever felt close to the Lord one day and then far from Him the next? I wonder if Abraham felt that way as a result of the events in Genesis 18-19, the **immediate context**. One day, he literally visited with the LORD and two angels who confirmed that the long-foretold promise of a son would come to pass within the year (Genesis 18:14). However, the next morning, Abraham saw the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction rising from the plain below (Genesis 19:27-28). Abraham had pleaded on behalf of Sodom and the LORD agreed to withhold destruction if ten righteous people were found in the city. The smoke told Abraham that ten righteous ones could not be found. Abraham's nephew, Lot, lived in Sodom. Although the LORD had delivered Lot, the one righteous man and his family, the Bible does not tell us if Abraham knew of Lot's deliverance. Again, I wonder how Abraham felt going from the promised certainty of a child to the uncertainty regarding his nephew.

Part One: Abraham Journeyed (20:1-2)

The Bible gives no specific reason for why Abraham did what came next. Genesis 20:1 simply indicates that Abraham "journeyed" or pulled out from that place (i.e., the plain or oaks of Mamre). According to the **immediate context**, both before and after Genesis 20, this journey must have occurred within three months of Sodom's destruction since Sarah would conceive soon afterward (Genesis 21:1-2) and the promised birth would come within the year (17:21; 18:10). Where did Abraham go? He traveled southward (also identified as the Negev). He dwelt between Kadesh and Shur and "sojourned" or stayed in a place named Gerar. This was about 50 miles southwest from the plains of Mamre and near the region of Gaza, the land of Philistines.

Abraham spoke of Sarah as "my sister" rather than "my wife" (20:2). Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent for and took Sarah. Scholars understand this to mean that Abimelech made her part of his harem. The passage provides no reason as to why Abimelech wanted her. The name "Abimelech" meant "father is king" and may have been used as a title for Philistine kings.

Part Two: God and Abimelech Meet in a Dream (20:3-7)

A. God came and said to Abimelech (20:3)

But instead of allowing him to keep Sarah, God came to Abimelech in a dream by night (20:3a). The dream included a conversation between God and the king. God said to him, "Behold," a **key word** meaning to pay attention. Notice the **cause and effect**. "Thou art but a dead man" (effect) "for the woman which thou hast taken . . . is a man's wife" (cause; 20:3b). The **key phrase** "thou art but a dead man" implies that Abimelech was already dying.

B. Abimelech responded to God (20:4-5)

Leader's Guide: This region is the same Gaza mentioned in current events.

Leader's Guide: Perhaps she was still beautiful or he sought an alliance (via marriage) with the powerful Abraham.

Leader's Guide: The names "Abraham" and "Abimelech" are somewhat similar in that they both mean something about a father. Both are compound words (i.e., made up of more than one word). The word pronounced "Ab" meant father.

Leader's Guide: In 20:17-18, Moses recorded that God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his maidservants so that children could be born. This implies that at least a month had passed since the women knew they were unable to conceive children.

The Bible makes it clear that Abimelech had not come near to Sarah (20:4a). This is critical to the story. Think of the implications for the covenant promise that Abraham and Sarah would have a child within the year. What if Abimelech had come near to Sarah and she conceived a child through him? The LORD's promise from 18:14 would have been eliminated and His plan of redemption defeated. Father Abimelech would have replaced Father Abraham. Also, conception between Abraham and Sarah would be impossible if separated. **Praise God** that He protected the redemptive plan from such hypotheticals.

Abimelech asked a question that appears somewhat like Abraham's question regarding Sodom (18:23). Abraham asked if the LORD would destroy the righteous along with the wicked? Abimelech asked the Lord if He would slay or destroy a "righteous" nation? (20:4b). He believed the people of Gerar to be innocent of his error. The **key word** righteous means just or innocent. Although Abimelech alone was guilty of taking Sarah, he saw his actions as having a consequence for his people. Those in authority should have a similar *attitude* regarding their actions.

Although he will admit the error in 20:5, Abimelech continued by presenting a defense to the Lord. **First**, he questioned, did not Abraham say "unto me" that "She is my sister?" **Second**, he simply declared that even Sarah herself said, "He is my brother" (20:5a). **Third**, he affirmed that "in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this" (20:5b). While he admits having taken Abraham's wife, Abimelech believed that both his intentions and actions were free of guilt. The **key phrase** "integrity of my heart" means the integrity of his inner mind or will. The **key phrase** "innocency of my hands" means he never touched her.

C. God said to Abimelech (20:6-7)

God affirmed His knowledge that Abimelech had acted "in the integrity of thy heart," a **repeated phrase** (20:6a). **Believe the truth** that God knows the intent of each human heart. (Jeremiah 17:10). Not only did God know Abimelech's heart, but He restrained the king from "sinning against me" (20:6b). The **key word** sinning means to miss the mark and commonly refers to missing the mark of God's righteousness. Interestingly, God viewed Abimelech's potential sin, intimate relations with another man's wife, as a personal offense against Himself rather than against Abraham or Sarah. **Believe the truth** that adultery is a sin against God. Notice the **cause and effect**. Because of the potential sin against Him, God did not allow Abimelech to touch or come near Sarah (effect; 20:6c). **Praise God** when He intervenes and stops people from sinning against Him.

Although God considered Abimelech's intentions and actions free of guilt, a wrong still needed to be made right. Notice other **causes and effects**. "Now therefore restore [or return] the man his wife" (effect), because he (Abraham) "is a prophet, and he shall pray for" you (causes) and you "shalt live" (effect; 20:7a). The **key phrase** "thou shalt live" meant Abimelech would remain alive. Even with his integrity and innocence, the situation remained extremely serious for Abimelech; in fact, his very life depended upon correcting his error even though some may consider what he did an "honest mistake."

Part Three: Abimelech Meets with Servants and Abraham (20:8-16)

A. Abimelech called his servants (20:8)

Leader's Guide: Perhaps Abimelech knew about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Leader's Guide: Genesis 20:7 is the Bible's first reference to a "prophet."

In response to the dream, Abimelech rose early the next morning and called all his servants together. He told them about “all these things” God had told him. Notice the **cause and effect**. Sharing with the servants caused his men to become sore or very much afraid (effect; 20:8).

B. Abimelech called Abraham (20:9-16)

Abimelech then called for Abraham. Their conversation likely occurred in the presence and hearing of Abimelech’s servants.

1. Abimelech’s questions and rebuke for Abraham (20:9-10)

First, Abimelech basically asked Abraham, “What have you done to us?” (20:9a). The king blamed Abraham. **Second**, Abimelech then basically asked Abraham, “What have I done to offend or sin against you that caused you to bring this great sin upon me and my kingdom?” (20:9a). The **immediate context** verifies that both God and Abimelech knew his integrity and innocence (20:5-6). Abimelech’s next words implied a rebuke to Abraham’s lack of integrity and innocence, “thou [Abraham] has done deeds unto me that ought not to be done” (20:9b). **Third**, Abimelech asked Abraham to explain what he had seen that would cause him to do “this thing” (i.e., to identify Sarah as his sister rather than his wife; 20:10). For example, had Abraham seen men in Gerar harming husbands and taking their wives?

2. Abraham’s response (20:11-13)

Abraham presented three reasons for his actions toward Abimelech. **First**, Abraham made an assumption. He said, “Because I thought, ‘Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake’” (20:11). **Avoid the error** of making assumptions and prejudgments based upon your own opinions rather than verified facts. One might also ask why Abraham journeyed to Gerar without knowing its view of God? Had Abraham forgotten the consequences of Lot’s move to wicked and ungodly Sodom? Why would he put himself in a situation potentially like that of Lot’s? Abraham’s actions seem to demonstrate a lack of trust in the LORD to keep His promises regarding a child, a promise that necessitated an intimate relationship between Abraham and Sarah.

Second, Abraham revealed that Sarah truly was his half-sister, the daughter of his father but not his mother (20:12). However, Abraham’s clear intent was to deceive by holding back the truth that Sarah was fully his wife. Approximately 25 years earlier, Abraham had used this same “She is my sister” line with Pharaoh in Egypt (Genesis 12:13). In both Genesis 12 and 20, Abraham’s actions seem dishonest and unethical.

Third, Abraham attempted to justify his actions by revealing a strategy he made 25 years earlier “when God caused me to wander from my father’s house” (20:13a). He encouraged Sarah to show him kindness by saying “He is my brother” in every place they would come during their journey (20:13b). Even after a 25-year journey with many direct communications with God and the receipt of His covenant and promises, Abraham fell back to a self-made strategy to handle what he “thought” would be a constant problem.

Grammatically, the **key phrase** “when God caused me to wander” could be translated as “when the gods caused me to wander without purpose.” Some

Notice that 20:8-16 has multiple causes and effects.

Leader’s Guide: Genesis 20 is descriptive of what happened and not prescriptive of what Abraham should have done or what we should do. Narrative literature often does not give moral teaching about what went wrong with the situation, it simply states the facts of what happened. Other Scriptures clearly teach lying is wrong; however, Genesis 20 simply describes what happened. Is it ever okay to lie? This passage does not address all cases. It simply records a lie based upon a false assumption, not reality. In this case, it was wrong to lie.

Leader’s Guide: Genesis 12:4 records Abraham was 75 years old in Genesis 12. Genesis 17:24 records Abraham’s age was 99 years old during the events of Genesis 17-20).

Leader's Guide: Grammatically, the word translated "God" is plural; however, it is usually translated in singular form unless used with a plural verb. Such is the case in 20:13. This could remind of how Adam seemed to blame God for giving him the woman who then gave him forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:12).

Leader's Guide: Note the apparent sarcasm when Abimelech referred to her husband as "thy brother."

scholars believe this was an attempt by Abraham to accommodate Abimelech's belief in many gods and basically cast blame elsewhere (i.e., toward "the gods").

3. Abimelech Restores (20:14-16)

Although wronged by Abraham and innocent of sin, Abimelech sought to make things right with Abraham and Sarah. **First**, Abimelech gave sheep, oxen, and servants to Abraham. He also returned Sarah his wife (12:14). **Second**, Abimelech encouraged Abraham to look at his land and invited Abraham to dwell anywhere that pleased him (20:15). **Third**, Abimelech spoke directly to Sarah and explained his efforts to vindicate her by compensating for the wrong. This involved his giving "thy brother" a thousand pieces of silver and Abraham's being a "covering of the eyes." The **key phrase** is figurative, meaning the wrong cannot be seen by anyone with Sarah or any others. This covering created a **cause-and-effect** relationship. These actions by Abimelech (causes) resulted in Sarah's being reproved (20:16). The **key word** reproved means things were set right.

Some scholars notice that Abimelech seemed to come across as more repentant and generous than Abraham. **Follow the example** of Abimelech who made matters right with those involved, even after an "honest mistake."

Part Four: Abraham Prayed to God (20:17-18)

Notice the **cause and effect** that closes Genesis 20. Abraham prayed to God (cause) and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his maidservants (effect). What healing occurred? The **key phrase** "and they bare" implies improved health for both the men and women to have children (20:17).

Another **cause-and-effect** is revealed. The LORD had "closed up" all the wombs of Abimelech's house (effect) because of the events surrounding Sarah, Abraham's wife (20:18).

Conclusion

Sadly, Genesis 20 recorded how God's man showed less integrity and innocence than did a pagan king. In this case, learners should follow Abimelech's example of making restoration even after making an honest mistake or being misled by those who have prejudged them. Mostly, God should be praised for intervening to protect Abraham and Sarah. Such actions ensured the fulfillment of His promise that Abraham would indeed become a father of many nations and ultimately of Jesus Christ.

Apply It

- **Praise God**
 - that He protected the redemptive plan.
 - when He intervenes and stops people from sinning against Him.
- **Believe the truth that**
 - God knows the intent of each human heart.
 - adultery is a sin against God.
- **Avoid the error** of making assumptions based upon your own opinions rather than verified facts.
- **Follow the example** of Abimelech who made matters right with those involved, even after an "honest mistake."

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Lesson Eleven: Father Abraham

Read Genesis 21:1-34

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will understand that God sovereignly caused Abraham to father Isaac as the son through whom He would bless all families of the earth.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed. **The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.**

Genesis 21:1-34

Lesson 11

FATHER ABRAHAM

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
old age, mocking, cast out
2. Is there a contrast in the passage?
Sarah's earlier laughter in contrast to her confession that God made her laugh (21:6).
3. What cause/effect relationships appear in the passage?

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
2. How is the passage affected by its historical background?
3. What key words or phrases need to be researched?
4. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
God is able to declare beforehand what will happen.
2. Is there a sin to confess?
If your actions resemble those of Hagar's son.
3. Is there something for which to praise God in this passage?

Abraham should obey Sarah (effect) because "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (21:12b). The angel commanded Hagar not to fear (effect) because God had heard the lad's voice (21:17b). The angel commanded her to get up and care for the lad (effect) because "I will make him a great nation" (21:18).

First, the LORD "visited" or was gracious to Sarah as He had "said" (21:1a). **Second**, the LORD did unto Sarah as he had promised (21:1b). **Third**, according to 21:2, Sarah conceived and gave birth to Abraham's son at the God-appointed time as recorded in Genesis 17:21.

(1) Children in that day typically weaned off their mother's milk close to the age of three years; (2) Arab people became descendants of Abraham through Ishmael.

Old age refers to Abraham's extremely old age. *Mocking* is similar to the name "Isaac," regarding laughter. *Cast out* carries an intensive meaning to drive away or expel.

Hebrews 11:12. Abraham was "as good as dead" due to his age. Galatians 4:22-31 provides essential insight for understanding Genesis 21. Hagar's son "persecuted" Isaac. (Galatians 4:29.)

Those saved and born of the Holy Spirit (via faith) are "not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." When He opens our eyes to see His provision when we are in great need.

Get Attention: Invite learners to read the following passages out loud. Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:7-18, and 17:1-4. Explain that the fulfilled promise to Abraham is recorded in this lesson's biblical text.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Eleven: Father Abraham Genesis 21:1-34

Part One: The Birth of Isaac (Genesis 21:1-8)

A. As the LORD said (Genesis 21:1-2)

B. Abraham called (Genesis 21:3-5)

C. Sarah said (Genesis 21:6-7)

D. Isaac grew (Genesis 21:8)

Part Two: Casting Out the Bondwoman (Genesis 21:9-21)

A. The problem with the bondwoman (Genesis 21:9-11)

B. The perspective of God (21:12-13)

C. The perspective of the New Testament (Galatians 4:22—5:1)

First, from God's perspective, these two women represent two covenants.

Second, even today, people are born of either the flesh or the Spirit.

D. The provision of God (21:14-21)

1. Hagar's cry (21:15-16)

2. God heard (21:17-21)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Eleven: Father Abraham Genesis 21:1-34

Aim: The learner will understand that God sovereignly caused Abraham to father Isaac as the son through whom He would bless all families of the earth.

Introduction

Twenty-five years after the LORD's covenant with Abraham, the man whose name means "father of many nations," finally fathered the promised son. The original covenant, recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, foretold how Abraham's descendants would be great in number and he would be a blessing to "all families of the earth." The LORD renewed the covenant in Genesis 13:14-17 and 17:1-4.

In His perfect timing, the LORD God demonstrated His sovereignty by causing Abraham and Sarah to conceive when they were beyond human ability to have a child. Similarly, the LORD would cause a young virgin to conceive many years later. Through her promised son, Jesus Christ the seed of Abraham, people of every language and nation are eternally blessed (Revelation 5:9)!

Part One: The Birth of Isaac (21:1-8)

A. As the LORD said (21:1-2)

Notice the **repeated** words regarding what the LORD had "said" or "spoken." These show His power to declare beforehand what will come to be, a **truth to believe**. The LORD declared these in Genesis 18:10, the **immediate context**. **First**, the LORD "visited" or was gracious to Sarah as He had "said" (21:1a). **Second**, the LORD did unto Sarah as "he had spoken" or as He had promised (21:1b). **Third**, according to 21:2, Sarah conceived and gave birth to Abraham's son at the appointed time of which "God had spoken to him" approximately one year earlier as recorded in Genesis 17:21. The **key phrase** "old age" refers to Abraham's extremely old age. Hebrews 11:12, a **related passage**, identified Abraham, "as good as dead" due to his age. Why is this key? It showed God's power to cause a miraculous birth when physically it was impossible. This act foreshadowed the miraculous virgin birth of Christ.

B. Abraham called (21:3-5)

Abraham responded by calling or naming his son "Isaac" (21:3) in obedience to God's command (Genesis 17:19). The name "Isaac" means "he laughs." When Isaac turned eight days old, Abraham circumcised his son "as God had commanded him" (17:12; 21:4). Again, the passage emphasizes Abraham's age. He was a hundred years old at Isaac's birth (21:5).

C. Sarah said (21:6-7)

A year before, Sarah had laughed in disbelief at hearing that she and Abraham would have a child during their old age (18:12-13). She even denied the laughter (18:15). The LORD affirmed that nothing is too difficult for Him and that the promised child would be born (18:14). In **contrast** to her earlier laughter, 21:6 records Sarah's confession that "God hath made me to laugh" (i.e., caused her to rejoice; a **cause and effect**). Sarah further believed that "all" others hearing her good news "will laugh with me" (21:6).

→ Leader's Guide: Some scholars believe this passage could be translated "all that hear will laugh AT me." If so, the passage prophesies mockery rather than joy.

Indeed, it is quite easy at least to smile when thinking of Sarah's obvious joy (21:7). She basically asked, "Who would have thought it?" She recognized a **cause-and-effect** relationship. She basically said, "I have born him a son in his old age" (cause), "Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah would nurse a child?" (effect).

D. Isaac grew (21:8)

Genesis 21:8 simply indicates that Isaac grew and was weaned. According to **historical background**, children in that day were typically weaned off their mother's milk close to the age of three years. When this happened, Abraham responded by hosting a "great feast." This was a large event.

Part Two: Casting Out the Bondwoman (21:9-21)

The events of Genesis 16, a **related passage**, occurred approximately 15 years before those of Genesis 21. Genesis 16 recorded how Sarai encouraged her husband Abram to take Hagar, her handmaid, to be a second wife. Why? They attempted to accomplish by human means what God had promised and would Himself miraculously fulfill in Genesis 21. Sarai regretted the decision almost immediately (Genesis 16:1-5). Hagar conceived and when Abraham was 86 years old, she gave birth to Ishmael (16:15,16).

A. The problem with the bondwoman (21:9-11)

Perhaps during the great feast (21:8), Sarah saw "the son of Hagar the Egyptian" mocking (21:9). Interestingly, Genesis 21 never identifies "the son" directly by his name. In the Hebrew language, the **key word** mocking is similar to the name "Isaac," regarding laughter. However, the word "mocking" is worded grammatically to imply cruel play and possibly improper touch. In other words, Sarah may have seen the approximately 16-year-old Ishmael inappropriately touching the three-year-old Isaac. The New Testament indicates that Hagar's son "persecuted" Isaac. (Galatians 4:29, a **related passage**). "Persecuted" means to harass or molest. It is simply wrong to harm or molest others. **Confess the sin** if your actions resemble those of Hagar's son. Seek help from those in authority if you or others you know have been "mocked" as was Isaac.

The son of Hagar's actions caused Sarah to speak with Abraham and insist that he "Cast out this bondwoman and her son" (effect; 21:10a). Sarah declared that "the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac" (21:10b). The **key phrase** "cast out" carries an intensive meaning to drive away or expel. This created another **cause and effect**. The situation was "very grievous" or unpleasant in the sight of Abraham (effect) because of his son (21:11). Clearly, Abraham loved his son, the son of Hagar.

B. The perspective of God (21:12-13)

It is unclear as to whether Sarah comprehended the full meaning of her statements about Hagar and the son but God agreed with her. God spoke to Abraham and commanded him not to grieve because of the lad or the bondwoman (21:12a).

God also commanded Abraham to "hearken" or listen and obey the voice of Sarah in all that she had said about casting out Hagar and her son. Why would God agree with casting out a mother and son? Notice the **cause and effect**.

Leader's Guide: Some scholars believe the word used for mocking implies sexual molestation in this context. The word is used about the adult Isaac's "sporting" or touching of his wife Rebekah, clearly in an intimate way (Genesis 26:8). Also, Potiphar's wife used the term "mock" when accusing Joseph of attempted sexual assault in Genesis 39:14.

Leader's Guide: Scholars notice Hagar's advanced status from that of a "handmaid" in Genesis 16 to a "bondwoman" in Genesis 21.

Abraham should obey Sarah (effect) because “in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (21:12b). This passage confirms God’s view that Isaac is the promised son rather than Abraham’s steward Eliezer (Genesis 15:2-3) or the bondwoman’s son Ishmael. This is about more than Abraham’s physical descendants. There is also a spiritual descendancy born through faith. According to Romans 9:6-8, a **related passage**, “children of the flesh” (i.e., those born as Israelites) are not “children of God.” They are not the descendants God had in mind. Rather “children of the promise” (i.e., children who believe the promise) are those counted as “seed” or “descendants.” God intended to bless the son of the bondwoman. Notice the **cause and effect**. God promised to make the son a nation (effect) because he was Abraham’s son (21:13). **Historical background** reveals that the Arab people became descendants of Abraham through Ishmael.

C. The perspective of the New Testament (Galatians 4:22 —5:1)

A general rule of Bible study is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. In this case, Galatians 4:22—5:1, a **related passage**, provides essential insight for understanding Genesis 21. Paul’s letter to the Galatians recognizes two spiritual meanings represented by the two women.

First, from God’s perspective, these two women represent two covenants. Hagar, the bondwoman represents a covenant of flesh (i.e., human efforts) to keep the biblical law and gain eternal life. Such efforts lack faith and are insufficient. They simply create spiritual bondage for those seeking to please God by works of the flesh (Galatians 4:23-25). In contrast, Sarah, the freewoman, represents a covenant of promise and rejoicing. It is a covenant of faith rather than works. For believers, “we” are “children of promise” just as was Isaac (Galatians 4:23, 26-28).

Second, even today, people are born of either the flesh or the Spirit. Those born after the flesh attempt to persecute those born after the Spirit just as Ishmael mocked and persecuted Isaac, the promised son (Galatians 4:29). People continue to mock God’s promised Son, Jesus Christ, and those who believe in Him. The New Testament verifies that the bondwoman and her son (i.e., those attempting to please God by human works and mock His promised Son) should be “cast out.” Those represented by the bondwoman’s son “shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman” (Galatians 4:30). They will not inherit eternal life.

Praise God that those saved and born of the Holy Spirit (via faith) are “not children of the bondwoman, but of the free” (Galatians 4:31). The free covenant points to the truth that “Christ hath made us free” and believers should stand fast in such liberty (Galatians 5:1).

D. The provision of God (21:14-21)

Abraham rose early the next morning, gave food and water to Hagar, put it on her shoulders, and sent her away (21:14). Although the text reads almost like her son is a very young boy, remember that Hagar’s son was at least 16 years old. Rather than placing the boy on Hagar’s back, it is more likely that he put food and water on both their backs. This seems to be all they could carry. Hagar departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

1. Hagar’s cry (21:15-16)

After an unspecified amount of time, they used up Abraham’s provisions of

Leader’s Guide: Jesus taught that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven. Even people professing to have done many “good” things in His name (Matthew 7:21-23).

Leader’s Guide: Beersheba is located southeast of Gerar.

food and water. Hagar “cast” or left the child under a shrub (21:15). She could not bear to see him suffer, went a distance, sat down and said, “Let me not see the death of the child.” There she “lift up her voice and wept” which means she cried loudly (21:16).

2. God heard (21:17-21)

Although Hagar cried loudly, God heard “the voice of the lad” (21:17a). The “angel of God” called to Hagar out of heaven and basically asked, “What’s the problem?” Notice the **causes and effects**. The angel commanded her not to fear (effect) because God had heard the lad’s voice from “where he is” (21:17b). The angel further commanded her to get up and care for the lad (effect) because “I will make him a great nation” (21:18).

Then God opened her eyes so that she could see a well of water nearby.

Praise God when He opens our eyes to see His provision in our great need. Hagar went and filled the bottle and gave her son to drink (21:19). God was with the child. The boy grew, lived in the wilderness, and became an archer (21:20). His mother “took” or arranged for him to get a wife from Egypt, her homeland, and he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran (21:21). Paran is northeast of Beersheba.

Conclusion

Even today strife exists between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael. If Abraham had simply waited upon the Lord to fulfill His promise, much conflict could likely have been avoided. Although God promised blessings upon all descendants of Father Abraham, He chose Isaac to be the descendant through whom He would bless all families of the earth. The New Testament helps us understand that the blessing for all families does not come through physical but spiritual descendancy. It comes through new birth granted to those who believe by trusting in Jesus Christ.

Apply It

- **Believe the truth** that God is able to declare beforehand what will happen.
- **Confess the sin** if your actions resemble those of Hagar’s son.
- **Praise God**
 - that those saved and born of the Holy Spirit (via faith) are “not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”
 - when He opens our eyes to see His provision when we are in great need.

Epilogue (21:22-34)

Genesis 21:22-34 records a covenant made between Abraham and Abimelech. Because he recognized God’s constant presence with Abraham, Abimelech asked that Abraham “swear” not to deal falsely but to act kindly toward him and his descendants. Abraham said, “I will swear” (21:22-24).

Abraham then “reproved Abimelech” repeatedly because of a well of water that Abimelech’s servants had violently taken. Abraham had dug the well! Although Abimelech denied knowing about the violence, the two made the covenant. Abraham provided an additional seven ewe lambs and explained to Abimelech their meaning as “a witness unto me, that I have digged this well” (21:30).

Abraham called the place “Beersheba” which means “a well of seven” or a “well of oath.” Abraham planted a grove of trees and called there “on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God” and sojourned in the Philistines’ land “many days.”

Leader’s Guide: As seen by His goodness to Hagar’s son, Jesus Christ taught that our heavenly Father blesses both evil and good people with sunshine and just and unjust people with rain.

Leader’s Guide: Cultural background indicates that parents arranged marriages for their children. That remains a custom in some cultures.

Leader’s Guide: Not every person is blessed with eternal life but people from every nation and language can be saved.

Leader’s Guide: Grammatically, the passage indicates that Abraham repeatedly complained that Abimelech’s servants had taken the well.

Leader’s Guide: This passage repeats the term “swear” and mentions a second well in Genesis 21.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Abraham's Greatest Fear

Read Genesis 22:1-19

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will be inspired to follow Father Abraham's examples of fear, faith, and obedience to God and His Word of fear, faith, and obedience to God and His Word.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed.

The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.

Genesis 22:1-19

Lesson 12

ABRAHAM'S GREATEST FEAR

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
tempt, behold here I am, burnt offering, fear, bound, sworn

2. What cause/effect relationships appear in the passage?

→ Stopping (effect) occurred because "now I know" that you fear God. The angel shared the LORD's words, "By myself have I sworn" (effect) because Abraham had "done this thing" and not withheld "thy son, thine only son" (22:16a).

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. What is the immediate context of the passage?
God affirmed Isaac as the child of promise (Genesis 21:12).

2. What key words or phrases need to be researched?

→ *Tempt* refers to a test. "Behold, here I am" (22:1b) literally reads "Behold, me." "Burnt offering" is an act of worship that completely burns something to ashes. Fear means a profound reverence and serious comprehension that God is sovereign and should be trusted and obeyed. "In the stead of" refers to a substitution.

3. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?

Per Hebrews 11:17, Abraham responded to God's commands in faith; God swore by Himself "because he could swear by no greater" (Hebrews 6:13-15).

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there a truth to believe in this passage?
God will provide; Jesus Christ is the substitutionary sacrifice to pay the penalty for your sins.
2. Is there an example to follow in this passage?
Abraham's faith, fear, and obedience; Isaac's submission to his father.

Get Attention: Read Genesis 22:8a followed by 1 Peter 2:21-25, and Revelation 13:8. Explain that this lesson teaches one of the greatest theological truths to believe in all of Scripture.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Twelve: Abraham's Greatest Fear Genesis 22:1-19

Part One: “ Abraham ” . . . “Here I am” (22:1-6)

God spoke to Abraham (22:1b)

A. God commanded Abraham (22:2)

God issued three commands to Abraham.

First, to “take now thy son.”

Second, God told Abraham to “get” himself to the land of Moriah.

Third, God told Abraham to “offer” Isaac as a “burnt offering” upon one of the mountains.

B. Abraham rose up and went (22:3-6)

C. Abraham took the wood (22:6)

Part Two: “My father ” . . . “Here I am” (22:7-10)

A. Abraham's answer (22:7-8a)

B. Abraham's act of obedience (22:8b-10)

Part Three: “ Abraham , Abraham ” . . . “Here I am” (22:11-19)

A. The angel's first call (22:11-14)

B. The angel's second call (22:15-19)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Twelve: Abraham's Greatest Fear Genesis 22:1-19

Aim: The learner will be inspired to follow Father Abraham's examples of fear, faith, and obedience to God and His Word.

Introduction

What is a parent's greatest fear? It is likely the fear that harm will come to one of his or her children, particularly an "untimely" death. How quickly life can change when tragedy strikes a family. May the Lord provide the peace that passes understanding to those who have experienced such things.

We can only imagine how Abraham felt when God commanded him to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Although Genesis 22 does not describe Abraham's feelings, it does reveal the intent and devotion of his heart. Father Abraham demonstrated a fear even greater than that of losing his son—reverence, and awe of God.

Part One: "Abraham" . . . "Here I am" (22:1-6)

Sometime after the birth of Isaac, the sending away of Hagar and her son, and Abraham's covenant with Abimelech, "God did tempt Abraham" (22:1a). The **key word** tempt is best understood as a test. Remember that God cannot be tempted and neither does He tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13). However, at times God does allow or even sends testing to strengthen His people or to verify their genuineness. God allowed His own Son, Jesus, to be tested in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Genesis 22 records God's testing of Abraham.

A. God spoke to Abraham (22:1b)

God simply spoke His friend's name, "Abraham" to which Abraham replied, "Behold, here I am" (22:1b). The **key phrase** literally reads "Behold, me." I have often wondered, "Would Abraham have responded as quickly and positively if he knew what God was about to require of him?" Regardless, Abraham provides readers with an **example to follow** by committing themselves to answer God's call, even before knowing His will for them.

B. God commanded Abraham (22:2)

God issued three commands to Abraham. **First**, "take now thy son." Notice how God emphasized the relationship between father and son. Indeed, Isaac was Abraham's son, but also his only son, and the son he loved! Remember from the **immediate context** of Genesis 21:10-12 that God affirmed Isaac as the child of promise and called upon Abraham to "cast out" the bondwoman, Hagar, and her son. God chose Isaac alone to be Abraham's heir.

Second, God told Abraham to "get" himself to the land of Moriah. The name "Moriah" appears only in one other place in Scripture (2 Chronicles 3:1). This **related passage** records that King Solomon began to build the LORD's house in Jerusalem upon Mount Moriah. Solomon built the house upon the exact location where the LORD appeared to his father David. Although no one can verify that the events of Genesis 22 occurred at the exact spot where Solomon built the temple, it was close!

Leader's Guide: The mountainous area of Moriah was approximately 50 miles from Abraham's home in Beersheba. The name "Moriah" means seen or chosen by Yahweh.

Third, God told Abraham to “offer” Isaac as a “burnt offering” upon one of the mountains. God would let him know which one. The **key word** *offer* means to ascend or climb upward. The **key phrase** “*burnt offering*” refers to an act of worship that completely burns something to ashes. In other words, God commanded Abraham to send his only son upward by a complete and consuming fire.

C. Abraham rose up and went (22:3-6)

One of the most important rules of Bible study is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. In a **related passage**, Hebrews 11:17 tells readers that Abraham responded to God’s commands in faith. This is key to understanding Genesis 22. Abraham did not delay in obeying God. He “rose up early in the morning,” prepared his donkey, and took his son and two other young men. He “clave” or split wood for the burnt offering. This implies they had enough wood to burn an entire animal. He rose up again and went to the place God had told him (22:3).

On the third day of travel, Abraham looked up and saw the place off in the distance (22:4). He told the young men to stay with the donkey (22:5a). Abraham told the young men, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (22:5b). Although most Bible translations use the word “lad” when referring to Isaac, the term comes from the same root word used of the young men. Scholars believe Isaac was likely at least in his late teens.

Notice Abraham’s incredible expression of faith. “I and the lad will . . . come again to you” (22:5c). Hebrews 11:17-19 reflects upon this very event and credits Abraham’s faith in that he believed “God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19a). Abraham would sacrifice Isaac, but he believed God would bring him back to life! In a figurative sense, that is exactly what happened (Hebrews 11:19b). **Can you comprehend such faith?** It should make us tremble! Simply writing and encouraging readers to **follow the example** of Abraham by having such faith in God seems so inadequate.

D. Abraham took the wood (22:6)

Abraham took the wood and laid it upon Isaac. Similarly, Jesus Christ bore the wood of His cross (John 19:17). Isaac’s ability to carry the wood demonstrates he was not a child. Abraham took the fire in his hand along with a knife. The father and son went together.

Part Two: “My father” . . . “Here I am” (22:7-10)

A. Abraham’s answer (22:7-8a)

Genesis 22:7 records the first words readers see from Isaac. He simply says, “My father” as he prepares to ask an important question. The one God promised to be a father of many nations responded with “Here am I, my son.” Abraham **repeated** the phrase “Here am I” or “Behold me” from 22:1. Isaac observed the presence of “fire and wood” but the absence of a lamb to sacrifice. He asked, “where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” (22:7).

Abraham’s answer establishes one of the greatest theological **truths to believe** in all of Scripture, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (22:8a).

Leader’s Guide: Some scholars recognize this as the second time Isaac was brought from the dead, according to Hebrews 11:17-19. The first occurred when born from his mother’s “dead” womb.

Leader’s Guide: Interestingly, an ancient and pre-Christian Jewish commentary says Isaac’s carrying of the wood was like a condemned man carrying his cross (Genesis Rabbah).

Leader’s Guide: Some scholars believe that Abraham carried a stone/flint for starting fire rather than an open flame.

B. Abraham's act of obedience (22:8b-10)

The response seems to have satisfied Isaac. Again, "they went both of them together" (22:8b). They arrived at the designated location and Abraham built an altar, laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid Isaac on the altar and wood (22:9). The **key word** bound referred to the binding of an animal's legs when preparing it for sacrifice. Abraham must have bound Isaac's hands and feet.

Remember that Isaac was a young man and Abraham was probably near 120 years of age. This story not only demonstrates Abraham's faith but also Isaac's! **Follow the example** of this young man who likely could have escaped but instead entrusted himself to his father's faith in God's provision. Isaac's actions foreshadow those of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Jesus could have prayed and been helped by tens of thousands of angels against those attempting to arrest and crucify Him (Matthew 26:53). Instead, Jesus prayed and submitted to His Father's will concerning the "cup" of crucifixion when He said, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

With no apparent delay or further words, Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son (22:10). He was obeying the Lord's command and likely planned to slit his son's throat, the typical means by which an animal would be sacrificed. The implication is clear. In Abraham's heart and mind, he was committing the act. He was sacrificing his only son.

Part Three: "Abraham, Abraham" . . . "Here I am" (22:11-19)

A. The angel's first call (22:11-14)

With emphasis, the "angel of the LORD" called out to stop the sacrifice by repeating "Abraham, Abraham!" As he had done twice before in Genesis 22, Abraham responded without delay, "Here am I" (22:11). What an incredible moment it must have been for Abraham, and perhaps Isaac, to hear the angel's voice. Although argued by scholars, many believe that this "angel of the LORD" is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ. If so, imagine the amazing implications of this visit as the only Son and Lamb of God stops the sacrifice.

The angel told Abraham not to lay his hand upon Isaac or do anything else to him (22:12a). Why did the angel stop the sacrifice? Notice the **cause and effect**. Stopping (effect) occurred because "now I know" that you fear God. The **key word** fear means a profound reverence and serious comprehension that God is sovereign and should be trusted and obeyed. Abraham's actions demonstrated his greatest fear, reverence for God, which was above his care for Isaac. By not withholding his son, his only son, from God (22:12b), Abraham passed God's test (22:1).

At that moment, Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. As Abraham predicted in 22:8, God provided for Himself a lamb. Abraham got the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering "in the stead of his son" (22:13). Abraham named the place "Jehovah-jireh" which means "the LORD will provide." Moses wrote Genesis 22 approximately 600 years after this event. Even so, Moses noted that the mountain's name remained similar at the time of his writing (22:14).

The **key phrase** "in the stead of" refers to a substitution. Instead of sacrificing Isaac, Abraham substituted the ram in Isaac's place. Related passages from the New Testament help tremendously in recognizing that God substituted

Leader's Guide: It is impossible to know Isaac's exact age in Genesis 22; however, we do know he was a young man capable of carrying wood. He was likely about 20 years old. Abraham was ten years older than Sarah (Genesis 17:17). Abraham was 100 years old at Isaac's birth (Genesis 21:5). The events of Genesis 22 occurred prior to Sarah's death at 127 years (Genesis 23:1-2). So, Abraham was probably between 120-137 years old when he offered Isaac. This makes Isaac approximately 20-35 years old.

Leader's Guide: The term used for "knife" is used elsewhere in Scripture as a tool large enough to dismember a human being (Judges 19:29).

Leader's Guide: Repeated use of the name "Abraham" created an emphasis.

Leader's Guide: Such an appearance is technically called a Christophany and is a preincarnate appearance (i.e., before Jesus became flesh at the virgin birth).

Leader's Guide: The "angel of the LORD" appears throughout Scripture. The angel shows the same divine qualities of the LORD (Exodus 23:21), is identified with the LORD (Genesis 16:11-13) but not as the same person as the LORD (Exodus 23:20-23). The angel at times speaks to the LORD (Zechariah 1:12). The LORD sent the angel of the LORD (Exodus 23:20-23). The angel of the LORD was recognized as being God (Judges 13:21-22).

Leader's Guide: God knows everything. "Now I know" is likely a way of simply confirming what God already knew.

Leader's Guide: Scholars believe the Hebrew wording for 22:13 implies "a ram just caught" or immediately appearing with perfect timing. Also, a ram is a male sheep.

Leader's Guide: The Hebrew word used for "seen" is the same word translated "provide" elsewhere in Genesis 22. Therefore, an accurate translation is "In the mount of the LORD, it shall be provided."

Leader's Guide: Revelation 13:8 teaches that one day everyone whose name is not written in the "book of life" will worship Jesus Christ. The book belongs to the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Is your name in His book of life?

Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for our sins. According to 1 Peter 2:21-25, the sinless Christ "bare our sins in his own body."
Abraham's act of obedience resembles that of the Heavenly Father. **First**, God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). **Second**, God loved the world so much that "he gave his only begotten Son" so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Genesis 22:13 presents a major **truth to believe**, the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for sins.

B. The angel's second call (22:15-19)

For a second time, the angel of the LORD called out of heaven (22:15). Notice the **cause and effect**. The angel shared the LORD's words, "By myself have I sworn" (effect) because Abraham had "done this thing" and not withheld "thy son, thine only son" (22:16a). Hebrews 6:13, a **related passage**, indicates that God swore by Himself "because he could swear by no greater." The **key word** sworn refers to an oath.

The LORD repeated His covenant promise that He would bless Abraham and multiply his descendants as much as the stars of heaven and the sand upon the seashore. Additionally, Abraham's seed would possess the "gate" or cities of his enemies (22:17). Again, the covenant includes the promised blessing that all nations of the earth would be blessed by Abraham's seed because of Abraham's obedience to the Lord's voice, a **cause and effect** (22:18).

Just as he promised and believed he would (22:5), Abraham returned to the young men, both he and Isaac. They "went together" to Beersheba where Abraham continued to dwell (22:19).

Conclusion

Abraham obeyed the commandment given him by the LORD. He did so with fear and faith. Today, the LORD still gives commands through His written Word, the Bible. Our faithful obedience to His Word demonstrates our appropriate "fear" of God. **Follow the examples** of Abraham, Isaac, and Jesus who each submitted themselves to God's will for their lives. Above all, fear the LORD!

Apply It

- **Follow the example . . .**
 - of Abraham's faith, fear, and obedience.
 - of Isaac's submission to his father.
- **Believe the truths that . . .**
 - God will provide.
 - Jesus Christ is the substitutionary sacrifice to pay the penalty for your sins.

Epilogue (22:20-24)

Abraham later received word that Milcah had born children to his brother Nahor (22:20). Genesis 22:21-24 simply lists Nahor's children. However, one of Nahor's grandchildren is mentioned, a granddaughter. Her name was Rebekah (22:23). She would become a significant figure in God's fulfillment of His covenant promise to Abraham. She will become Isaac's wife.

Prepare to Lead: Review the Teacher/Leader Preparation on (page 6).

Lead the lesson: Land for Father Abraham

Read Genesis 23:1-20; 24:1-9; 25:1-11

Read the Lesson aim: The learner will recognize Abraham's faith in God's promises regarding land for his descendants.

Learning Option One: Discuss the Guided Bible Study: Encourage/expect learners to study the Bible passage for themselves before reading the learner book or coming to the learning session. You should answer the questions for yourself—but brief answers are provided below that will be found in the lesson that follows. The answers are not exhaustive so encourage learners to expand as much as needed.

The Introduction will answer basic observation questions not included here. Review the introduction with learners.

Genesis 23:1-20, Genesis 24:1-9, Genesis 25:1-10

Lesson 13

LAND FOR FATHER ABRAHAM

Guided Bible Study

This lesson provides questions designed to guide learners in discovering what this lesson's Bible passage says, means, and how it applies. Before reading the lesson, prayerfully read the Bible passage and ask the Lord to help you see answers to the following questions that will guide you. When finished, compare your answers to those found in the lesson.

Observation: Discover the facts or accurate information God presents in the passage of Scripture.

1. What key words or phrases are in the text? (Are any repeated?)
land, stranger, sojourner, in the audience of the people

2. What is being contrasted in this passage?
In **contrast** to being a stranger and sojourner, the children of Heth declared that Abraham was a "**mighty prince**" among them (23:5-6a).

3. What are the cause/effect relationships in the passage?

→ **Leader's Guide:** In 24:6-7, Isaac was not to return to Abraham's homeland (effect; 24:6) because the LORD God of heaven, which took Abraham from his father's house and land of his kindred, spoke and swore unto him that "Unto thy seed will I give this land."

Interpretation: Determine what the passage of Scripture means.

1. How is the passage affected by its cultural/historical background?
Abraham had no legal right or status, but he asked to be given property to possess as a burial place (23:4b).

2. Are there any related passages that need to be studied?
Hebrews 11:8-19 verifies that by faith Abraham obeyed the command to leave his homeland for a place he did not know but would later inherit (Hebrews 11:8).

Application: Apply the passage to our lives as God intends.

1. Is there an example to follow?
Abraham who acted by faith according to the LORD's promises. By investing in earthly things useable for God's kingdom.

Get Attention: Ask learners to reflect on Abraham's life story. When did his name change from Abram to Abraham? (17:5) Read Hebrews 11:8-19 before beginning the lesson.

Learning Option Two: Review the Lesson Outline:

Outline for Lesson Thirteen: Land for Father Abraham Genesis 23:1-20, Genesis 24:1-9, Genesis 25:1-10

Part One: Abraham Buried Sarah . . . “in the land of Canaan” (23:1-20)

A. The years of the life of Sarah (11:31-21:10)

B. Sarah died (23:1-2)

C. Abraham buys a burial place (23:3-18)

D. Abraham buried Sarah (23:19-20)

Part Two: Unto Isaac . . . “will I give this land” (24:1-9)

A. Abraham instructs his servant (24:1-4)

B. Abraham insists that Isaac remain in the land of Canaan (24:5-9)

Part Three: His Son's Buried Him . . . “in the cave of Machpelah” (25:1-9)

A. Abraham took a wife (25:1-6)

B. Abraham died and buried (25:7-10)

Learning Option Three: Explore the Commentary in the Learner Book:

Ask learners to answer bolded questions in the following in-depth study. All answers can be found in the Bible text. Encourage learners to compare their answers to those provided with the Guided Bible Study questions. **In the Learner Book and in this Leader's Guide, questions will be in bold print, key words will be underlined, related passages, etc. will appear in italics.**

Lesson Thirteen: Land for Father Abraham **Genesis 23:1-20; 24:1-9; 25:1-11**

Aim: The learner will recognize Abraham's faith in God's promises regarding land for his descendants.

Introduction

Most scholars agree that his willingness to offer Isaac as a burnt offering is the climax of Abraham's extraordinary life (Genesis 22:1-18). Genesis 23-25 describes Abraham's final years and serves to transition the book's focus from Abraham to Isaac.

The biblical story of Abraham began in Genesis 11 where he is listed as "Abram" in the genealogy of Noah's son, Shem (11:27). Although his name meant "exalted father," Abram and his wife Sarai had no children. Abram's father, Terah, took Abram, Lot, and Sarai from Ur of the Chaldees "to go into the land of Canaan" but only made it as far as Haran (11:31). Later, Abram obeyed the LORD's command to leave his home country and father's house "unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1).

Throughout their journey, the LORD reminded Abram and Sarai of His covenant promise to bless Abram, his descendants, and all families of the earth (12:2-3). The LORD renewed His promise throughout Genesis. He promised to give Abram multiple descendants (13:16; 17:4-7) and land for both Abram/Abraham and his descendants (13:14-15, 17; 17:8). The LORD changed their names to Abraham and Sarah (17:5, 15) and verified that Sarah would give birth to the son of promise, Isaac (Genesis 17:16, 19).

Again, the covenant also included the promise that Abraham's descendants would possess the land in which he lived as a stranger, "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:8). The **repeated** use of land makes it a **key word**.

Hebrews 11:8-16, a **related passage**, verifies that by faith Abraham obeyed the command to leave his homeland for a place he did not know but would later inherit (Hebrews 11:8). He lived in tents as a stranger in a strange land (Hebrews 11:9). He looked for a city with "foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham could have returned home; however, his actions regarding Sarah's burial, the search of a wife for Isaac, and his own burial demonstrate his faith in God's promise to give his descendants "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" and to be "their God."

Part One: Abraham Buried Sarah . . . "in the land of Canaan" (23:1-20)

A. The years of the life of Sarah (11:31—21:10)

Sixty-two years before Genesis 23:1, Abram and Sarai left Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan (11:31). Although Genesis 12-22 focuses mostly upon her husband, Sarah is also a prominent figure throughout those chapters. Her apparent beauty attracted the attention of both the Egyptian Pharaoh (12:15) and the king of Gerar (20:2). Her inability to conceive a child led her to encourage Abram to seek a child through relations with her maid Hagar (16:1-3). She quickly regretted that

decision (16:4-5).

The LORD changed her name and declared His promise that she would be a “mother of nations” and kings (17:15-16). At 90 years old, Sarah laughed in disbelief when the LORD visited and promised that she would bear a child within the year (18:10-12). Soon after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, she relocated with her husband to Gerar (20:1). Then, the LORD did as He had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son (21:1-2). At some point, her disbelief turned to faith. She considered the Lord “faithful who had promised” that she would bear a son when past the age of childbirth (Hebrews 11:11).

She called upon Abraham to send away both Hagar and Hagar’s son, declaring rightly that “the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac” (21:10). The New Testament recognizes Sarah as a “freewoman” who gave birth through God’s promise rather than through the flesh (Galatians 4:22-23).

B. Sarah died (23:1-2)

Abraham’s beloved wife and companion on his incredible journey, died at the age of 127 years (23:1). She died in the city of Arba (Kirjah-arba), which had been renamed “Hebron” at the time Moses wrote Genesis 23:2. Abraham must not have been present when she died because he “came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her” (23:2b). The word “mourn” means that he beat his chest. “Weep” means he cried over her passing.

C. Abraham bought a burial place (23:3-18)

Abraham stood up before his wife’s body and spoke to “the sons of Heth” (23:3). **Historical background** indicates that these “sons” were also known as Hittites, descendants of Heth. They were the predominant people group in Hebron.

Although the LORD had promised him the land of Canaan (17:8), Abraham addressed the group and referred to himself as a “stranger and a sojourner” with them (23:4a). This characterization is consistent with Hebrews 11:9, a **related passage**. The **key word** stranger refers to a temporary resident. The **key word** sojourner refers to one without rights of citizenship. **Cultural background** indicates that Abraham had no legal right or status, but he asked to be given property to possess as a burial place (23:4b).

In **contrast** to being a stranger and sojourner, the children of Heth declared that Abraham was a “mighty prince” among them (23:5-6a). The **key phrase** means “prince of God” or “God’s elect.” They appear to have respect for Abraham; however, it is difficult to determine their amount of sincerity. Regardless, they spoke the truth. Abraham was God’s elect. The children of Heth offered Abraham “the choice of our sepulchers” and insisted that no one would withhold it from him (23:6b). Again, their level of sincerity is uncertain.

Cultural background determined what happened next. A matter of such sensitivity demanded a mediator. Abraham stood and bowed himself to the people of the land, the children of Heth (23:7). The **key phrase** “in the audience of the people” is repeated several times in this passage and verifies the legitimacy of the business transaction. Abraham spoke and asked the people to mediate on his behalf with Ephron, the son of Zohar (23:8), regarding the “cave of Machpelah...

Leader’s Guide: Scholars believe Abraham sat on the ground before standing.

Leader’s Guide: This is the first mention of a grave in Scripture.

Leader’s Guide: The term “sepulcher” refers to a tomb. It is typically a cave or place cut out of rock.

which is in the end of his field.” Abraham offered to pay for the cave’s full value (23:9).

Ephron was present when Abraham mentioned him and the cave. In the presence of everyone (23:10), he told Abraham, “I give it thee in the presence of the sons of my people” (i.e., “I have already given it to you” or “consider it done”). Ephron added the “field” along with the cave (23:11). Although he said “I give,” he apparently saw an opportunity to make more money by selling more property.

Abraham agreed to pay for the field also as a place to “bury my dead,” a **repeated phrase** (23:13). Ephron stated that the land was worth 400 shekels of silver and acted as though such a price was no big deal by asking basically, “What is that between me and you?” (23:14-15). Shekels refer to a measure of weight rather than coins. Abraham weighed out 400 shekels in the presence of the crowd and with the assistance of a merchant to verify the payment’s accuracy (23:16). The final purchase included a field, cave, and trees in the field (23:17). The purchase was “made sure” or deeded over to Abraham in the presence of the children of Heth (23:17-18, 20).

Leader’s Guide: Estimates for the weight of 400 shekels range from 6 to 100 pounds. In other words, it is difficult to determine an approximate amount for what Abraham paid.

D. Abraham buried Sarah (23:19-20)

Abraham buried Sarah in the cave which was “in the land of Canaan” (23:19-20). By this, Sarah became the first of Abraham’s family to “rest” in the land. Perhaps Abraham could have taken Sarah back to their homeland. By faith, he decided to stay in the land of promise.

Part Two: Unto Isaac . . . “will I give this land” (24:1-9)

A. Abraham instructed his servant (24:1-4)

Another occasion through which Abraham demonstrated faith in God’s promise for the land of Canaan to become his descendants’ possession occurs in 24:1-9. Abraham was advanced in years and the LORD had blessed him in “all things” (24:1). Abraham spoke to his eldest servant, the one who ruled over all Abraham’s possessions, and said, “Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh” (24:2). The reason for this action is unclear but only someone extremely close and trusted would be instructed to put himself in such a position.

Abraham apparently recognized a sense of urgency to find Isaac a wife. Abraham determined that she must not be a Canaanite. Although Abraham dwelt in Canaan, he insisted that his servant swear by the LORD, God of heaven and earth, not take a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the Canaanites (24:3). In **contrast**, Abraham instructed him to “go unto my country, and to my kindred” to find Isaac a wife (24:4).

B. Abraham insisted that Isaac remain in the land of Canaan (24:5-9)

The servant expressed concern that the woman might not be willing to make the move to “this land” of Canaan. If such was the case, the servant asked if he should bring Isaac back to Abraham’s homeland (24:5). In response, Abraham insisted that his servant “beware” or be on guard that Isaac not be brought to his homeland (24:6).

Notice the **cause and effects** in 24:6-7. Isaac was not to return to Abraham’s homeland (effect; 24:6) *because* the LORD God of heaven, which took

Abraham from his father's house and the land of his kindred, spoke and swore unto him that "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Hebrews 11:15-16, a **related passage**, states that faithful believers, such as Abraham and Isaac, chose to stay in the land because they desired a heavenly country more than they desired a return to their homeland. Abraham stressed to his servant the belief that an angel would go before him and that he would take a wife from there for Isaac (24:7).

Abraham freed his servant from fulfilling the oath if the woman would not willingly follow him back to Canaan. He repeated that "my son" should not be brought to the homeland (24:8). The servant put his hand under his master's thigh and swore as Abraham requested (24:9).

Part Three: His Sons Buried Him . . . "in the cave of Machpelah" (25:1-11)

A. Abraham took a wife (25:1-6)

Abraham took a wife named Keturah (25:1). The passage does not verify when Abraham remarried; however, it indicates that God continued to bless him with the ability to father children after the miraculous birth of Isaac. Genesis 25:2 lists the six sons born to Keturah. Genesis 25:3-4 lists grandsons also descending from Abraham and Keturah.

"Abraham gave all he had unto Isaac" (25:5). However, he did give gifts to the sons of his concubines. Scholars believe the term "concubines" refers to Hagar and Keturah. He also sent his sons away towards the east, away from Isaac (25:6).

B. Abraham died and was buried (25:7-11)

Abraham lived 175 years (25:7). Genesis 25:8 records several things about Abraham's death. **First**, he "gave up the ghost" or breathed his last breath. **Second**, he "died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years" which reflect a good and satisfying life. **Third**, he "was gathered to his people" (i.e., gathered with his fathers who already died). God had promised such an end for Abraham (15:15). Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham "in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron" (25:9). This was the field Abraham purchased to bury Sarah his wife (25:10). After Abraham's death, the immediate context turns toward God's blessing of Isaac (25:11) as He continues the story of redemption through Abraham's descendants.

Conclusion

Abraham hoped for more than a piece of land. He hoped for what God was building and had in mind for the land of Canaan. He longed to know how God would use the land to bless all families of the earth through his descendants. How did God use Abraham, his descendants, and the land to bless all families of the earth? Jesus Christ is the answer.

Apply It

- **Follow the example** of Abraham
 - who acted by faith according to the LORD's promises
 - by investing in earthly things useable for God's kingdom

Leader's Guide: Some scholars believe that Keturah was a concubine as described in 25:6. Some scholars also believe that the word translated "took" is better understood as "had taken," thus, implying Abraham's relationship with her occurred before Sarah's death, perhaps even long before her death.

Leader's Guide: Scholars recognize that being gathered with his people preceded Abraham's burial.

Leader's Guide: God's plan for the land included making it a home for His people when they returned from Egyptian bondage, for prophets, priests, and kings, and for the Temple. It included a place for the birth, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

NOTES
