

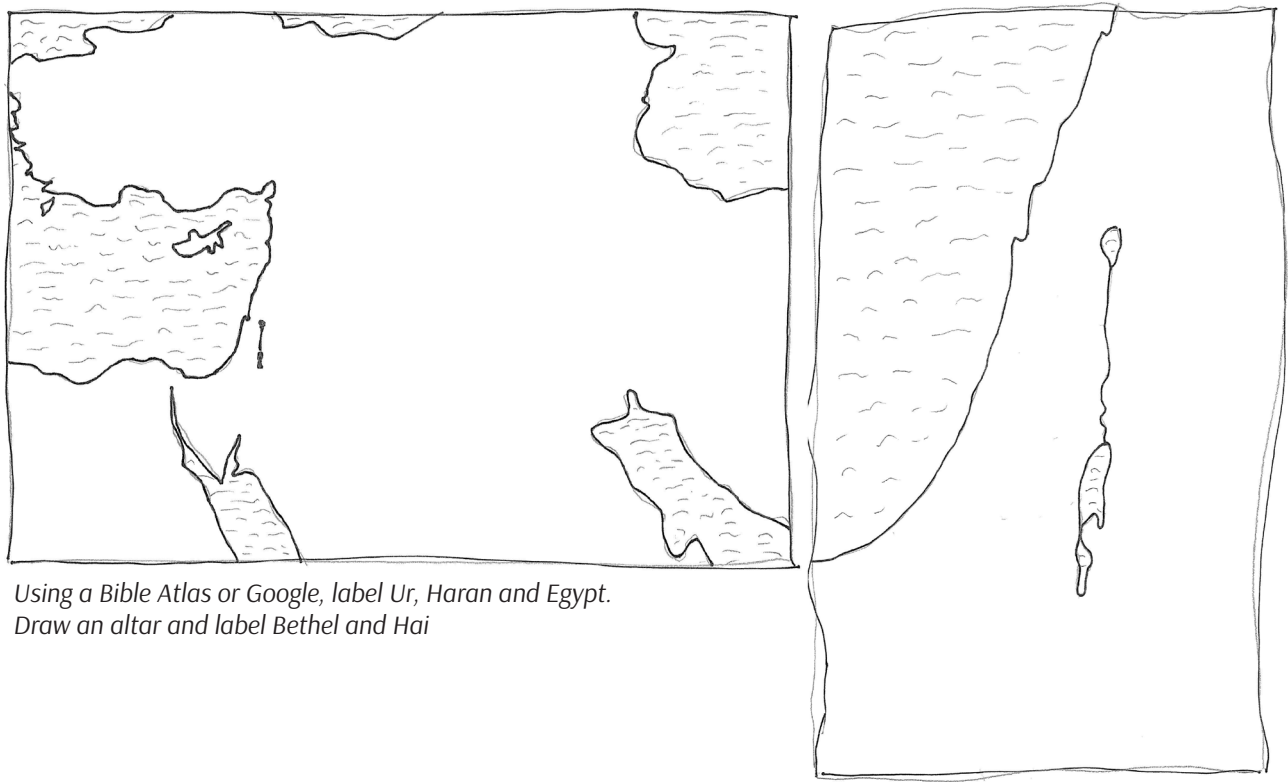


STUDY WEEK 2014





SECTION ONE



Using a Bible Atlas or Google, label Ur, Haran and Egypt.  
Draw an altar and label Bethel and Hai

Where do we begin when looking at the life of a man who lived so long ago?  
As with any study, the best place to start is the context.

What was it like when Abraham lived? What kind of world did he grow up in?

Genesis 10 and 11 have been given to us for this reason.

## GENESIS 10 AND 11



Genesis 10 is a breakdown of the families of Noah after the flood.  
Let's have a look at some interesting themes.

As you read through Genesis 10, grab a coloured pencil and colour in the following:

10:5	'every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations'
10:20	'after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.'
10:31	'after the families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.'
10:32	'after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth'





What are the 5 things emphasised in the verses listed on the page before?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

As the world's population grows rapidly, man spreads out in search of his own area. Families grow and become nations – some stronger than others. The chapter seems to show us that in this stage of earth's history the focus was on their land, and their family, and how rapidly they grew.

Interestingly, this same focus on self is still prevalent at the very end of the Bible, in Revelation 17v15. These exact terms are used to describe the kingdom of men that Christ will destroy when he returns – a system focused on building its own empire and its own religion. God doesn't want an empire, he wants families who love him and want to look like him.

So, back in Abram's time: What about the people? What were they like?

Genesis 11 tells us this is a chapter that seems out of place yet will prove to be so very relevant to Abraham's background.



Take a new coloured pencil. Colour in every time the word 'us' or 'we' is used in Genesis 11v3-4.



What impression do you now have of the world at the time? Who and what were they focused on?



Take the same coloured pencil you used in Genesis 10 and colour in every time 'begat sons and daughters' is mentioned. Then draw a box around Genesis 11v30.



Take a moment to look over the colour in Genesis 10 and 11.  
How is Genesis 11v30 so different from all those you have coloured in?

Why has God told us this?

## CHARACTERS OF THE STORY

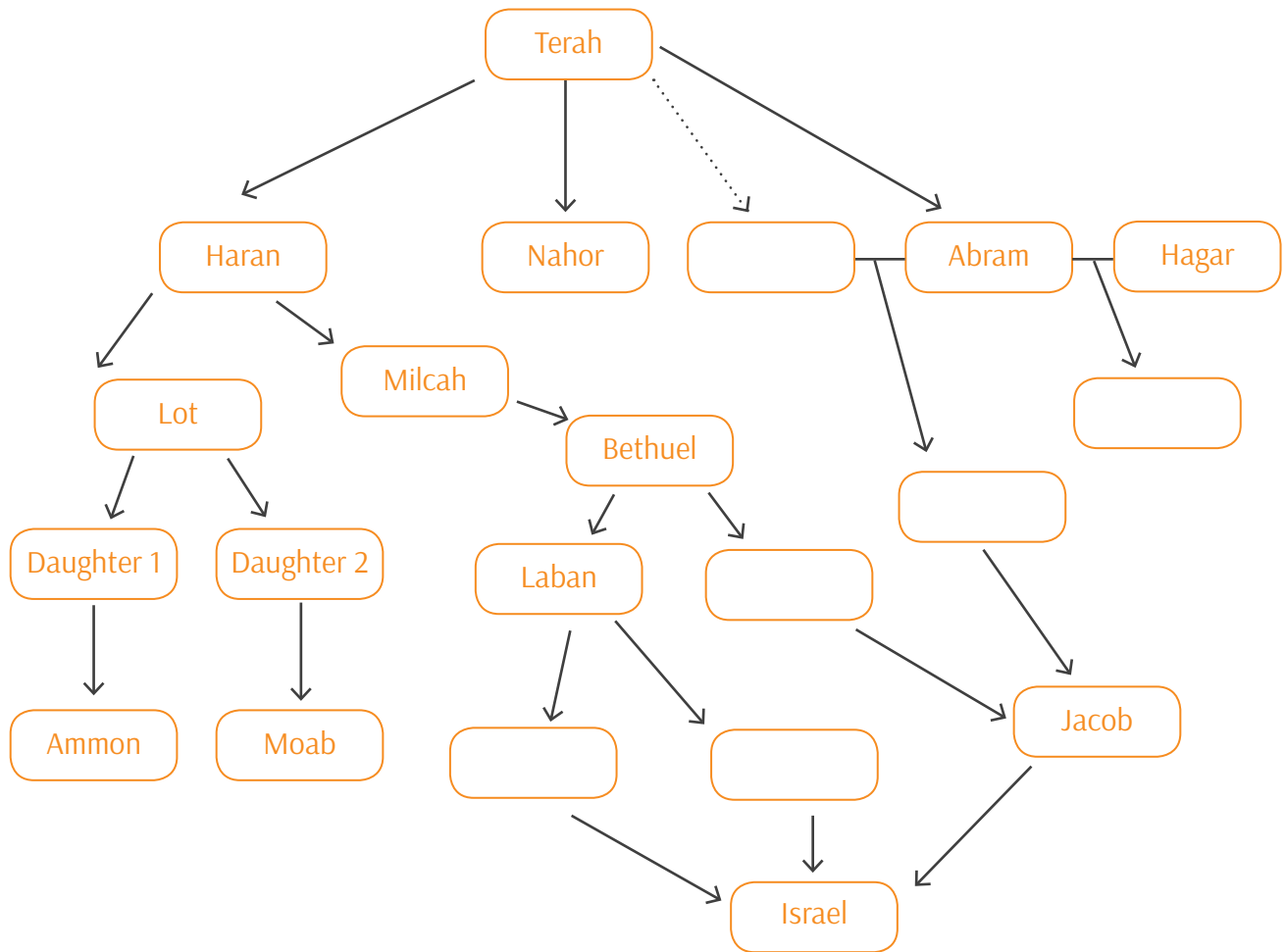


Using a Bible Dictionary (Smiths, Unger's or similar) look up the meaning of the names and try to discover a little about their backgrounds.

NAME	Info
Terah	
Abram	
Nahor	
Haran	
Lot	
Sarai	
Milcah	



Write down the people named in this brief section. Draw up a family tree to see how they are related.



## BARREN

The closing words of Genesis 11 conceal a subtle but persistent challenge in the life of Abram. You could easily miss the fact that Sarai was barren. This would have been a major cause of doubt and uncertainty throughout Abram's life – it might have seemed God's plan was failing at the first hurdle. How was he to have a child?

As we saw in the background, the nations and peoples around Abram were focused on building families. They were begetting sons and daughters, creating dynasties after them – yet Abram, the supposed “father of many nations”, is childless. How this must have tested Abram's trust in what God had promised him!

Until now, the record has always referred to men as “begetting sons and daughters”. However Genesis 11v30 states that Sarai had no children.

Why did it not say Abram had no children?

This seems to allude to the promise God made to Eve (Genesis 3v15) that the promised seed would come through a woman through God’s intervention. This becomes obvious throughout the Bible. Look up the word “barren” and see where it appears in the Bible.

There are only five other women recorded in scripture who were barren, who subsequently had children:

	PASSAGE	MOTHER	What was the result of God’s intervention?
1	Genesis 25v21-22		
2	Genesis 29v31; 30v1		
3	Judges 13v1-2		
4	1 Samuel 1v1-20		
5	Luke 1v7		

## THE FIRST PROMISE



Where was Abram when he received the call and promises in Genesis 12v1-3?  
(Compare Acts 7v1-5)



Where is Abram in Genesis 12v4?



It is suggested that up to five years had passed during these verses (for more on this, compare the years and dates in the following passages – Genesis 15v13; 17v17; 12v4; Exodus 12v41). Look at all the events that have occurred:

- \* Left Mesopotamia
- \* Arrived in Haran
- \* Accumulated many people and possessions

This shows that although time has passed he had not forgotten the calling. It would have been easy to forget the promises as Abram had become well established, comfortable and secure in Haran (Hebrews 11v15).



What were the three things God asked him to leave in Genesis 12v1? How does this contrast with what happened to Haran in Genesis 11v28?

ABRAM	HARAN

Without God's calling, Abram would have ended up buried beside Haran!



Who is it that makes the decision to leave Ur in Genesis 11v31? Find a copy of 'Josephus' and look up Antiquities of the Jews, chapter VI, verse 5. What suggestion does this particular historian make?



See Acts 7v4. Who is it that makes Abram move from Haran? What was the event that made him leave?

God was actively involved in Abram's life, using natural events that prompted him in the right direction!

## THE PROMISE



What are the 7 aspects to this promise? (Record them in the order you find them in Genesis 12v2-3)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

As we shall see, these promises were only partially fulfilled in the life of Abram. Their ultimate fulfillment will only come with Christ in his Kingdom and finally at the end of the kingdom when God is all and in all.

## ABRAM ACTS



In Genesis 12v4-5, who did Abram take with him? (compare with Genesis 14v14)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Wherever Abram was, he motivated people to become part of the family of promise and to share in the blessings.



Genesis 12v5 reads, 'into the land of Canaan they came' – but was it really that easy? What do the following quotes suggest?

Joshua 24v2-3 –

Hebrews 11v8 –

## STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND



Look up Shechem in a Bible Dictionary (Smiths or Unger's). What two mountains lay either side of this location?



What do the names of these mountains mean?



Look up the following passages – what events happened in these passages?

<b>Genesis 35v1-4</b>	
<b>Deuteronomy 27v11-15</b>	
<b>Joshua 24v19-26</b>	
<b>Judges 8v33-9v6</b>	
<b>John 4v5, 19-24</b>	



What is the common theme throughout these passages?



Look up Genesis 9v25-26. What do these verses tell us about Canaan and his descendants?

Abram entered into a land filled with the descendants of Canaan. Imagine what he may have faced turning up in a foreign land with a large group of people. It would not have been as straightforward as we like to think. Consider some of the obstacles he would have encountered:

- \* A native and potentially hostile population wary of a new wave of immigrants
- \* Trying to guide, provide for and protect his extensive family
- \* Widespread immoral beliefs and practices that had to be avoided
- \* A foreign, uncharted land he had no knowledge of
- \* Local languages and customs he is ignorant of



In Genesis 12v7 God appears to Abram – but who is the land promised to? Look closely!



Who is the seed being referred to? See Galatians 3v16



What does Abram do after receiving this promise?



Using a Bible Dictionary, draw a rough sketch of what a typical altar would have looked like in Abram's day.



An altar was a public declaration of a person's worship. They were also often a reminder of something that God had given or done for them. Abram is making it clear to those who lived in the area that he was guided by God and that he was thankful for the promises God had made to him.

Think about the "altars" you have built in your life. How are they a reminder of what God has done?

## CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD



See Genesis 4v26; who are the first people to call on the name of the LORD?



Now look at Genesis 6v2; what other name are these people known by?



What does Joel 2v28-32 say is the result of "calling on the name of the LORD"?



Peter quotes from Joel in his speech on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. How were these people going to be saved, Acts 2v37-41, 47?



Finally, take a look at Romans 10v9-13. What does this passage say the two things are that "calling on the name of the LORD" represents?

- 1.
- 2.

So what did it mean for Abram to “call on the name of the LORD”?

This phrase, in its simplest form, means to pray. However as we have just seen the phrase is used as a way of identifying those people who have heard the gospel, believed and been baptised into the name of the LORD.

To call on the name of the LORD was to be surnamed with his name (Luke 22v3, Acts 10v18, Acts 11v13, Acts 12v12, Acts 15v22) like a wife would when she is married. She adopts the family name to gain a new identity. Abram here identifies himself as one of these people – and all who follow in his footsteps will receive the promise.



In Genesis 12v8 Abram pitches a tent and appears to be settling – but what was his attitude? Look up Hebrews 11v9-13 and Acts 7v5. How do these verses describe Abram?



Take a look at Genesis 26v25 and Genesis 33v18-20. What does this tell you about the attitude of Abram’s family? Where did they get this attitude from?



Notice carefully where Abram is at this time – get a Bible Dictionary or Concordance and look up the words ‘Bethel’ and ‘Hai’. What do these names mean?



What might the significance of Abram being between these two places mean?

## FAMINE STRIKES / TROUBLE IN EGYPT

Shortly after being promised the land, Abram has to leave! Struggling through famine was not a problem unique to Abram. Look up the following verses to see who else in his family was affected.

<b>Genesis 12v10</b>	Abram goes down to Egypt
<b>Genesis 26v1</b>	
<b>Genesis 42v5</b>	

Despite being especially called by God, Abram and his family are not immune from life's problems. Abram had pitched his tent in a place of decision, and now he is faced with an important choice: stay in the land he has been promised, or relocate elsewhere?



In Genesis 12v11-13, Abram comes up with a plan to take matters into his own hands if things go wrong. What was the plan he had discussed with Sarai?



What was the problem with this plan?



Why did he feel this was necessary? What were the two major fears of Abram, Genesis 12v12?



How did his fear become a reality, Genesis 12v14-15?

Abram chose to go to Egypt because of the famine. The responsibility and pressure of looking after such a large group of people caused him to go to a place he may not usually have gone. In this difficult time he sought to solve problems his own way, making bad decisions. Although he was a man of faith, on this occasion his fear of the Egyptians overcame his faith in God. Nowhere in this section are we told he sought God's direction. How often do we seek God in times of difficulty?



What seven things did Abram gain from this lie, Genesis 12v16?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

It is important to realise that despite the material wealth Abram received, his lie was still wrong. Material benefits are not an indication of God's approval. A good example of this is shown in Psalm 73, where the Godly man looks at the wealth of the ungodly, and is disappointed.

On one hand Abram's plan appears to have worked – he is still alive. However, Sarai is still in a very vulnerable position – Pharaoh wants to take her to wife. How is Abram going to get them out of this situation? God is going to have to intervene, not because of Abram's faith, but because God is faithful to Abram.



How does God intervene, Genesis 12v17?



How can this be linked with the promises made in Genesis 12v3? See also Psalm 105v13-15!

## THINK ABOUT: SPEAKING THE TRUTH

We have just considered an occasion where Abram does not tell the truth. Sometimes we deceive ourselves just as Abram did: if we tell partial truths then “strictly speaking we aren't lying”. But lying is more than just not telling the truth. It involves telling a story in such a way that the truth becomes blurred or confused.



Abram said, “She is my sister”. This was true, but what it was implying was that he wasn’t in a relationship with Sarai. Any normal person would have interpreted this statement in a way that assumed Abram and Sarai were NOT married. However, this is the exact information that Abram was trying to conceal. This is the deceitfulness of sin. Because in Abram’s mind, he could always say, “I never said she wasn’t my wife”.

Look up Jeremiah 9v1-9. What is God’s attitude to lying? (see verses 7 and 9)

What effect does lying have on our relationship with God? (look closely at verses 3 and 6)

Think of an occasion where you haven’t told the truth. Why do you think you didn’t tell the truth? Why didn’t you tell the truth? Were you embarrassed by the real facts? What was the truth you were trying to hide?

If you think about that same situation, try to think of what would happen if you had told the truth. Would this have demonstrated a greater trust in God if you had told the truth (either confessed to a fault or spoke up for your beliefs or conscience)?

## THINK ABOUT: THE WAGES OF SIN

Sometimes you get away with it – that little lie, something slightly immoral, a nasty comment, perhaps cheating the law. It may seem like you got away with it, or are even better off! Sometimes your friends, or even people you respect like Abram, seem to get away with it. If you think about this situation with Abram, as a result of lying he became very rich. How was this fair?

In Psalm 73, we find Asaph struggling with the injustice of human life. It seems like all the good people are suffering for their righteousness, and all the bad people are getting away with it. But as the Psalm explains, we need to think about the eternal promises God has made to those who love him and look forward to Christ’s return. In Psalm 73, Justice and God’s righteousness prevails in the end.

In the midst of trial, Abram ignored the promise. He took things into his own hands and the ‘solution’ became too blurred. He was cowardly towards his wife and his actions suggested to his nephew Lot that riches could be gained by compromising truth. This idea is explored in the next section.

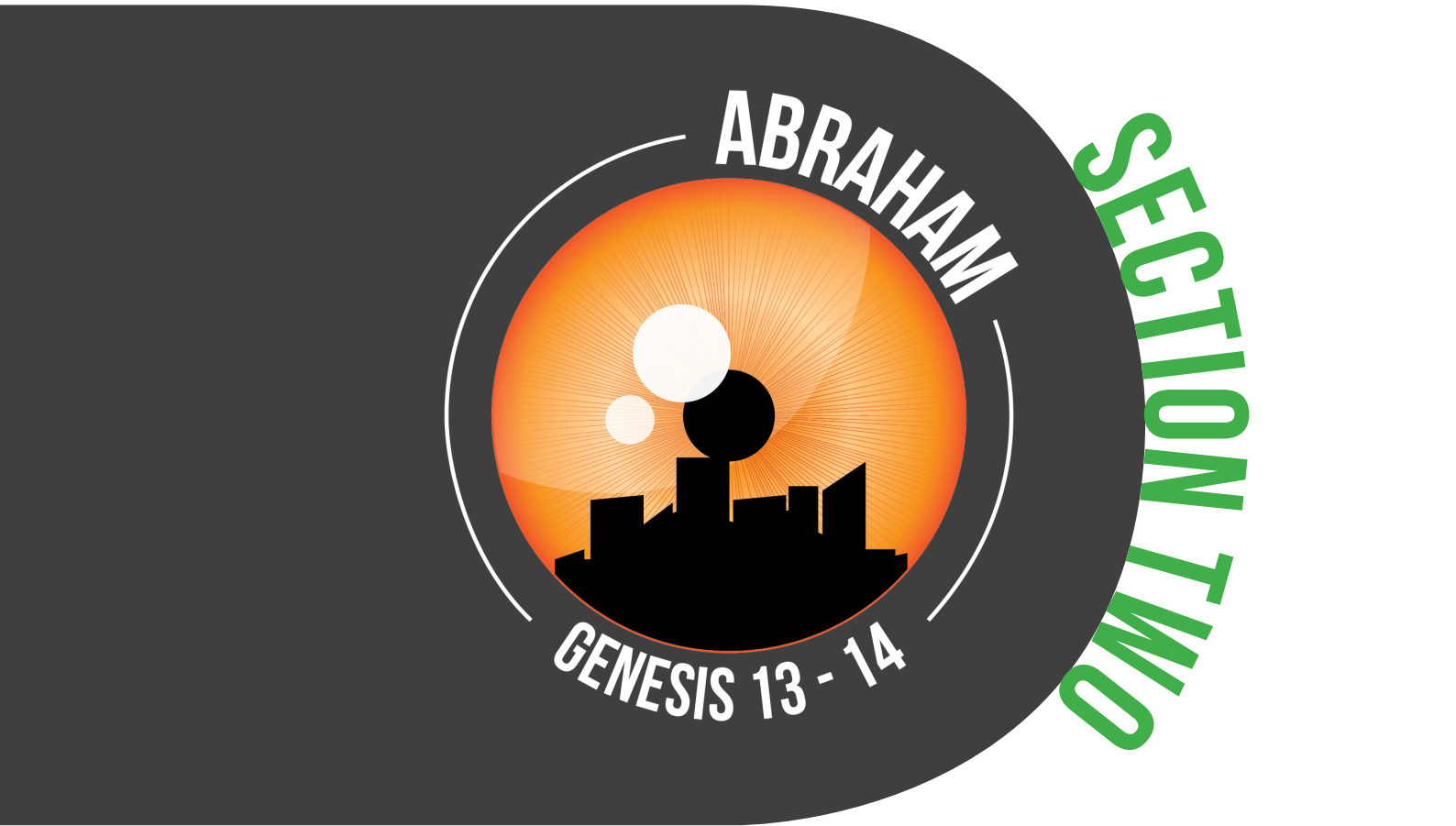
Short term gain may come our way through compromising our principles, but this is devastating to our relationship with our God, family and friends.

Does anyone really “get away with” sin? Take a look at the following passages:

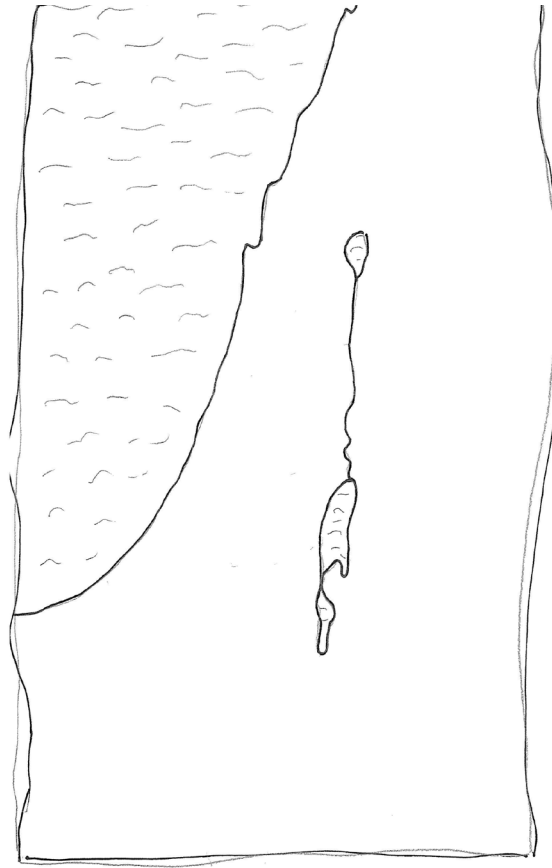
Psalm 32v1-4

Romans 6v23





*Using a Bible Atlas or Google, label Sodom & Gomorrah, Hebron and Salem*



## STARTING OVER

The start of Genesis 13 implies Abram has returned from Egypt having learnt some hard lessons and is determined to start again.



Who else goes with Abram? Genesis 12v4, 20; 13v1



A lot of people have and will be influenced by Abram's decisions.  
Write a list of four people in your life that you are close to and have the ability to influence:



Reflection: Are you influencing the people you are close to in the right direction?

Look at Genesis 12v8-9 and 13v1-3 and notice the deliberate reversal of order of where Abram journeys:

Journey Southward	Journey Northward
Leaves Bethel (12v8)	Leaves Egypt (13v1)
Goes through the Negev desert (12v9, “the south”)	Goes through the Negev desert (13v1, “the south”)
Arrives in Egypt (12v10)	Arrives in Bethel (13v3)



He is clearly retracing his steps. Why?

Compare what Abram did in Bethel in Genesis 12v8 and what he does on his return to Bethel in Genesis 13v4.



Why might Abram have returned to this particular place?

After the mistakes made in Egypt, Abram brings everyone back to Bethel – ‘the house of God’.

Abram understands that the merciful character of God allows faithful people, despite their mistakes, to return to Him and start again.



Look up the following passages to remind us of how we can have confidence in returning to God.

Job 22v23-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Ezekiel 18v27-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Malachi 3v7 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2v37-38 \_\_\_\_\_

## STRIFE AND DECISION MAKING

These early verses of Genesis 13 highlight the wealth that Abram and Lot received from Egypt.

Compare Genesis 13v2 with Genesis 13v5, and list what they had gained.

Abram - Genesis 13v2	Lot - Genesis 13v5

Abram is now faced with a new sort of problem – in Genesis 12 they departed the land because of the famine and lack of provisions. Now in Genesis 13 they are immensely rich. Yet as we shall see, this has its own dangers. Before we move onto the next section, write out Proverbs 30v8-9 in the space below:

Keep these principles in mind as we look at the choices Abram and Lot make in this chapter.

What immediate problem does their new-found wealth cause in Genesis 13v6-7?

The disagreement over land was between the herdsmen; not Abram and Lot. Abram acts quickly to prevent any strife arising between them personally. In doing so, he offers Lot “the whole land before you”. Clearly Abram still believes the promise of Genesis 12v7, despite the continued Canaanite and Perizzite presence (Genesis 12v6 and 13v7).

In Genesis 13v8 Abram shows leadership. How does Abram approach the strife? Disagreements are events we will all have to face in our lives. Where we can't avoid them, what matters is how we approach them and deal with them.

Draw a line to match the action of Abram with the correct phrase below



Abram's Action	Steps to ending strife
"Abram said unto Lot"	Put another before yourself
"Let there be no strife for we be brethren"	Address the problem in love
"Is not the whole land before you?"	Suggest a solution
"if you take the left hand I will take the right"	Address the person one on one



Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 6v1-8 in the English Standard Version (ESV). How were the Corinthians failing to follow the example set by Abram?

Throughout this section we are made aware of the concern that Abram has for Lot. It is possible that in the absence of his own son, Abram believed that it would be through Lot that the promises were to be fulfilled. Abram continues to struggle with the lack of a natural descendant.

Abram's decision for the two men to separate is not necessarily wrong. However, Lot's decision to choose the lands around Sodom is clearly unwise. The consequences will prove to be disastrous for Lot and his family.



What exactly did Lot see when he looked at the land, Genesis 13v10?



Look up the meaning of Lot's name and write it below:



What major thing was Lot ignoring when he looked at this land, Genesis 13v13?



What does this tell us about his motivation for going there?

There is an interesting wordplay hidden in these verses. Jordan means "going down" and this is the same verb used to describe Abram's descent into Egypt. Lot is about to make a similar mistake.

Lot's decision to descend to the Jordan was because of the land, not the people. However as the following table shows, even he could not escape the lure of sin.

The following verses show the steady influence the city and its people had on Lot:

Genesis 13v7 – "Strife"

Genesis 13v10 – "Lifted up his eyes"

Genesis 13v11 – "Chose him all the plains of Jordon"

Genesis 13v12 – "Pitched his tent toward Sodom"

Genesis 14v12 – "Dwelt in Sodom"

Genesis 19v1 – "Sat in the gate"

Genesis 19v16 – "Lingered"



What effect did this have on Lot's and his family? Look up the following passages to follow the consequences of Lots decision:

Genesis 19v14 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 19v26 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 19v30 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 19v31-38 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 83v2,4,8 \_\_\_\_\_

Zephaniah 2v8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Lot's decision is even more tragic given all the lives that were lost along the way. Whilst Abram made the mistake of going down to Egypt, he still returned with his entire house. Lot, however, probably went down to Jordan with at least 50 people (Genesis 18v24), yet only three made it out alive!

What are the 'little choices' that, over time, could possibly lead us to a life that doesn't please God? Take a moment to look up both of these quotes:

1 Timothy 6v9-10

1 Corinthians 15v33 (ESV)

## THE PROMISE CONFIRMED



Compare Genesis 13v10 with 13v14. What are three clear contrasts between these verses?

As we saw previously, Abram showed that he was not interested in the immediate riches that the plain of Jordan could offer. It is no coincidence that straight after Lot departs God appears to Abram and promises him future wealth.



What has God now added to his original promise to Abram? Add these to the growing list.

GENESIS 12v2-3

1. Great nation
2. Abram blessed
3. Abram's name made great
4. Blessings by association with Abram
5. Blessings upon those who bless Abram
6. Cursings upon those who curse Abram
7. All families of the earth will be blessed

GENESIS 12v7

8. Abram's seed is promised the land

GENESIS 13v15-16

- 9.
- 10.



How do we know that Abram has been promised a physical land to inherit, Genesis 13v17?

## THE BATTLE OF THE KINGS



Make a list of every king mentioned in Genesis 14

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



Take a colour pencil and highlight the words in Genesis 14 which describe the actions of the first nine kings:

*made war, joined together, served, rebelled, smote, joined battle, fled, fell, took goods*

The battles rage in the background but the story will now turn to Abram, as one man will escape the destruction and bring news to Abram of the capture of his nephew, Lot.



Look closely at Genesis 14v13 – what is interesting about what Abram is called?



What does this new title actually mean in the original text? (Use a concordance to find this out)



What might this tell us about Abram's attitude to his calling?

Genesis 14v13 introduces us to three Amorite brothers: Mamre, Eshcol and Aner. These men have not been involved in the wars that have struck their own people (Genesis 14v7).

So why is Abram living amongst these worldly Amorites?

Why haven't they gone to fight with their countrymen?



Look up the meaning of the word "confederate" in a Bible dictionary:



What kind of relationship might these brothers have with Abram? Consider the following points:

Genesis 13v8 - Abram builds a \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 14v13 - They are allied with \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 14v24 - Amorites are present when \_\_\_\_\_ rescues Lot

Genesis 14v15 - Abram devises the \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 14v17 - Abram is sought by \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 14v18 - Abram is sought by \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 14v24 - Abram invites the Amorites to decide on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



What quality is Abram showing throughout this story?



How does his relationship with the Amorites differ to his relationship with the King of Sodom?

Abram had already decided to leave his own country and search for a new city. From the clues provided in this story, it is quite possible he has managed to convert the Amorites to do the same thing – ignore their own country, and join with Abram in searching for a ‘new one’. It is interesting to note they are living in Hebron, which means “fellowship”.

Abram was not influenced by the Amorites – he influenced them. Think about your school, uni or work relationships. Who is doing the influencing?

Abram has a very different relationship with the Amorites than the one he has with the King of Sodom, whom he utterly rejects. What does this story teach us about our attitude to our relationship and how we interact with worldly people?

## RECOVERING THE LO(S)T

As can be seen in Genesis 14, it is evident that Abram still loves Lot and will do anything to save him. He could have easily ignored the report – it may have been a few years since they last met. He could have written Lot off as having made wrong decisions and paid the consequences – but this chapter shows just how far Abram would go to save his nephew.



Abram pursues the invading forces all the way from his settlement in Hebron north to Dan, and then further on to Damascus. Using the maps in the back of your Bible, try to calculate how many kilometres this journey represented.

Abram's journey = \_\_\_\_\_ km

To try and appreciate this distance, find a town or city that is the same distance away from your current location, in Google maps. How long does Google think it would take you to walk this journey?



What simple lesson does this teach us about looking after friends who are ‘lost’?



Genesis 14v14 strangely tells us the exact number of men Abram had – just three hundred and eighteen trained servants. Remember the ten kings we listed at the beginning of this section – the force Abram is about to attack is made up of four of these kings and their respective armies. Given this war has been raging for two years, it is likely these were immensely large armies, well experienced in warfare. Abram would have been hugely outnumbered and ‘outgunned’ – but that was the point. To whom did Melchizedek attribute the victory (v20)?



This will not be the only time God uses a small army to defeat an overwhelming force. Name three other places in scripture where this happens:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Genesis 14 closes with a fascinating meeting between the victorious Abram and two very different kings. The King of Sodom is the first to appear, but Abram appears to ignore him initially..



What can we learn about Melchizedek from this section?

Look up the meaning of his name (see Hebrews 7v2)

\_\_\_\_\_

Where is he from and what does this mean?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does he bring to Abram?

\_\_\_\_\_

What blessing(s) does he give?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is Abram's response to this?

\_\_\_\_\_

What does Abram's response tell us about the relationship between these men?

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 110 is the only other reference to Melchizedek in the Old Testament:

As Hebrews 7 explains, we have very little detail regarding this mysterious character. He appears suddenly, and is never referred to again in the story. The mention of the mysterious Melchizedek would have puzzled the Jews for centuries. Abram was everything to these people – the greatest character in the Jewish faith – so who was this figure who was even greater than their hero?

Genesis 14 shows us that someone greater than Abram would come; a man who would likewise “strike through kings in the day of his wrath”. This is undoubtedly an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ, who will meet with the faithful saints after the battle of Armageddon, after the remnant of Israel have been saved from the enemy. God will be glorified and Jesus will share in fellowship with the true children of Abraham.

#### Psalms 110 - A Psalm of David.

- 1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
- 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
- 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.
- 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.
- 5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.
- 6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.
- 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Contrast this with the King of Sodom, who having been ignored until now feels the need to interject. What is it that this man desires, Genesis 14v21?

## “GIVE ME THE SOULS...”



What is Abram’s response to this king and how would you describe Abram’s attitude in Genesis 14v22-23?

The King of Sodom was particularly interested in owning the people; he wanted their hopes and aspirations, emotions and allegiance. Like all worldly kings, this system traded in souls, not just goods. Abram stood apart from such thinking, and this same warning is given to the saints from Genesis through to Revelation.

Revelation 18v3-4

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.  
And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

Why did Abram stand apart? Why should we? Because in being faithful, our baptism declares that we promise our soul to the God of heaven.

Whilst this chapter sounds like an improbable and remarkable rescue mission, what is the tragic outcome? The King of Sodom got the soul that he wanted. Where does Lot go after this incredibly fortunate escape? Look at Genesis 19v1.



How must this have left Abram feeling?



Does the Bible ever tell us Abram and Lot met again?

## THINK ABOUT: THE PROBLEM WITH MONEY

Money can be problem. Find a person who has never thought to themselves, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to have a little bit more money!’ If it not exist, then the “love of money” would never exist. Money often breeds wants and desires that make us irrational, envious and selfish. There are few bigger sources of contention within families than money and how it is spent. Did Abraham have a problem with money? How did money and possessions affect his family?

Jesus made an amazing statement in Luke 12v15: And he said to them, “take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

This cuts straight to the heart of the way we often rate a person: their car, clothes, accessories, job, house. But none of these have anything to do with how God values a person. How many changes of clothing did Jesus have? How much money did he have in his bank account? Where did Jesus live?

Matthew 8v20: And Jesus said to him, “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

All of us have varying financial situations; some have more than others. But does this really matter? We spend far too much of our time talking about what we have, where we've gone and what we want. These really have nothing to do with why we are together but have everything to do with why we split up and divide – see James 4v1-4. We have been called together as a family, not because of what we have, but the hope we have been given – the promise of Abraham.

## THINK ABOUT: PRISONER OF WAR

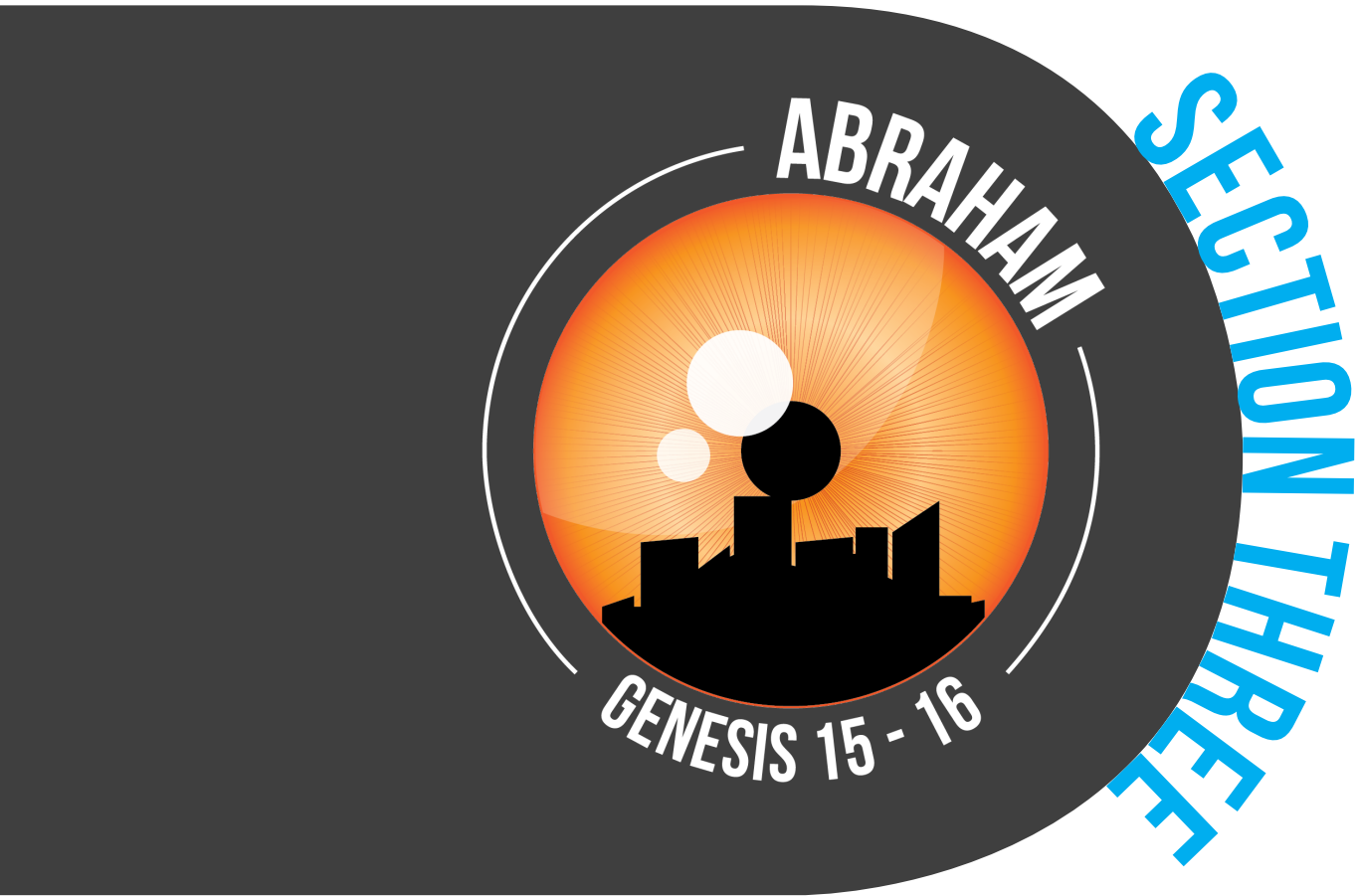
In Genesis 14, we find that Lot is taken captive by the axis of evil from the north. As a result of moving into Sodom, Lot had placed himself in a vulnerable position. He and his family were exposed to the invading armies and were isolated from the support of Lot's family (Abram) and ecclesia.

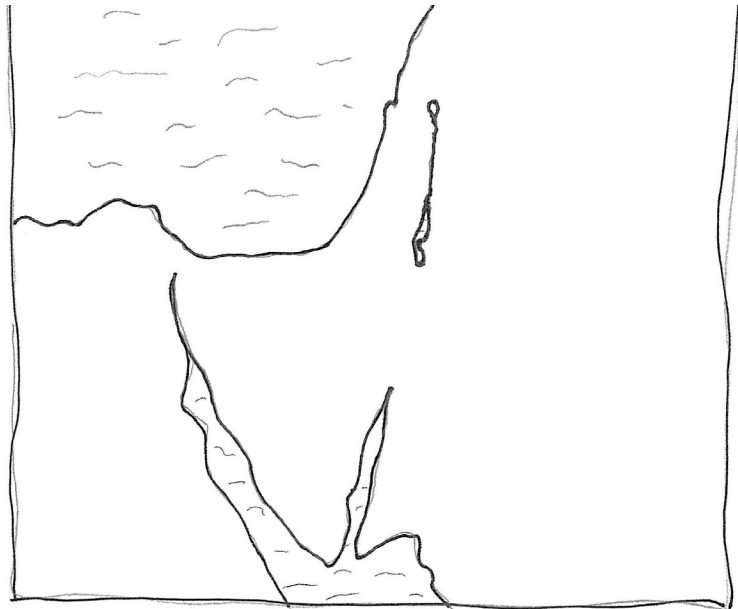
First, let's have a think about some of the decisions that led to his capture.

- [1] He had a falling out with his best friend and family
- [2] He decided to take his family to an isolated and immoral place
- [3] He got caught up in life in that place

If we or our friends ever get into a situation like Lot, an intervention is needed. It will require a battle. There may be casualties – maybe even those who are close to us. But in the end our “soul” can be saved.

How do we go about this intervention? How can we make a rescue through Christ and conquer through his victory? How do we have this conversation with ourselves? Or with our friends?





Using a Bible Atlas or Google, label Beerlahai-roi, which is between Kadesh and Bered. Also identify the “way of shur”.

Add the two rivers that form the boundaries for Abram’s promised land.

## FEAR, AND THE COVENANT



Given that Genesis 15v1 opens with the phrase “after these things”, what is the context to these events?



Has everyone returned with Abram to the plain of Mamre in Genesis 15? Who is missing?



As we just in the previous section, Abram declined an immense reward following the slaughter of the kings. God now appears to him in vision, describing Himself as a “shield” and “an exceeding great reward”. Using a Strong’s Concordance, look up the meaning of both these words:

**Shield (# H4043)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reward (# H7939)** \_\_\_\_\_



In the table below, explore where else these phrases are used:

Passage	To whom is God a shield?
Deuteronomy 33v29	
2 Samuel 22v3	
Psalms 115v10	
	You! (Use Strong's to find a verse)

Passage	Who is God rewarding?
Genesis 30v18	
Numbers 18v31	
Psalms 127v3	
	You! (Use Strong's to find a verse)



It would be understandable for Abram to be fearful of retaliation after he had destroyed nations and refused kings – but he appears to be struggling with another issue at this point in his life. What does his response to God reveal this to be, Genesis 15v2-3?



Up to this point, who are the two people Abram presumed might be counted as his heir?

1.

2.



Based on the above, do you think Abram believed he would be the biological father of the promised seed?



God's response (Genesis 15v4-5) points Abram's view to the heavens. He is told his seed shall be as innumerable as the stars. For Abram, a man unable to comprehend their number, this would have been an overwhelming thought. But what does Psalm 147v4 say about God and the stars?



Where does God say this seed will come from – from another, or from Abram himself? Look closely at Genesis 15v4 and quote the exact phrase:

## **“AND HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD”**



Why was this so amazing? Look up Romans 4v17-22 and give two reasons why Abram might have doubted God's promise:

- 1.
- 2.



Abram's belief was counted by God as righteousness, Genesis 15v6. Write in your own words what this phrase means.



## ABRAHAM, THE RIGHTEOUS

Although Abram has known the gospel for at least ten years, Genesis 16v3, this is actually the first time Abram is called “righteous”. Why now? Previously he had obeyed God, but now he is described as believing. So what is righteousness? God’s righteousness is a way of describing who He is and how He operates; everything He plans and does is right. We are called to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”, Matthew 6v33. We know it is only those who are “righteous” who are saved, Matthew 25v37. How then can we be part of the righteous, especially when our plans and actions are often against God’s?

God chooses to account people as righteous, by forgiving those who have shown an active faith in Him and His son.



In the table below, explore where Genesis 25v6 is referenced:

	What is the context?	Why is Abram’s faith used as an example?
Romans 4v3		
Romans 4v22		
Galatians 3v6		
James 2v23		



In Genesis 15v8, Abram asks God how he will inherit the land. Why did Abram ask how this was going to be achieved? Does asking questions mean he didn’t believe?



What are some other examples of people who questioned things that God had promised?

**Exodus 6v30 – 7v9** \_\_\_\_\_

**Judges 6v14-18** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 1v30-35** \_\_\_\_\_

Does this mean they didn't believe or weren't faithful? No!

It is important to make a distinction between doubting because of unbelief, and questioning how God will achieve something. One is a lack of faith, the other a desire to know how God's plan will be implemented. Abram had just been commended for his faith, and yet his first impulse was to question God: how? This shows Abram's desire to understand God's mind and the outworking of His plan.



Look up Hebrews 11v6 and write it out in the space below. Underline the key words!

## CUTTING THE COVENANT



Strangely, God does not answer Abram's question directly, but leads him to perform an unusual ritual.

Abraham is instructed to take five things in Genesis 15v9:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



In the space below, list each of the steps in this process, Genesis 15v10-12

He cuts them all \_\_\_\_\_ (except for \_\_\_\_\_ )

He lays them \_\_\_\_\_

He defends the \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

He fell into \_\_\_\_\_ ("great \_\_\_\_\_")



The animals that are described in this covenant are later used as sacrifices under the law of Moses. Complete the table below to see how these animals were used.

Passage	Animal	Type of Offering
Numbers 19v2, 9	Red Heifer (3 years)	Sin Offering
Leviticus 4v27-29		
Leviticus 5v16		
Leviticus 5v7-10		



We are told that Abram fell into a deep sleep. What could this deep sleep represent? Have a look at Genesis 2v21 for ideas



What does the horror of darkness represent (Deuteronomy 4v10-11, 5v22)?

God then proceeds to explain to Abram how his seed would possess the land. God is very specific about the details.



Using the table below, what are the main aspects that Abram is told in Genesis 15v13-16?

Main Aspects	Corresponding Information
	Canaan and Egypt
	Exodus 12v40; the 430 years most likely starts when Abram enters the land
	Exodus 7-14
	Exodus 12v36; Psalm 105v37
	Exodus 6v16-20; Jacob-Levi-Kothath-Amram-Moses

The reason that God says Abram's descendants would not inherit the land for another 400 years was because "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full". Is it possible that God would send the descendants of Abram into Egypt and subject them to slavery just to allow the Amorites more time to repent (Compare Deuteronomy 9)?



This idea is consistent with God's character in that He gives nations time to repent. What other examples in scripture show this principle?

Just as the horror of great darkness represented the presence of God, so do the smoking furnace and burning lamp. Compare Deuteronomy 5v22 and Exodus 13v21. In symbol, God was confirming this covenant by walking between the animal pieces. The animal pieces represented the fate of those entering into the covenant if they were to break it (Compare Jeremiah 34v18).

Normally, both parties entering into the covenant would have walked between the pieces. But here, God is the only "maker" of the covenant, as the covenant solely related to what God would do for Abram.



The power of this covenant is highlighted in Hebrews 6v13-20. Summarise this passage in the space below using your own words.

God adds to His previous promises, defining the boundaries of the land that Abram would inherit. We are told that the border of this land would extend from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates., Genesis 15v18-21 On the map provided at the start of this section, colour in the territory that God is describing.

The table below summarises the sequence of events and the spiritual significance. This might be a good table to fit into your margin.

Event (Genesis 15)	Spiritual Significance
Abram prepares the sacrifice (v10)	Abram promised a covenant
Abram fights for the covenant (v11)	Abram never received the promise
Abram falls into a deep sleep (v12)	Abram died
Told how the covenant would come about (v13-16)	While Abram is dead, the covenant is established in Jesus Christ
Abram awakens - he sees the covenant being made (v17)	Abram raised from the dead
Covenant given (v18-21)	Abram receives the promise at Jesus' return

## ISHMAEL / "PLAN B"

It has been at least 10 years since Abram has been promised children. This would have weighed heavily on the mind of Sarai and would no doubt have put pressure on the relationship.

The whole of Abram's household would have been waiting in expectation. How was this going to happen? How were they going to have the promised seed? Who was going to have this child? Abram was promised that the seed would come from him but it is not until Genesis 17 that Sarai is mentioned as being the mother of this promised child.



Read Genesis 16v1-2 and try and work out how Sarai came to the conclusion that the promised seed was to come through her handmaid Hagar.

**Sarai's thinking**

1 . She couldn't have \_\_\_\_\_

2 . God had \_\_\_\_\_

3 . Abram was promised \_\_\_\_\_

(Genesis 15v4) not necessarily Sarai

4 . The child must be through \_\_\_\_\_

The events in Sarai's life cause her to make a decision in desperation, thinking that she and Abram could bring about God's plan of a promised seed through another way. They both needed to learn to wait patiently for God's time. This was a real test of their faith as they had already waited a long time for this promised child.



Have a look at how other people had to learn patience.

Verse	What were they waiting for?
1 Kings 19v9-18	
Romans 2v6-10	
Revelation 6v9-10	

There are also personal challenges that may weigh heavily on our faith. Think of some challenges in your life that might require you to patiently wait for God's timing. These might include; a friend getting baptised, a job or career, waiting for a partner, managing an illness or disability, or having children.



Read Genesis 16v4-6 to see the way in which people reacted and then compare how they should have behaved.

Character	Passage	Reaction	Passage	The right behaviour
Hagar	Genesis 16v4		Ephesians 6v5-8	
Sarai	Genesis 16v5-6		Ephesians 6v9	
Abram	Genesis 16v6		Ephesians 5v25-29	



The scene we read of in Genesis 16v6 is not pretty. Look up the word “dealt hardly” in Strong’s and find where else this word is used in the story of Abram. What do you discover?

This bitterness in the household of Abram became too much for Hagar, causing her to flee. Where did she flee to? Refer to the map at the beginning of this section.

God demonstrates His love and care for those who are poor and needy. Hagar was very vulnerable – she was pregnant and running away from Abram’s house. God sends His angel to encourage her and assures her that she will have a son and that his descendants would be many.



Find out some information about Ishmael from Genesis 16v8-13, other passages, and Bible dictionaries. Describe the man in the box below:



Color in the word “handmaid”, “maid” and “mistress” in Genesis 16. It is interesting that the angel calls her Sarai’s handmaid and not Abram’s wife!



What does the angel ask her to do and why might this be difficult for her, Genesis 16v9?



What do Hagar's words and actions tell us about Hagar's faith, Genesis 16v13?



This story is picked up by Paul in the letter to Galatians. The Galatians, who were only newly converted to Christ, were being convinced to turn back to the law of Moses as the way of salvation. Paul uses the story to represent two ways of living and two types of children. Read through Galatians 4v21-31 and fill in the comparisons in the table below.

Galatians 4	Hagar/Ishmael	Sarah/Isaac
v22	Bondmaid	
v23		Born by promise
v25,26	Current operation of the law in Jerusalem	
v31		Children of freedom

Paul makes the point that the law could not save – why? Because people could not keep all of it (Galatians 3v10) and are therefore sentenced to death. Even the only one who kept it perfectly – Jesus – was cursed by it (Galatians 3v13) highlighting the need for salvation through another way.

In Paul's comparison, Hagar and Ishmael represent the children of slavery - those who try to earn their salvation through keeping a set of rules (the Law of Moses). Sarah and Isaac represent the children of freedom – Jesus and all those who have been baptised into Christ. These children live by faith – not relying on their own strengths, but relying on the faith of Christ and the hope of the promises.

**Galatians 2v16**

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”



## THINK ABOUT: FAITH - POWER TO CHANGE

God made a promise to Abram, and he believed God. What God had promised was impossible for Abram to achieve himself.

“Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.” Hebrews 11v12

How could Abram be so sure of the unseen promise?

Because he was so sure of the unseen God, just as he had been so sure of the unseen land (Hebrews 11v8). God had given reasons and experiences for Abram to believe.

God was going to undertake a personal physical transformation for Abram to perform something that he couldn't. It wasn't up to Abram to make this change, but it was up to him to believe that God would be true to his promises and do what was humanly impossible.

God has made a promise to you and I. He has promised to change us, both now and in the future. He has called us to be transformed into the image of his Son. But how can this happen?

It's not up to our personal will power to fix our problems! Through faith in God and Christ, he can make this change in us. We place our full faith and trust in God and Christ, that “he who began a good work in you will bring in to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil 1v6).

## THINK ABOUT: DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL HURT

Think about a time when you have been really upset by what someone has said or done to you.

Sarai was really upset with her situation. God had promised them a child, but she couldn't have it. So she hatched a plan to try and fix things, hoping that she would be emotionally strong enough to deal with the consequences. But she wasn't.

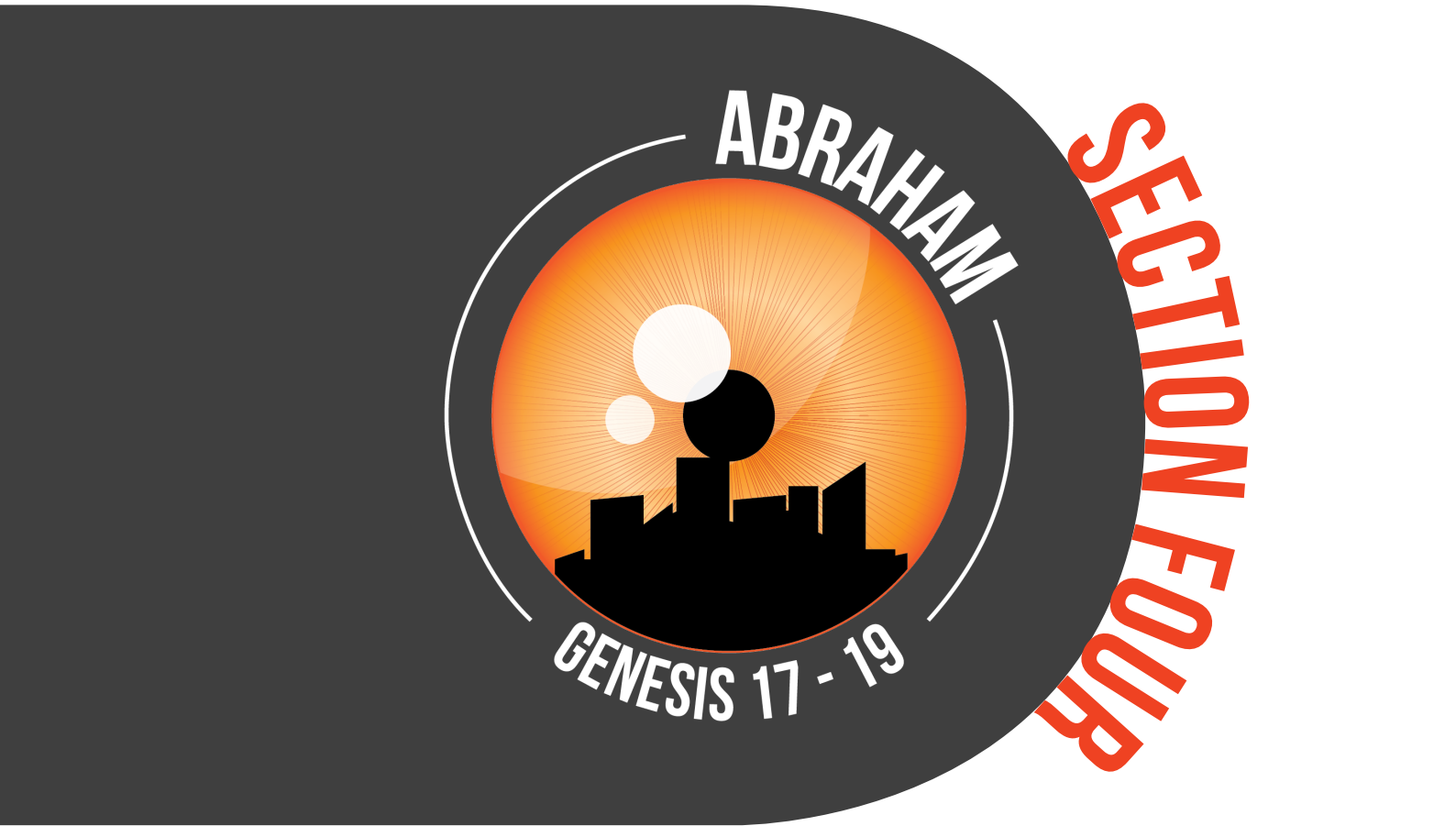
The outcome of her plan only led to more pain and hurt and deepened the emotional wounds that she was feeling.

Sometimes people can say and do things that bring up really painful emotional memories. This can be very difficult as they can take hold of us and leave us feeling upset, angry and bitter. They make us aware of our insecurities and can paralyze us from moving on.

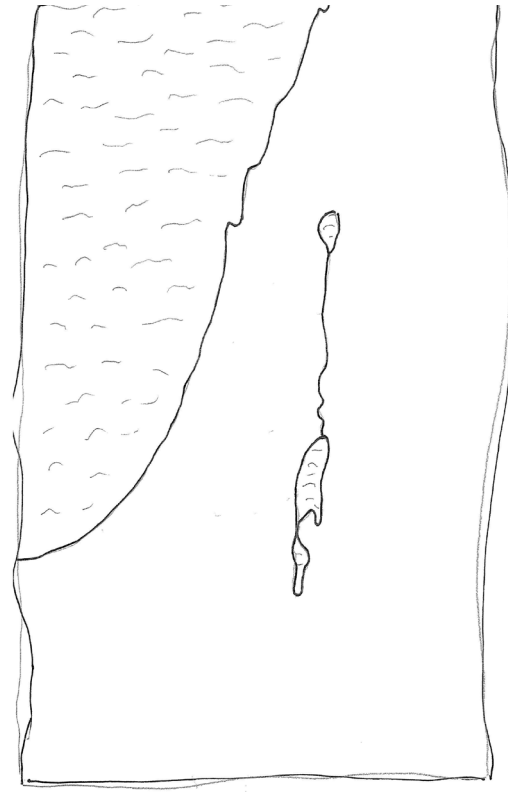
So how can we deal with these situations?

Sometimes we may need professional help. But we also need to take our hurt to God in prayer. He is the great healer and can help us deal with the pain we are going through. One way to pray is to ask God to forgive the person who said or did something that brought up this emotional hurt. Often we bind up forgiveness in the need for an apology. But as our Lord taught us, “Forgive them for they do not what they do”; forgiveness is not bound in the need to accept an apology, it is accepting an apology that has never been received. Forgiveness is something which we offer. It doesn’t give us power over the situation of our hurt; it gives us freedom.

“Forgive our sins, for we also forgive” Luke 11v4



Using a Bible Atlas or Google, label Moab, Ammon and Gerar



## ABRAM RECEIVES THE COVENANT



When we meet Abram in this chapter he is ninety-nine years old. How old is Ishmael at this point and how many years have passed since the end of chapter 16?

## THE NAME OF GOD

In Genesis 17v1, God tells Abram who He is: “I am the Almighty God”. Exodus 6v3 tells us that Abram did not know God by His memorial name, Yahweh. Why?

The names of God may confuse us, but a simple understanding can have a huge impact on the story we are reading. The flow chart below helps keep it simple.

When looking at the names of God remember two things:

- 1 . The meaning is always telling us something
- 2 . The context is essential to understand.

Genesis 14v18-22



Genesis 17v1



Exodus 3v15

- Context: Abram pursues the kings of the North to rescue Lot and is victorious with God's help.

- Name used: God - El: Mighty or Strong

- Context: Isaac is promised to Abram when he is 99 years of age. He is well past the years of having children. and after waiting for 24 years.

- Name used: Almighty God - El Shaddai - a nourisher, (as a feeding mother.)

- Context: Moses is about to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt as promised to Abraham. The promise now expands to a nation.

- Name used: LORD - Yahweh - He who will be manifested in the mighty ones of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We can now see the importance of looking at what God instructed Abram to call Him. The names that God is called at different times show His plan and purpose along the way.



The opening words of God in Genesis 17v1, "Walk before me, and be blameless", are very similar to those used to describe a man earlier in the Genesis record. Both men stood at the edge of a new beginning. Who was this person? List some of the things these men have in common.



This idea of walking before God will continue throughout the rest of the Bible. Follow these verses to see what this means for us:

**Micah 6v8** \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 4v12** \_\_\_\_\_

**Galatians 5v16-26** \_\_\_\_\_



The final quote from Galatians is vital here; we are given a list of the works of the flesh that we are to crucify, or cut off (Galatians 5v19-21). List these in the box below:



Paul follows this with a list of “the fruit of the spirit”. These are things that must grow in contrast to the things that come naturally; write these in the space below:



With the previous verses in mind, what do you think God means when he tells Abraham to “walk before me, and be perfect”?



In what way should this same command affect our life?

## THE COVENANT EXPLAINED

The covenant with Abram has already been given (Genesis 15), but God is now going to reveal “tokens”, where more detail about the covenant is provided. Work through the following questions to get a better idea of what this passage is actually about.



Who is the covenant between? (Genesis 17v4)



What was going to happen to Abram? (Genesis 17v4, 6)



Who else is the covenant with? (Genesis 17v7)



In Genesis 17v8, God says “I will be their God”. What is He promising?



How will the covenant be linked between Abram and those who followed after him? (Genesis 17v10)



What would happen to those who did not obey? (Genesis 17v14, compare Joshua 5v6-7)

## NAME CHANGES

The significance of name changes is as important in our society as it was in Abram's. A change in someone's name indicates something about them; when a woman changes her last name it is usually because she has married. In the same way, the title 'doctor' is adopted when certain qualifications are completed. God's altering of Abram and Sarai's names show something was going to change in their lives.



Using a Bible dictionary, fill out the tables below:

Original name	Meaning
Abram	
Sarai	

New name	Meaning
Abraham	
Sarah (Genesis 17v15 margin)	



Both names pick up the idea of being parents “of many nations”. Given their current family situation, why would this have seemed unusual to people around them?



What characteristic in Abraham and Sarah did this particularly demonstrate?



Who else (Genesis 17v4) was going to be impacted by the change in Abraham and Sarah’s life?

## THE COVENANT TOKEN



What specific action initially showed one’s desire to become part of the covenant? (Genesis 17v10-11)





But did God only want a physical action? Look at the following to see what was really required:

**Deuteronomy 10v16** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deuteronomy 30v6** \_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 4v4** \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 2v28-29** \_\_\_\_\_

Circumcision was the token, or symbol, of the covenant that God made with Abraham. It was to get people to think about why Abraham was given the covenant in the first place; he had faith in God and walked before God perfectly. This same response should be seen in all those who desire to become a part of this covenant (Romans 4v11-12).



Circumcision was obviously a painful process. Why did God ask this of Abraham and his family?



God gives quite extensive instructions about who is to be circumcised (Genesis 17v12-13). Who was to be circumcised and what point is He making to Abraham again? (see Genesis 17v4).



In Genesis 17v14 God makes a deliberate play on words. What is it? Explain this in the space below:

## ABRAHAM'S RESPONSE

Everything Abraham had just been told would have been quite overwhelming. His response in Genesis 17v17 might seem rather surprising: he laughs!

However, Abraham is not criticised for laughing in front of Almighty God, unlike Sarah in Genesis 18v13-15. This suggests he laughed for a different reason.



Compare Genesis 17v17 with Romans 4v19-21 and explain why you think Abraham laughed:

Strangely, Abraham's first thought is for the son he already has; Ishmael. Does he want Ishmael to be the promised son, or does he just want God to not forget him? God's response to Abraham in Genesis 17v20 makes it clear that it is the latter.



Notice carefully the language used to describe the descendants of Ishmael in Genesis 17v20. How does this compare with the descendants of Sarah? (Genesis 17v16)



What does this suggest about the hierarchy between Isaac and Ishmael? Compare notes on Genesis 16

Immediately after receiving the instruction to be circumcised, Abraham begins to do exactly as God commanded him. Genesis 17v23-27 are words we can read over too quickly and miss the real meaning behind them.



Bearing in mind that circumcision was a very painful process, Abraham would have needed to convince everyone in his household this was the right thing to do. How would he have done this?



What does Genesis 17v27 tell us about Abraham and his household?

## ENCOUNTERS WITH ANGELS



In the opening verses of Genesis 18, Abraham is living about 3 km north of Hebron, by the oaks of Mamre. How long has he lived here?



What does this tell us about being a stranger and pilgrim?

As mentioned in the notes on Genesis 13, there is a contrast between Abraham and Lot in terms of where their lives headed based on their decisions. There are, however, parallels in how they behave. Fill in the blanks in the table on the next page to discover these parallels.



Abraham – Genesis 18v1-8	Lot – Genesis 19v1-3
Sat in the tent door v1	Sat in the gate of Sodom v1
	Noticed strangers approaching v1
Ran to meet them v2	
	Bowed himself before them v1
Begs the angels to stay with him v3-5	
	Feeds the angels v3



Although Sarah is in the background, how does she get involved in Genesis 18v6? How does this compare to Lot's wife when entertaining angels in Genesis 19?



Colour in the language that is used to describe how Abraham acts in Genesis 18v2-8. He "ran", "hastened", "ran" and "hasted". What does this reveal about his attitude to strangers?



Compare this attitude to that of Zacchaeus in Luke 19v1-9. What title does Christ give Zacchaeus?



According to Genesis 18v2, who did Abraham see from his tent door?



Abraham spends a great deal of time entertaining these strangers. What food does he provide in Genesis 18v6-8, and what else does this reveal about his character?



How does this contrast to the way that the Sodomites treated strangers? (See Genesis 19v4-5).



Hebrews 13v1-2 seems to be referring to this event in Abraham's life. What were the Hebrews instructed to make sure they remembered to do?

It is always easier to show hospitality to our family and friends. However, the Greek word used in the Bible for "hospitality" actually means to 'entertain strangers', 'love to strangers' (Romans 12v13). This is the real challenge but it is what sets people apart as being children of Abraham.

## A CHILD THROUGH SARAH

The assurance of a child through Sarah is confirmed by the angels in Genesis 18v10. Again the scriptures are at pains to emphasise that this was a miracle. Sarah had gone through menopause so it was naturally impossible for her to now have a child even had she not been barren. Abraham was not a young man so he too was unlikely to be a natural father (Hebrews 11v12). Romans 4v19 shows that these facts were well known to both Abraham and Sarah. This undoubtedly was to be the work of God.

In Genesis 18v10, Abraham is told 'I will certainly return unto you'. For 25 years Abraham has seen God or His angels come and go. - each time the promise was confirmed. Now with the birth of the seed so close, the promise is to be confirmed with the return of the angel at the child's birth.

Romans 9v9 calls this the 'word of promise'.

Although the child was not yet born, Abraham could be certain it would happen because it was the purpose of God.

What a great lesson for us! Read Acts 1v11 and see the promise that we wait for. Think about how sure we can be, like Abraham, as we await for Jesus to return. Do you share the same certainty as Abraham?



Sarah is rebuked by the angels for laughing (Genesis 18v12). How is this different to Abraham's laughter in Genesis 17v17?



The angel's indirect question to Sarah in Genesis 18v13-14, highlights what about faith? Compare Matthew 19v26.

It is easy to see why Sarah reacted in this way. It would be a natural response upon hearing news that had long been promised but was humanly impossible. It is also understandable that Sarah, undoubtedly embarrassed by her reaction, tried to hide it by lying. Discipleship and faith are not natural; it must be grown by constant exposure to the word of God.

Sarah should not be seen as someone weak in faith but an example of how faith can grow and develop. The New Testament ensures that we do see Sarah as a very faithful woman as it uses this very story to bring out two different lessons.

Look at Hebrews 11v11 to answer the next 3 questions.



What is Sarah commended for?



Within what period of time must Sarah have fallen pregnant after the angels left?



What does this tell us about her faith?



Look at 1 Peter 3v6. What is Sarah commended for? Highlight the phrase in Genesis 18v12 that Peter refers to.



What was the origin of Sarah's beauty in 1 Peter 3v3-4?

## ABRAHAM PRAYS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS



In Genesis 18v16-22, the angels continued on their journey toward Sodom. Abraham accompanies them to make sure they are well on their way. This again shows his character of hospitality and the desire to look after the “stranger”.

Why does God decide to reveal the destruction of Sodom to Abraham in Genesis 18v17-19? Write down the specific reason in the box below:

This becomes the pattern for all those who are of the faith of Abraham. Not everyone is shown the mystery of the Gospel. Not everyone understands what will take place on this earth in the future.



Look up the following quotes and note down what things are revealed about God's plan and purpose, and to whom:

**Matthew 13v10-11** \_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 11v7-11** \_\_\_\_\_

**Revelation 1v1-3** \_\_\_\_\_

There was an outcry or shrieking about the sin of Sodom and the other cities of the plain. Perhaps this is not only due to the fact that God is all knowing but that it may also be in reference to the prayers of Lot from within Sodom (see 2 Peter 2v7-8).



If they already knew what was going to happen to Sodom, why did the angels need to actually visit the place?



It is worth noting that there were 3 angels that came to visit Abraham at his tent in Genesis 18v1. How many continued on to Sodom? See Genesis 19v1.



What is the title given to the angel who stayed with Abraham rather than going down to Sodom, Genesis 18v22?



What does this imply about the role of angels?

When Abraham hears the plan of God, his mind goes straight to the welfare of his nephew Lot, Genesis 18v23. What was to happen to him? Would he be destroyed? Would Lot get out before the destruction?

With this going through his mind, Abraham humbly approaches Yahweh. Abraham believes that God is merciful, gracious and just, so he wishes to make sure that God would not destroy those who were righteous with the wicked. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18v25)

In the days of Noah, God has already shown that He was willing to delay judgement for the sake of a few righteous people. Abraham wishes to see how merciful God is by asking him to spare the city for the sake of 50 righteous people.





Why might Abraham have started with fifty people, Genesis 18v24?



Abraham asks God to spare the people in Sodom for the sake of a group of righteous people. How many were in each group?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Why does Abraham stop at ten? A suggestion is that he wants to make sure that at least Lot and his immediate family will be saved – he assumes that at least they would still be faithful. The number of his family is not clear, however Genesis 19v12-15 tells us that he has at least two daughters still living with him. These are not likely to be the ones betrothed to his sons in law and Genesis 19v15 implies that there were other daughters. Based on the angel's questions, Lot may have also had sons.



In the end how many people are actually called righteous? See 2 Peter 2v6-8.



God's willingness to spare the city for ten righteous people tells us what about His character?

Abraham goes to great lengths to try and ensure the safety of his nephew, Lot, and his family. Abraham does not presume to tell God what to do but recognises his position. Colour in the phrases Abraham used when he approached God with a new request:

- \* “drew near” – in this context it implies he approached in reverence (Exodus 20v21)
- \* “dust and ashes”
- \* “let not the Lord be angry”
- \* “let not the Lord be angry”



What other examples in the Bible are there of people praying for the welfare of others?

Abraham would have left the presence of the Lord with reasonable confidence that Sodom would not be destroyed. As it was destroyed this would have devastated Abraham. It is likely that he believed Lot was killed in the destruction as there is no record of them ever meeting up after this event.

This would have tested Abraham's faith. His actions in Genesis 20 imply that it did affect him greatly, as he moves from the place he had been staying for a number of years and then he lies in exactly the same way as he had earlier in Egypt.

## THINK ABOUT: CIRCUMCISION TODAY

After the resurrection of Jesus, the Apostles were sent in to many nations to preach the gospel to everyone who would listen and to baptize and make disciples of whoever would receive its message. This inevitably led to many more Gentiles accepting the gospel. As a result, there were many discussion as to whether these new disciples were to uphold the law of Moses and the commands contained in it.

One of these commands, as we have seen, was the command to circumcise every male in the congregation.

But would this mean that new Gentile converts would need to be circumcised?

Circumcision was a symbol of the covenant made with Abraham and contained by the law of Moses. Jesus not only was a fulfillment of this covenant, but in the process established a new covenant.

Those who were participants of this new covenant to be physically circumcised. Instead, it highlighted the true intent of what circumcision was trying to teach them.

God was not just looking for a change in their physical body, he was looking for a change in their hearts.

Look up the following passages that demonstrate this.

- Deuteronomy 10v16
- Deuteronomy 30v6
- Jeremiah 4v4

The Apostle Paul beautifully captures this point when he writes to the believers in Rome.

“For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” Romans 2v28-29

The truth is, we need radical heart surgery. The token of circumcision was meant to highlight this. Instead, the Jews became caught up with the externals and forgot what really needed fixing.

We need to think about this principle. Are we disciples of Christ just through merely our externals? Or are we a disciple of Christ because of the surgery that has been made to our heart?

## THINK ABOUT: HOSPITALITY

If a brother or sister, who is a stranger to you, was to walk into your ecclesial hall what do you do? Do you just ignore them? Pretend you're busy doing something? Nod, but don't speak? Or just say a meaningless “Hi, how are you going?”

Showing hospitality is an important aspect of “brotherly love”. Hebrews 13v1-2 shows us that our ecclesia is an excellent starting point for this for this.

The excuses we make to not show hospitality normally revolve around selfishness. “I feel awkward; I feel like I wouldn't know what to say; they look a bit weird, I might get stuck talking”. If this is our thinking or behaviour, then we're not following the example of the father of the faithful, Abraham,

Perhaps, we consider ourselves to “be the stranger” and so blame others for the lack of not being made to feel welcome. If we are feeling like this then think about the amount of hospitality we have shown to strangers recently and we'll probably find it lacking. Again this attitude is not in line with that of Abraham or Christ's demonstration of faith.

Everyone is to take on the responsibility of being hospitable to the stranger, starting at the ecclesia, as it is the characteristic of the children of Abraham who are to inherit the kingdom.

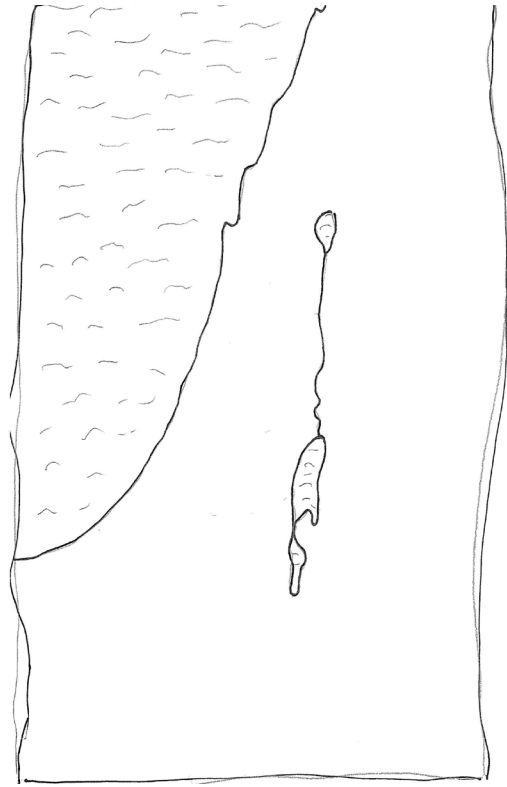
“I was a stranger and you took me in”, Matthew 25v34-36





# SECTION FIVE

Using a Bible Atlas or Google, label  
Beersheba and Moriah



## THE BIRTH OF THE SON



God had promised Abraham he would have a son through Sarah – how many years had he waited for this promise to be fulfilled? (Compare Genesis 12v4 and 21v5)



In waiting all this time what crucial characteristic has Abraham demonstrated? (look up Hebrews 6v12-15)



How do we also need to demonstrate this characteristic in our own lives? (look up 2 Thessalonians 3v5)



In Genesis, what does Isaac's name mean and what incident is this a reminder of?



Compare Sarah's response in Genesis 21v6-7 with Genesis 12v11-12. What is the key difference between these passages? How has the birth of her son changed Sarah?



In Genesis 20v1-3, Sarah was taken into the household of Abimelech who intends to make her his wife. As a warning, God closed the wombs of the household and instructed Abraham to pray for them. Abraham did so, and the women in the household were able to bear children again.

What lesson would Sarah and Abraham have learnt from this about Sarah's own barrenness?



Look up Hebrews 11v11. What is the key phrase here and how does it help show how Sarah has grown?

## ISHMAEL VS ISAAC: CONFLICT IN THE FAMILY

In Genesis 21v9 Sarah finds Ishmael 'mocking' her son, Isaac; this disturbs her so much that she insists Abraham cast out both Ishmael and his mother Hagar! On the surface, Sarah might appear to be motivated by jealousy and a desire to rid herself of a rival woman and son – but God makes it clear to Abraham that his wife's advice is to be followed, Genesis 21v12. What then was this 'mocking' by Ishmael that so disturbed Sarah? Whilst we are not told in Genesis, there is a hint elsewhere in scripture to what might have happened on that fateful day.

In John 8v33-41 we find the Pharisees arguing with Christ. Consider the following: [The Pharisees] answered and said "Abraham is our father!"

Jesus saith unto them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham; but now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth [...] this did not Abraham.  
You do the deeds of your father.”

They said unto him, “We be not born of fornication!”

This final, derisive insult perhapsholds the key to the story of Ishmael and Isaac. It was a well-known fact among the Jews that Christ’s mother had fallen pregnant before she married – Joseph was about to put her away before an angelic vision convinced him otherwise (Matthew 1v19-20). But how does John 8 help explain Genesis 21?

Like the Pharisees, Ishmael may have been questioning who Isaac’s real father was when he “mocked” him. This parallels with the story of Mary, because Sarah had been in the house of Abimelech directly before she had conceived Isaac, Genesis 20v2-3.

## SACRIFICE AND SUFFERING



The opening words of Genesis 22 can seem rather awkward at first glance: “after these things... God did tempt Abraham”.  
Does God tempt Abraham? Does God tempt us?  
Look up the word ‘tempted’ in a concordance and copy out the New Testament passage that answers the above question (hint: it should be the last two verses on the list in the concordance!)



Based on the above, how do we explain this passage in Genesis?  
Using a Strong’s Concordance or an Online Bible app, look up the meaning of the word ‘tempt’ [# H05254] in Genesis 22v1 and write what else it can mean:

The meaning of the word is really to be found in the context of each passage. James 1v13-15 teaches that when the context is sin, God is not the source – it is the person.  
However, if the context is about refining our faith then God can be the source of this – James says this himself in James 1v2-3, something with Peter also picks up in 1 Peter 1v6-7.





It is worth noticing that those who translated the scriptures appear to have understood the above. Turn to the record in Hebrews 11v17 and see how this event is described there. Write down the word used in the ESV or NIV that describes what Abraham was going through:



Being asked to sacrifice your own child would be extremely difficult for anyone, but why might this have been even harder for Abraham and Sarah?  
(Think back to the opening questions on Genesis 21)



Genesis 22v3 has seven very deliberate actions, all beginning with the word 'and'. List these below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.



What is Genesis 22v3 trying to teach us about Abraham's attitude to what God had asked him to do?



This is by no means the first time Abraham has risen early in the morning – it is typical of the man. Look up the following passages to highlight where else this occurs in the life of Abraham, and who Abraham is concerned about:

Genesis	Purpose: Abraham rises early because...
19v27	He is worried about _____
21v14	He is worried about _____
22v3	He is worried about _____

Notice that all of the above were very difficult situations – this teaches us a lot about Abraham. When he has something hard to do, he does not hesitate or procrastinate. Abraham is a man of action – he acts on what God asks of him, no matter difficult trying the request might be.

Interestingly, ‘rising early’ is nearly always used of people who have a definite purpose – see the examples of Jacob (Genesis 28v18), Moses (Exodus 34v4), Israel (Numbers 14v40), Joshua (Joshua 7v16) and David (1 Samuel 17v20).



In Genesis 22v4, we are told Abraham “lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off”. What might this actually mean? Is this talking about Abraham seeing only a physical place, or could it be something else? See John 8v56.



In Genesis 22v5, Abraham says something very unusual to his men. What is it and why does it not seem to make sense?



What does this suggest Abraham believes in? (See Hebrews 11v19)



The end of Genesis 22v6 has a key phrase that describes the relationship between father and son. What is it, and where else does it appear in this chapter? (This would be a good thing to colour in).



We often have the image of a little boy being led up the hill but this is most likely not the case.

How long does Genesis 21v34 say Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines after Ishmael left the family? How old do you think Isaac was?



In Genesis 22v5, the word 'lad' has a variety of meanings; it can range from 'babe' and 'boy' to 'youth', 'young man' or even 'servant'. There is something further in Genesis 22v6 that implies Isaac was not just a young boy. Read the verse carefully; what is it?



In Genesis 22v10 Abraham "reached out his hand [...] to slaughter his son". What does Hebrews 11v17 tell us Abraham actually did, in God's eyes?



Under the Law (Leviticus 1v2, for example) who would normally provide the sacrifice?



Who is providing the sacrifice in this instance? (Genesis 22v8, 13)



What is the only other time in the Bible where the sacrifice is provided this way? (clue; write out John 3v16 in the space below):



It is no accident that we are told exactly how the ram was caught in the thicket. Where else in scripture do the ideas of thorns, a head and sacrifice appear?



In Genesis 22v12, God describes Isaac as Abraham's 'only son'. Is this true? Why might God describe him in this way?

## THE PROMISES RECONFIRMED



Previously, we listed what God had promised to Abraham. Read Genesis 22v17-18 and then expand on what you've found so far.

### GENESIS 12v2-3

1. Great nation
2. Abraham blessed
3. Abraham's name made great
4. Blessings by association with Abraham
5. Blessings upon those who blessed Abraham
6. Cursings upon those who curse Abraham
7. All families of the earth will be blessed

### GENESIS 12v7

8. Abraham's seed is promised the land

### GENESIS 13v15-16

- 9.
- 10.

### GENESIS 15v18

- 11.

### GENESIS 22v17-18

- 12.
- 13.
- 14.



In Genesis 22v15, God says, "By myself I have sworn". Why does God use Himself as the basis for confirming the promise to Abraham? (see Hebrews 6v13-18)



In Genesis 22v17, Abraham is told that “your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies”? What do gates do?



Who is Abraham’s offspring that is being spoken of here? (hint: “his”)



Who is his greatest enemy, and how will it be controlled?  
See Matthew 16v17-19, 1 Corinthians 15v50-57, Revelation 1v18.



The end of this momentous chapter seems to end quite strangely: why are we told all about the children of Abraham’s brother? What might the record be trying to say to us?

## THINK ABOUT: OBEDIENCE

By nature, we don’t like being told what to do. But think of these quotes:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” John 14v15

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

And his commandments are not burdensome.” 1 John 5v3

When looking at the example of Isaac in Genesis 22, we see a son who was in perfect obedience to his father. This is an example of obedience that is foreign to our thinking.

Often when we think of obedience, we think of obeying to avoid consequences. We obey because of fear. Not speeding, not stealing, paying our taxes. But how can we follow the obedience shown by Christ, motivated by a positive spirit and not the fear of punishment?

Christ's attitude towards obedience was:

“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness” Hebrews 1v9  
“Behold I come to do your will, O God” Hebrews 10v7

Christ was motivated by a positive attitude towards keeping God's commandments. Why? Because he loved and believed God. He could see that the commandments of God were given for our good because He loves us as a loving Father.

“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as we are this day”  
Deuteronomy 6v24

Is our spirituality governed by simply not wanting to upset our parents or our friends? Or is it motivated by love and a burning desire to please God and do His will? We can move from an obedience motivated by fear, to an obedience motivated by faith and love when we see that the reason God has given us these things is only for our eternal good.

## THINK ABOUT: SACRIFICES

Abraham's faith was tested when he was asked to make sacrifices for his faith. The biggest sacrifice he was asked to make was his beloved son; his 'only' son.

Jesus said

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14v26-27

This is radical. Some would even call this extreme!

But Jesus is demonstrating the single mindedness needed to be his disciple. This single mindedness will ultimately lead us to make decisions in our life that could be classified as sacrifices. These decisions often involve something or someone that we really love. Sacrifices can only really be made when what we offer costs us something, when we truly believe that what we are giving up is not as valuable as what we are receiving.







## SECTION SIX

## THE HEIR OF PROMISE

The New Testament constantly reminds us of the promises to Abraham and his example of faith. His relevance across the ages of the Bible is not to be missed.



Using a Bible program (i.e. Online Bible, eSword etc), search for 'Abraham' in the New Testament and answer the following:  
How many times does his name appear?



In how many books/letters does he feature?



Who is linked to Abraham in the first mention of his name in the New Testament?

The clear link between Abraham and Christ continued throughout New Testament times, whether from the teaching of Christ himself or via the apostles.



Briefly look through the chapters listed below and identify which passages further show that Jesus Christ is the promised seed spoken of:

**John 8v\_\_\_\_**

**Acts 3v\_\_\_\_**

**Galatians 3v\_\_\_\_ (there are several verses here that mention Abraham so choose carefully!)**



The importance of this fact is highlighted by both Mary and Zacharias at his birth. Look closely at what they both had to say at this momentous occasion:

**Mary – Luke 1v54-55**

**Zacharias – Luke 1v68, 72-73**

The birth and subsequent work of Christ would enable the promises to take effect, promises of:

- \* An innumerable seed
- \* The possession of the promised land
- \* Having power over the enemy
- \* Blessings extended to all families on earth

How then are we able to share in these promises through Jesus Christ?  
Is this something for the Jews only?

## BECOMING HEIRS BY FAITH



The Jews are the natural descendants of Abraham through the promised line of Isaac. This has brought great blessings to them. It was to them that the Messiah came, it was to them that the gospel was first preached, and it was to them that the law of God was first revealed. However, being the natural descendants of Abraham caused them to stumble. Read Matthew 3v7-10 and John 8v31-33 to identify their problem:

These passages show us that being naturally born into the family of Abraham does not mean you are automatically an heir of the promises. It is the same for us today. Being born into a Christadelphian home is, of itself, no guarantee of eternal life! Let's consider the following passages to see what it is that allows people to share the promises to Abraham:

## ROMANS 4 – THE FATHER OF US ALL



In Romans 4v3, what does Paul say Abraham was justified ('made righteous') by? Was it by performing some great act, or something else?



In Romans 4v11-12, Paul deals with the possible dilemma that only those who are circumcised could share in the promises – this went hand in hand with the Jew's belief that only they would be saved. Who does Paul say the promises of Abraham are available to?



What does Romans 4v13,16 say is the foundation behind being named an heir with Abraham?



To establish this beyond all doubt, take a colour pencil and colour in the key words "believe(d)" and "faith" littered throughout this short chapter (there are fourteen references!)

Romans 4	Who is Abraham the father of?
v1	"Our father"
v11	
v12	"The father of [...] all who walk in the steps of that faith"
v12	
v16	
v17	
v18	"A father of many nations"

Those phrases may also be worth colouring or underlining.

We can be counted heirs together with Abraham, if we live by the same faith, and walk in the steps of Abraham!



How does faith come about? Copy out Romans 10v17 in the space below:

## ABRAHAM'S REPENTANCE, AND OURS

Abraham was called out of an idolatrous world to wander a land that would be shown to him by God. God made the call but it was up to Abraham to respond and obey. The call, although a simple one, was a huge commitment, ignored by some in his family but embraced by others. In the same way, God has called us to leave what is natural and follow in the steps of Abraham, in searching for a future eternal city in which to live.

We, like Abraham, have the same choice to make; do we heed the call, or remain behind in Ur?



How do the following verses relate to us and the calling God has offered?

**Matthew 9v11-13**

**Acts 2v38-39**

Repentance, then, is the first step in obeying the call. In Matthew 3v8-9, John the Baptist speaks of repentance in the same sentence as Abraham; this is no coincidence!

Abraham repented when he left everything behind and headed in the direction God wanted him to go. Our repentance must be the same.

## GALATIANS 3 — ABRAHAM'S 'BAPTISM', AND OURS



Baptism is the sign of true repentance. Abraham may not have been baptised as we think of it, but it did occur in a type. Look up Joshua 24v2-3; based on your knowledge of the region, what particular geographical location does this word 'flood' refer to and what did Abraham have to do in order to get to the Promised Land?

We too must enter a body of water in order to share in these promises. But what is it about baptism that makes it so important? Galatians 3v26-29 is a marvellous piece of scripture that brings together Abraham, Christ, baptism and us.



What key word from Romans 4 do we immediately find in Galatians 3v26?



What phrase is used to describe us in Galatians 3v26 and how does this fit with the title given to Abraham throughout Romans 4?



How does Galatians 3v27 describe baptism?



According to Galatians 3v28, to whom is this opportunity available?



Compare Galatians 3v29 and 3v16 – what is the final result of being baptised? How does Christ ‘join’ us to the promises to Abraham?

## ROMANS 6 – OUR WAY OF LIFE

Baptism is by no means the end. Abraham crossed over the river Euphrates, but that was not the end of the road – he would continue to journey throughout the land for a hundred years as God worked in his life and developed his faith.

Although baptism makes us heirs to the promise, we must continue to live as children of Abraham and followers of Christ in the months and years that follow. Romans 6 is the famous chapter on baptism, so let’s see what Paul teaches us there.



What does Romans 6v4 say must follow after baptism?



What about Romans 6v8? How is the same idea described here?



Finally, in the space below, copy out Romans 6v13 and underline the key phrase which expands the above idea (the NIV is probably the easiest to understand for this passage)

Our way of life must therefore be driven by our faith. It is something that must only grow after baptism. Another 'Abrahamic' New Testament chapter is found in James 2. Let's consider how Abraham is again held up as a great example of a faithful way of life.



Read James 2v21-22 – what point is James trying to make about faith?



What specific example from Abraham's life does James choose to illustrate this point? Why do you think this event was chosen?



In what ways can we demonstrate our own faith?  
Think up some of your own personal ideas but consider James 2v14-16 as a starter.



What does James 2v23 say the result of Abraham's great faith was?



What beautiful phrase is used to describe Abraham?



Although he was indeed given this incredible title, Abraham's life still ended. His death is recorded in Genesis 25v8, and that seems to be the end of the story. What about all these wonderful things he was promised? Hebrews 11v39-40 gives us a very specific reason as to why Abraham (and others) died before they inherited the promises.



What was this reason and how does it relate to us?



Hebrews 11v8-9 gives us a marvellous commentary on the life of this faithful man, and tells us of his faith in leaving Ur and sojourning in a strange land. How does Hebrews 11v10 describe Abraham's view of his future inheritance?

## OUR INHERITANCE: SEARCHING FOR A CITY



Like Abraham, we too are searching for a city. What were the two key attributes of the city that Abraham was seeking in Hebrews 11v10?

- 1.
- 2.



What does this imply about the cities that we live in today, whether that be Sydney, Adelaide or Perth? What does God think of them?

In contrast to this, what city has God prepared for us? Consider the below quotes in your answer:

**Hebrews 11v16**

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**Ephesians 2v19-22**

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**Revelation 21v2-3, 9-10**

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These quotes clearly show us that this is a city made of people – a people united as the faithful bride of Jesus Christ, the true seed of Abraham, as innumerable as the sand upon the shore and the stars in heaven.

It is within this glorious city, the faithful bride of Christ, that the promises to Abraham will finally be fulfilled. His name, as we can see throughout the scripture, is already great. God even ‘surnames’ Himself with the name of Abraham. All those who associate with Abraham through Christ will be blessed – a wonderful promise made not just to Jews, but to faithful Gentiles also. Through Christ, all families of the earth can share the promises to Abraham and inherit the land, forever.

It is the fulfillment of these great and eternal promises, and how we can all be a part of them, that we look forward to sharing with you at Study Week 2014.





**“FOR HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CITY THAT HAS FOUNDATIONS, WHOSE  
DESIGNER AND BUILDER IS GOD.”**

*Hebrews 11:10*