

# The Story Begins



DailyLife  
Five Oaks Church

Week 7: October 22–28, 2016

# Day 1

October 24



*Pray* / Ask God to give you wisdom as you study his Word, the Bible.

MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT relationship where a man and women make promises that bind them to one another. A covenant is an arrangement where both parties agree to keep their commitments no matter what the other party does. Unfortunately, many people now approach marriage not so much as a covenant but more as a contract. If one person breaks his or her side of the deal, the contract is null and void.

The Bible describes God's relationship with his people as a covenant, yet often people think of their relationship with God as a contract: "I have to do my part to be a good person, and if I do, God will uphold his end of the deal by blessing me and by letting me into heaven when I die." But God knows we can't keep our end of any contract, and he offers a covenant to Abram anyway, where he has done nothing to earn God's blessings and where he will not cause God to end the covenant because of anything he does.



*Read* / Genesis 12:1–5



*Reflect / Choose one or more of the following for reflection.*

God wanted to establish a covenant relationship with his people, not a promise from God contingent on our actions or ability to live up to God's standards of holy living. We can only be seen as righteous because of the eventual self-sacrifice of Abram's descendant—Jesus. Why, then, do you think we often have a contractual attitude toward our relationship with God rather than a covenantal one?

When we take on a contractual attitude toward our relationship with God, it often can lead to either a sense of unreasonable guilt or entitlement. We either work hard to earn God's favor or get angry when we feel as though God isn't letting our lives work out the way we think we deserve them to. Have you ever found yourselves responding to God as though you're in a contract with him rather than the fact that he has offered to enter into a covenant with you?

God's invitation of relationship with Abram required Abram to leave his father and extended family and the home he knew to go to completely new land, stepping out in faith that it would all be worth it. What would it take for you to obey God if he called you to do something that made no sense from the world's perspective?

## Day 2

October 25



*Pray / Thank God for keeping his promises.*

WHEN GOD GAVE the promise to bless Abram's descendants, Abram struggled to trust God's promises as he continued to age and still had no children. In the midst of Abram's doubt, God came to him and restated the promises he had given Abram and even added to them. Abram believed the promise of God, and God counted his faith in God's promises to him as righteousness.

In Galatians, the apostle Paul pointed to Abram's faith as a model of saving faith. Paul argued that we are not declared righteous before God by trying to keep the rules. Those who break God's law are cursed, and we're all law breakers. But the good news is that Christ became that curse for us on the cross. Justification only comes through faith in Jesus, and just as with Abram, God credits Jesus' righteousness to our account when we believe in God's promise of salvation from our curse. We, too, are called to trust in God's promises.



*Read / Genesis 15:1–6*



*Reflect / Choose one or more of the following for reflection.*

Abram's faith in God's promises was counted to him as righteousness, not how holy or righteous his life was until that point. When we focus on trying to earn our relationship with God based on the things we do for God or the good we do in comparison to the bad, we shift our focus away from God's grace in our lives and toward a rules-based life. What kind of person will you ultimately become if you choose to follow the path of a rules-focused life?

In contrast, what kind of person do you envision yourself becoming if you choose to lead a faith-focused life?

When Abram was struggling to believe in God's promise because he had waited to see the results of the promise and still hadn't, God not only restated his promise to Abram to let him know he hadn't forgotten him or changed his mind; God showed him the extent to which he planned to keep his promise. God gave him a larger glimpse of the vision he had for blessing Abram that encouraged him and reinforced his faith in God's promises. When you have felt discouraged in your faith, has God ever provided encouragement that has increased your faith or helped you keep going in the direction he was calling you?

# Day 3

October 26



*Pray / Ask God to give you faith in the truth of his promises.*

SOMETIMES EVIDENCE SEEMS to stack up against promises. God made wonderful promises to Abram, but he and his wife didn't have any children. Both of them were old and well past the years of being able to conceive children. So Abram began to question that God would keep his promises and started to take matters into his own hands.

Abram looked at the promises and his situation, and he thought he would try to help God along. Instead of trusting God despite its seeming impossibility, Abram decided to sleep with his wife's servant have a son through her so that he could have children to continue God's promise through.

If we're honest, we'll admit we've all had this kind of doubt in our own lives as well. There are times in our lives when the promises of God do not look so promising.



*Read / Genesis 16:1–16*



*Reflect / Choose one or more of the following for reflection.*

Sometimes we are tempted to, or actually do, choose to take matters into our own hands to ensure an outcome in our lives we want instead of waiting on God's timing and waiting in hope to see him fulfill his promises to us. In what areas of your life (such as finances, marriage, parenting, relationships, job status) do you struggle with trusting in God's promises?

Sometimes each of us feels drawn toward using our own power or influence to change our circumstances in a situation when we know instead we should be waiting on God to fulfill his promises. What can you do to fight the urge to take matters into your own hands when those situations happen?

When we distrust God and his timing, the actions we sometimes decide to take instead can be destructive to ourselves and to others. Despite how completely disastrous Abram's choice to father a child through Hagar became for his immediate family and for generations up to our present day, God did not break his covenant with Abram. Similarly, when we sin and hurt ourselves and others, there are consequences, but God does not cancel his promise of our salvation. How is God's grace for our lives different from what we often expect or experience from others?

*Day 4*  
*October 27*



*Pray / Thank God for the plans he made to bless all nations.*

God reminded Abram of his promise to him yet again at the age of ninety-nine. When God spoke to Abram again of the promise, he explained even more about what he was promising to him and his offspring. He also told Abram how he should respond to the covenant God had established with him.

The Lord called Abram to walk blamelessly before him, and then he restated the promise that he would multiply Abram's offspring and that he would be the father of many nations. So, as you will read in verse 5, the Lord changed Abram's name to "Abraham," which means "father of a multitude." Not only that, but kings would come from Abraham's family. He would produce a royal line (leading, of course, to the King of kings—Jesus of Nazareth).



*Read / Genesis 17:1–7*





*Reflect / Choose one or more of the following for reflection.*

God called Abraham to be blameless, but in truth none of us in our own power are able to be blameless before God. It is only through one of Abraham's far off descendants, Jesus, that we can be viewed as blameless before God because of Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf. The Lord even makes it possible for us to be made blameless because of the work he did for us—yet again not by any effort we can put into keeping God's covenant. God went to a great extent so he could have a renewed and perfected relationship with you, to show you love and bless you. What can you do today to actively respond to his love?

We all have sin in our lives that has broken our relationship with him. God promises reconciliation to himself through Jesus' death and resurrection. Anyone who responds to God's promise is a child of Abraham, and we are therefore spiritual brothers and sisters with everyone who has faith in the promise, no matter how different our lives may seem. Sometimes we focus too strongly on the differences we see in each other's lives and overlook the common bonds we share in Christ. What can you do to more actively pursue unity with your fellow brothers and sisters?

# Day 5

October 28



*Pray / Ask God to help you go into the world to bless others.*

God entered into a covenant relationship with Abram in Genesis 12, and through that relationship he intends to bless the world. The promise to bless Abram’s descendants has come to fruition through Jesus of Nazareth. Through God’s covenant, he bound himself to Abram and his offspring—ultimately Jesus and all who believe in him.

God enters into a loving, unconditional covenant relationship with all who are in Christ. Not only should that truth give us hope that frees us from the guilt of falling short of God’s glory, but it should propel us out into the world so that “all the families of the earth” might be blessed by Jesus.



*Read / Genesis 17:1–11*



*Reflect / Choose one or more of the following for reflection.*

God has chosen to make us part of Abraham's family of faith, and therefore, we are called to be the people through whom blessing flows to the world. What are some ways you can be involved right now in being a light to the nations, both locally and abroad?

God called Abraham and his descendants to circumcise the men as a sign of the covenant God established with them. Circumcision helped them maintain their distinction from the world. As members of God's covenant through Jesus, we are also called to be distinctly set apart from the rest of the world, not by physical circumcision but by the circumcision of the heart; our lives should bear the marks of God's redeeming grace. How does your distinctiveness and pursuit of holiness affect your mission as one of God's people?

Can you truly be on mission with God to reach the nations of the earth and yet fail to pursue holiness?

*Portions of this study were adapted from The Gospel Project Chronological: The Story Begins, Vol. 1, Adult Personal Study Guide ESV (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2015). Used by permission.*

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