

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 12 Abraham the Wanderer Genesis 22:20–23:20

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”
John 11:25

Family Ties — Genesis 22:20-24

Day 1

- a. Who was Nahor?
 - What do you learn about him in Genesis 11:27-32?
 - Why do you think this is important to the Bible's account of Abraham?
- a. How do you think Abraham might have felt when he compared his brother's life with his own? Why?
 - What are some of the symbols of success in our culture?

Learn the TRUTH!



Losing a loved one to death is never easy. As Abraham suffers sadness at the loss of his beloved wife, Sarah, he must make decisions about her burial. His choices demonstrate his deep faith in the promises of God. How do your choices — both big and small — reflect your faith in the promises of God?

Death of Sarah — Genesis 23:1-2

Day 2

- What qualities do you find in Sarah — godly or otherwise — in these passages?
Genesis 12:1-5

Genesis 18:10-15

Genesis 21:6-13
- What godly qualities does Peter attribute to Sarah in 1 Peter 3:1-6?
- How does the example of Sarah's life challenge you?

Buying a Burial Plot
Genesis 23:3-9

Day 3

6. What request does Abraham make of the local residents when Sarah dies?

7. a. How do the Hittites respond?

b. What does their response tell you about Abraham?

8. a. What specific property did Abraham want to buy?

b. Why do you think he chose that specific place for Sarah's burial?

The Deal is Struck
Genesis 23:10-16

Day 4

9. a. How did Abraham respond to Ephron's offer to give him the land?

b. Why do you think Abraham responded this way?

10. a. What are the final terms of Abraham's and Ephron's agreement?

b. How is the transaction completed?

c. What do you learn about Abraham from this transaction?

11. Who is later buried in Machpelah Cave? Genesis 49:29-31

Believing the Promise
Genesis 23:17-20

Day 5

12. In Abraham's culture, people were buried in their homeland. How does Abraham's purchase demonstrate his faith in God's promise in Genesis 15?

13. In what practical, visible ways can you demonstrate your faith in God's promises to you?

Live the TRUTH!

Instead of going back home to Ur, Abraham buys a cave in Canaan to bury his beloved Sarah, making sure that his family truly "occupies" the Promised Land, just as God commanded him to do. He and his children will be buried at Machpelah. Abraham is declaring that he knows God's promises extend beyond this life. Like Abraham, our hope extends beyond this life because our hope is in Jesus Christ, "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

Commentary Genesis Lesson 12

The great crisis of Abraham's life, the offering of Isaac, is followed by about 25 years of silence in the biblical text. When Abraham is 137 and Isaac 37, Sarah dies. Her death forces a decision on the grieving Patriarch. Where will he bury his wife? Through a difficult negotiation with a Hittite inhabitant of Canaan, Abraham purchases a burial place. At great cost, he pays for a portion of the land he has been promised by God and buries his beloved Sarah.

A brief section of chapter 22 describes events that took place in Paddan-Aram. Abraham learns that, in contrast to the few children born to him, his elder brother, Nahor, has produced not only eight sons through his wife, but four more through Reumah, his concubine. The last of these, Bethuel, is the father of Rebekah, the woman who will become Isaac's bride.

Abraham is finally faced with the loss of his beloved Sarah, who dies in Hebron at the age of 127. While Abraham lost a beloved spouse, Isaac lost a mother. By now he is in his late 30s and has lived his entire life in Canaan. Abraham weeps over Sarah following her death. This marks the first occasion in the Bible to record a man's tears — but not the last. Trusting that the missing person has gone to a better place in no way diminishes the personal loss experienced by those who are left behind.

As Abraham grieves, he must make a difficult decision. The custom in those days was to bury honored dead near their relatives in their homeland. Is his home in the region of Haran, or in the land of Canaan? He decides he will not return Sarah to Paddan Aram, but bury her in the Promised Land, bearing mute testimony to her children and grandchildren of her trust in God. That decision poses a difficulty, however. Abraham owns not a single square foot of the land that God has promised him. Though a wealthy man, he has never been able to purchase property in Canaan because he is considered an outsider.

Abraham goes to "the Hittites," knowing he has little hope of purchasing property unless he can persuade their leaders to part with some. He pleads: "Sell me some property ... so I can bury my dead." The Hittites recognize Abraham's prominence in the area, addressing him as "a mighty prince" living among them, but are reluctant to sell him anything. Instead, they propose to allow Sarah to be buried in one of their own tombs, adding that the entire community would be pleased to share their property with him. The Patriarch shows the keenest deference toward these leaders, even bowing before them, but he finds their proposal unacceptable. It is time to put down roots in the Land of Promise. He wants some acreage of his own. Throughout the negotiations, Abraham seems careful to make sure that his attitude and his words commend rather than detract from his testimony before these pagans.

Abraham offers a counterproposal: Perhaps they could help him negotiate the purchase of a particular cave belonging to a prominent Hittite leader, Ephron. Abraham offers to buy the cave, located at the end of a large field owned by Ephron, for the full purchase value. Soon Abraham is involved in direct negotiations with Ephron at "the gate of his city," the location where the law courts sit and city business is conducted. As was the custom of the ancient East, Ephron displays an extraordinary generosity, offering to give not only the cave, but the field attached to it to Abraham for nothing.

Check It Out:

What made the Hittites call Abraham "a mighty prince" at the ripe old age of 137? His physique? Doubtful! Isn't it more likely his regal spirit? The attractiveness of Abraham and Sarah as they grew older is something that we can have if we walk with God as they did. The fruit of the Spirit — "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23) — spilling over in our lives is guaranteed to make us look good to God, and perhaps even to our friends and family!

Had Abraham been so bold as to accept this offer, it is likely that Ephron would have backtracked rapidly. The ritual has to be carried out to its logical conclusion for the sake of form, however. Abraham knows this and plays the game to its end. He is acutely conscious that his negotiations are being evaluated not just by Ephron but by the whole community as well, so he again "bowed down before the people of the land" who are sitting as silent observers. Finally, he asks for a specific amount: What is the full value of the field?

Even as Ephron quotes the exorbitant price of 400 shekels of silver, Ephron pretends that Abraham's payment of any price at all is purely the Patriarch's option. Abraham agrees and gives Ephron the silver. In time, he receives the registered title to the property with the merchants and officials looking on at the city gate. Sarah is laid to rest in the cave, where, eventually, she would be joined by Abraham, Leah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob.

A commentary on Abraham's pilgrim mentality is found in Hebrews 11:13-16: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."

While believers are to live as "strangers and aliens on earth," separation from the values and priorities of the present age does not mean indifference to the fate of the people and culture of this age. Virtually without exception, the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 enriched the lives of those around them and left the world they lived in a better place. They did not do so because they thought better economic or cultural conditions formed ends in themselves. They desired to bring glory to God, and in the process display His love and faithfulness.



Abraham went out of his way to show respect and politeness to the Hittites throughout his negotiations. Today, neglecting niceties appears to be a cultural trend; people feel free to say or do exactly what they are thinking no matter how rude. This is not God's way. Paul makes God's principle very clear: "Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:32-33, New Living Translation). You never know how some "uncommon" courtesy just might open the door for sharing our faith!



How does the Bible help us understand death?

1 Corinthians 15:26

2 Corinthians 5:8