

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 7 Trusting God's Promises Genesis 15-16

**Abram believed the LORD,
and he credited it to him
as righteousness.
Genesis 15:6**

God's Promise to Abram – Genesis 15:1-3

Day 1

1. What did God promise Abram in Genesis 15:1?
2. a. In light of events in Genesis 14, what fears was Abram facing?

b. What fears are you facing today?

c. How does God's promise to Abram in Genesis 15:1 relate to his fears as well as yours?
3. a. What concern did Abram express in verse 2?

b. What solution did he come up with?

Learn the TRUTH!



God shows Himself to be generous. In this week's lesson, God confirms promises of future kindness, then proves His intentions by establishing a covenant with Abram. Through Jesus, God establishes a covenant with us. Thank God this week for His faithful promises!

Abram Believes the Promise – Genesis 15:4-6

Day 2

4. a. How did God address Abram's very real and great concern?

b. Did God's response indicate that He was displeased or offended by Abram's question?
5. In verse 8, Abram asked God for reassurance. Do you think it is wrong to ask for reassurance or clarification of promises God has made?
6. a. Read Romans 4:18-22. On what basis did Abram believe God's promise of a son?

b. According to Genesis 15:6, how did God respond to Abram's faith?

**Making a Covenant
Genesis 15:7-21**

Day 3

7. a. Who made this covenant and who keeps it?

b. What ceremony confirmed the covenant?
8. What additional prophetic information about the future of his descendants did God give at this time?
9. Why do you think God delayed the fulfillment of His promise to Abram for such a long time?
10. a. What promise of Jesus to the Church are we waiting for God to fulfill? Matthew 24:30-31

b. Why has God delayed the fulfillment of this promise? 2 Peter 3:8-9

**Faltering Faith
Genesis 16:1-3**

Day 4

11. What very specific promise had God given Abram in Genesis 15:4?
12. Why do you think Abram and Sarai decided to take matters into their own hands?
13. a. What culturally accepted solution to their problem did Sarai propose?

b. What should they have done instead?
14. Tell about a time you were impatient. What was the result of your impatience?

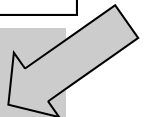
**Consequences of Impatience
Genesis 16:4-16**

Day 5

15. a. What were the immediate consequences of Abram and Sarai's decision?

b. According to verses 11-12, what would be the long-term consequences?
16. Describe Hagar's encounter with God, and tell what she learned about Him from this experience.
17. What warnings can we draw from this lesson? What encouragement?

Live the TRUTH!



At the beginning of chapter 16, notice how absent God is in the lives of Abram and Sarai. They talk about God, but do not pray. They choose to solve the baby dilemma in a very human, ungodly way. When they left God out of the picture, the results were hatred, contention and meanness. When we disregard God and choose not to trust Him, the results can be the same for us. How different the story would have been if only Abram and Sarai had trusted God. We can stop the "if only" in our lives if we choose to trust Him.

Commentary Genesis Lesson 7

God appears to Abram in a vision, bringing him “the word of the LORD” (15:1). This marks the first use of this expression in the Bible. It appears again in verse 4 and suggests the weightiness of the promise God is about to make. Abram is not to fear, but to trust in the One who has already proved to be his shield and will be his reward. Abram unburdens his heart to God and approaches Him with unusual reverence and submission. His childless condition weighs heavily on his heart. Though he possesses great wealth and supervises an enormous household, he lacks an heir. His name means exalted father, but he is not a father at all. Were he to die, a favored servant, Eliezer of Damascus, would inherit all his wealth.

In the vision, God insists that Abram’s heir will not be a servant, but a flesh-and-blood son from his own body. Abram’s descendants will be so numerous that they will resemble the stars of the night sky. By the time Israel arrived from Egypt on the plains of Moab, this promise was more than fulfilled (Deuteronomy 1:10). Abram believes what God has said, and Moses notes that God “credited it to him as righteousness” (15:6). The New Testament quotes or alludes to this verse many times. God declares him righteous, though Abram remains a sinner who will stumble many times in the future.

God reaffirms His earlier promise of title to the land of Canaan and confirms His Word by issuing a covenant. Sometimes the parties to a covenant pictured the bitter consequences of betrayal by walking together between pieces of slaughtered animals to suggest, “May the one who breaks this agreement suffer the fate common to these creatures.” God instructs Abram to fetch “a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon” (15:9). Abram cuts them in two and arranges them opposite each other, creating a pathway down the center of the paired pieces. Abram falls into a divinely imposed sleep, but one that is agitated by a “thick and dreadful darkness” (15:12), suggesting that the path to the Promised Land would be long and painful. Abram has asked for sure knowledge, and God provides it: “Know for certain ...” (15:13).

God gives Abram four certainties: (1) Abram’s descendants would live as strangers in a distant land; (2) they would be enslaved and mistreated; (3) their exile and bondage would last for four centuries; (4) they would return to the Promised Land and possess it. In the darkness, Abram watches as “a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces” (15:17) of the slaughtered animals. The two fiery items represent God’s zeal and His unapproachable purity. God is assuming all responsibility for the fulfillment of the covenant, which includes the possession of the land by Abram’s offspring.

Check It Out:

Many believers say that the Lord makes Himself most real — makes His presence felt — during times of great testing. Abram was in distress. He recognized that, humanly speaking, it would take a miracle to have an heir. The Scripture says, “He did not waver through unbelief” (Romans 4:20), but it does not say there was no tension, no battle going on, as he struggled to hold on to his faith. He was open and honest with God. He asked Him how He was going to solve this. Then the “the word of the LORD” came to Abram in a vision. Trust Him to speak through His Word when you are being tested. He will do it.

Sarai is barren. Learning of God's renewed promise to give Abram a son from his own body, she suggests that they use a practice common in the ancient Near East: A barren wife could legally obtain offspring by using a surrogate. Sarai urges Abram, "Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her" (16:2). Though it sounds strange to us, regulations for such arrangements appear in a number of ancient law codes. But this plan is born of convenience, not faith. Abram and Sarai are past the natural age of childbearing, but Sarai dismisses God's promise to give them a supernatural conception. Their meddling produces a long string of human miseries.

Abram agrees to Sarai's proposal, and soon Hagar, the maidservant, is pregnant. Unexpectedly, Hagar begins to despise Sarai, who now blames Abram for the consequences of her own idea. After harsh treatment from Sarai, Hagar flees into the wilderness. As an Egyptian, she heads for home, moving west into the northern Sinai. There she is found by the angel of the Lord, a person who appears here in Scripture for the first time. Old Testament scholars regard "the angel of the LORD" as an appearance of God in visible form. The angel speaks with divine authority that Hagar recognizes and to which she submits. Bible students generally recognize the angel of the Lord as an early appearance of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Proof of this is the angel's ceasing to appear in Scripture after Jesus enters the world in human flesh.

Hagar learns that God has not ignored her plight. Though she has been a victim of Sarai's scheme to hasten the fulfillment of God's promise, she is bearing the Patriarch's child. God directs her to return to Sarai. He will make her a mother to large numbers of offspring. The angel predicts that she will bear a son, to be named Ishmael (God hears) to remind her of the prayers she uttered out of her misery. Ishmael and presumably those who descend from him will display consistent hostility toward his neighbors.



Abram was a relatively new believer in the Lord God, and he allowed himself to be influenced by current customs in his pagan society. He made a bad choice — one that brought him heartache as long as he lived. The hostility between the descendants of Abram's firstborn son Ishmael, the Arabs, and those of Isaac, the Jews, has continued to this day.

Our society wants instant gratification. No wonder it's so hard for us to wait on the Lord. When our schedules and the Lord's don't match, remember He is the One who is sovereign, and no amount of fretting on our part will change His timetable. It's possible to have a lifetime full of regret if we run out of patience and take matters into our own hands.



Read more about patience and trusting God to take care of circumstances in Psalm 37.

Write your reflections here: