

2 The Promise of God

God is on the move in his creation and he has great plans. God chooses for himself a people and makes promises to Abraham to make him into a great nation and to be a blessing to others.

Readings for the Week

Genesis 12:1-9

Genesis 15

Genesis 37

Genesis 39-50

What big promises have been made to you in your life? Any that you have had to wait a long time for?

Abraham (originally called Abram) was a man from Ur, a place that would be located today in Iraq. He is considered to be the father of God's people and he was a recipient of big promises from God.

When you think of Abraham, what first comes to mind? How do other faiths see him?

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

What does God promise to Abraham? Is his promise just for Abraham?

Before he receives this promise, God tells Abraham to "go." What must he leave behind? Have you ever made a move or had a major transition in life? How hard is it to pull up roots and go somewhere new and unknown?

What does it take to follow God into new places?

Abraham was a man who had *faith* in the promise of God and so he left home to follow God. But he was not perfect in his faith which you will see when you read Genesis 15, where God again makes promises to Abraham.

How consistent is Abraham's faith in this interaction with God?

Not only in this chapter but elsewhere in Genesis we see that Abraham, while being a man of faith, also has his doubts. How do you think God reacts to our doubts? When do you struggle with doubt the most? When does Abraham struggle?

Abraham is told his descendants will spend 400 years in a foreign land, a promise of God that finds the people in Egypt later in Genesis. Read Genesis 37:1-28 to see the unexpected way that God begins to usher the people south, beginning with Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson.

Why would Joseph's brothers want to get rid of him and sell him into slavery? Why would God allow for such a thing to happen to Joseph? What happens after he is made a slave in Egypt?

Is it hard to see God at work in difficult and even painful circumstances and events?

Not only did God bring his people to Egypt, but because Joseph was placed by God there and brought up to be a leader, the people were provided for in a time of great famine. As Joseph says in Genesis 50, "As for you [brothers], you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." God had made promises and he always has his eye on fulfilling them in ways only he can.

God has made promises that are for Abraham's offspring, but we understand that in a new way. Read Galatians 3:7-9 to find out who truly is the offspring of Abraham. What makes someone a child of Abraham?

If we are recipients of the promise, are we also seeking to be a blessing to others as God had desired for Abraham?

How can we apply what we are learning to the way we live today?

