

Tell Me the Stories – Abram

Week 1, Genesis Chapter 12 Who Am I?

Noah Recap: We learned the genealogy from Adam to Noah, 10 generations later. Of all generations, through Adam's sons Cain & Seth, there were only 2 people who found favor with God Enoch & Noah. In chapter 6-7 we learned that Noah followed all of God's instructions to build, fill and live on the ark until it was safe to disembark. We learn in chapter 8 of God's change of heart. God moved from being heart broken & grieved to being committed to doing something new because cursing, punishment & destruction did not bring the change God longed for in creation.

Bridging between Noah & Abraham: We finished last week's study by looking at the genealogy between the two. We move from "primeval" story of Noah where the primary actor is God to the "patriarchal" history where God is present but the focus is on the people. In this move we see God moving from being concerned with the entire world to focusing on 1 family. The move from the world to Abraham does not mean the God is not still working on reclaiming the whole world – God still wants to redeem the whole world but does this through Abraham's line. Because Abraham's story is more complex we are limiting it to him directly. We will be skipping the stories of Lot including Sodom & Gomorrah. We can study just this story another time.

All Age Question: What do you know about Abraham?

(A note – we will use the name Abram until God changes his name to Abraham in chapter 17. Whether you read Abram or Abraham it is still the same person).

Who Am I? – Chapter 12

Read verses 1-9

God calls Abram – much like God called Noah. Scholars begin the story by backing up a few verses to chapter 11:27 because Terah, his son Abram & grandson Lot (along with Sarai) leave Ur for Canaan but settle in Haran, where he dies. If we only read it from verse 1 it is easy to think that God out of the blue wants Abram to leave everything behind. He was already in the process of moving and his dad dies. God calling Abram encourages him to continue what he started. Grief is hard and we can understand that it would be easier to stay put. God is not

just encouraging him but makes promises. He will be with Abram as the Lord said I will show you the land. He also promises to work with Abram blessings those Abram blesses and cursing those he curses. Abram gets up and gets moving.

Question: How easy would it have been for Abram to stay put? What does it take for you to get going?

Kid Question: What do you need to do when you're getting ready for a trip? When you're on a trip is easier or harder to pack up than before you began?

Call of Abram

God called Abram and this call gives us the lens in which to read the rest of the book of Genesis but also Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy. The blessing of those A blesses and the cursing of those who curse him. The blessing is followed with promises for Abram – promises for a nation, personal blessing and celebrity. Abram does not speak back to God, much like Noah – he got up and obeyed God. The text tells us that he was 75 and traveled all through the promised land. As Abram continues to travel throughout the land that will one day be his God promises not just the land but offspring. In response Abram builds an altar, in Bethel, in what will become the northern kingdom of Israel.

Question: Do we wander anymore? If yes, where do we wander? If no, why not?

Kid question: When going somewhere do you always take the quickest path or the most interesting path?

All age question: What does Abram get for wandering?

Abram & Sarai in Egypt

Read verses 10-20

The land that has been promised to Abram is filled with famine. Before we get to what happens in Egypt we may ask ourselves why, if God promised the land for generations & blessing, is it not producing. This relates back to what we learned in Noah's story. The creation has the promise that God will not flood it again. In 8:22 "as long as the earth endures, seedtime & harvest, cold & heat, summer & winter, day & night, shall not cease." The creation has been damaged and is not the perfection that once was. The sin & evil in human hearts had & has consequences on the earth. God did not cause the famine even with generations and blessing to come.

So Abram & Sarai go to Egypt. We do not know if the others that have been with him have stayed behind. The story that comes appears 3 times in Genesis. This is the first occasion. The second comes in 20:1-18 when Abraham calls Sarah his sister and again with Isaac & his wife Rebekah in 26:1-11. Some scholars believe that it's the same story that is told in 3 ways. Other scholars believe the first & third are from the J source while the second one is from E. We do know from other texts that stories of this nature are common. When looking at the second story from chapter 20 we get the revelation that Sarah is actually his half sister, same fathers, different mothers. We also learn that on the chance this story does indeed happen a second time that Abraham did not learn from this experience.

Abram asks Sarai to do this and she obeys. Abram was correct that the Egyptians would prize her beauty. Abram is made wealthy by the Pharaoh who takes Sarai as his wife. Abram assumed that if they did not do this he would die. It appears that blessing is following Abram but brings curses to Pharaoh and his household for taking Sarai as his wife. It works out well for Abram, however, he now has been well compensated and takes his wife back to return home.

Question: What if Abram had chosen another way? What might that have looked like?

Kid Question: Was Abram selfish? If you don't think so, why? If you think yes, why?

What do these stories tell us about God?

Where is God in this? This is difficult because Sarai is given to another man. It seems hard to imagine from where we are that this would be something God would condone. However we know that God was there because God kept the promise that Abram was blessed. Because of Abram's deceit others suffered. How the chosen people respond in any situation carries consequences – sometimes good and sometimes dangerous. It is hard to read that Sarai is expendable because Abram did not believe the promise flowed through her but through him. God was indeed right that the human heart had not changed. God however continued in faithfulness. God afflicted all in Pharaoh's house. Sarai is freed to return to Abram and to go home with the riches that have been collected.

Question: Why didn't God intervene by protecting them both?

Kid Question: Have you even broken a rule that you didn't know about? Are you responsible for it?

Prayer: God help us to work with you to bring blessings in what we say and do so that we may be known as your faithful child. Amen.