

Patriarchs Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson One: Abram's Call and Arrival in Canaan – Genesis 12-14

Unless otherwise noted, all questions refer to the underlined Scripture references listed at the beginning of each of the 5 sections within the lesson (often given as readings). This is true for ALL GOD of the WORD Bible study lessons.

Read Genesis 12:1-9.

- 1) From Genesis 12:1-3 and 7, list the commands and the promises that God gave to Abram. **God's commands to Abram were to leave his country, his people, and his father's household and go to the land God would show him (in some translations, this reads as one command: "Go"). God's promises were to make Abram into a great nation, to make his name great, to give him sovereign protection (to bless those who blessed him, to curse those who cursed him), to make him a blessing to all peoples on earth, and to give the land of Canaan to his offspring.**
- 2) Read Genesis 11:27-32 together with Acts 7:2-4. What information is given about the circumstances surrounding Abram's progress from his birthplace to the land to which God was calling him? **From Acts 7:2, God appeared to Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia (before he lived in Harran) to give him orders to leave his country and people, and to go to the land God would show him. From Genesis 11:31, when Abram first left, it was with his father, wife, and nephew, seemingly under his father Terah's leadership. Although they were headed for Canaan, the group settled in Harran, where Terah died (Genesis 11:31-32). Abram's wife Sarai was barren (11:30). Abram took Sarai, Lot, and all the people and possessions he had acquired with him.**
- 3) Genesis 12:7 says that Abram built an altar in a place where God appeared and made him a promise. When was the last time you marked a significant encounter with God in some way? What kind of a marker did you make? (Journaling, giving a public testimony, or making a significant life change are among the many types of markers.) **Personal sharing**

Read Genesis 12:10-20.

- 4) Genesis 12:10-20 tells of Abram's descent into Egypt. List ways God protected and provided for Abram in Egypt, despite Abram's deception. **God provided food in a famine, although Egypt may not have been the place where God wanted to do so. We may infer that God also spared Abram's life when Pharaoh learned that Abram had lied (Abram's lie had brought trouble on Pharaoh's family). Despite Abram's deception, God enabled him to prosper financially. (The goods Abram acquired in Egypt were not an indication that God approved of his decision to go there. It is never safe to assume that material blessing is the result of one's spiritual condition.)**
- 5) Genesis 12:20 says that Pharaoh sent Abram out of Egypt. Can you think of other consequences that are not explicitly stated in the text but probably would have resulted from Abram's deception? **Pharaoh sent Abram out of the land; that is explicit. However, one might also assume Abram experienced anguish over the possibility that his wife would be sleeping with (and even impregnated by) another man. Later, Abram likely suffered Sarai's anger toward him for putting her at risk. Finally, it seems almost certain that Abram's testimony to Pharaoh's pagan household would have been damaged.**
- 6) What do you learn about God's nature or ways from this account? **He ensures His greater purposes prevail. (Sarai didn't bear children to anyone but Abram. Also, Pharaoh's household learned of God's power, despite Abram's poor testimony.) God works behind the scenes on our behalf. (In verse 17, God inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh's household, making Pharaoh aware of his wrongdoing and resulting in Sarai's safe return to Abram.)**

Read Genesis 13:1-11.

- 7) Compare Genesis 13:6 with Genesis 12:10. What were the crises that caused Abram to initiate a change in each situation? **Famine in 12:10 and abundance in 13:6**
- 8) Do Abram's solutions to the crises in chapters 12 and 13 suggest spiritual growth from fear to faith (see 12:10-13 and 13:8, 9)? If so, how? **First, Abram didn't feel compelled to move without God's clear leading in chapter 13. While Abram put his own life before Sarai's in chapter 12, in chapter 13, he put the best interest of his family member (Lot) ahead of his own. In chapter 12, Abram's decision to lie about Sarai was driven by fear; in chapter 13, his decision to offer Lot first choice was motivated by selfless faith.**
- 9) In what present circumstances might the Lord be asking you to move from fear to faith? **Personal sharing**

Read Genesis 13:12-18.

- 10) Consider Genesis 11:31-32, 12:4, 13:11, and 13:14a. What losses did Abram experience? **Loss of the last two male family members to whom he had connection: his father through death in Harran and his nephew by parting company in Canaan. Also, the loss of a familiar setting twice, in chapter 11 (Ur) and chapter 12 (Harran).**
- 11) Reread Genesis 13:14-17, considering all of its phrases carefully. In light of Abram's losses, how would God's words have brought timely encouragement? **God's promise consoled Abram that while he had lost human companionship, he had not lost God's companionship or God's promises. Abram would also have been encouraged to know that in the future, he would have much family. Although, by offering Lot first choice Abram sacrificed the more lush land, God encouraged Abram that He would ultimately give him more land than he could imagine. By instructing Abram to walk through the land, God gave him a short-term goal to keep him occupied and joyful (rather than allowing his losses to consume him). By "lifting his eyes," God was giving Abram a greater perspective than the sad circumstances of the moment. By promising something that was "forever," God reminded Abram that his losses were temporal and what he was gaining was eternal.**
- 12) What words of encouragement has God given you that would be helpful for you to recall, in light of your own present circumstances? **Personal sharing**

Read Genesis 14.

- 13) List all the kings Abram encountered in chapter 14. **Verses 1, 9, and 17: Kedolaomer (King of Elan), Tidal (King of Golin), Amraphel (King of Shinar), Arioch (King of Ellasar). Verses 2 and 9: Bera (King of Sodom), Birsha (King of Gomorrah), Shinab (King of Admah), Shemeber (King of Zeboiim), and Zoar (King of Bela). Of these, only the king of Sodom is mentioned as speaking with Abram (verses 17, 21-24). We can perhaps assume that he encountered these five kings when he went out to fight against the four kings. In verse 18, Abram encountered Melchizedek, King of Salem.**
- 14) From Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:5-6, and Hebrews 7, whose priesthood is in the order of Melchizedek? **Jesus'**
- 15) Read Genesis 18:20-21 and 19:4, 5, and 24 for commentary on Sodom and inference about the probable moral character of the king of Sodom. Abram declined to keep the plunder offered to him by the king of Sodom, even though it rightfully belonged to him as the victor.
 - a) What motivated Abram's generosity toward Melchizedek, King of Salem (14:20b) and Abram's *apparent* generosity toward the king of Sodom (14:22-24)? **Abram gave to Melchizedek out of love for God and desire to honor God's servants. On the other hand, Abram forfeited what was rightfully his (declining to keep the plunder offered by the king of Sodom) because he didn't want to be affiliated with a wicked king. Both were acts of holiness: separation from what is sinful and separation unto what is righteous.**
 - b) Is there an opportunity before you at the moment to make a statement about your faith by choosing to give up something that is rightfully yours? **Personal sharing**