

GOD MAKES A COVENANT WITH ABRAM

God's grace to us is revealed in the calling of Abram.



THE STORY: GENESIS 14:17–15:1

MONDAY

God took initiative with Abram.

God took initiative with Abram. In this passage we once again see God taking initiative with sinful man in the unfolding of his plan of salvation. After rescuing his captive nephew Lot, Abram was visited by Melchizedek, who was king and priest of Salem, an ancient name for Jerusalem. In a dramatic foreshadowing of Jesus, who was also a king and priest in Jerusalem, Melchizedek praised God and brought out bread and wine for a dinner. One future day Jesus would similarly bring out bread and wine and provide a supper we all would remember—the Last Supper.

After the battle with the king of Elam (who had captured Lot) and the visit with Melchizedek, God took the initiative to speak to Abram again. God was faithful to Abram to keep watch over him.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What does it mean to take initiative toward a person? (*To take initiative is to take independent action to move toward another person.*) How has God taken initiative toward us? (*God sent his son Jesus to us while we were yet sinners, God reaches out to us through his Word, and God touches our hearts and places his Spirit there that we might believe in him.*)

PRAY:

Thank God for taking initiative in Abram's life and in our lives.





God made a covenant with Abram.

God made a covenant with Abram. God promised to give Abram a son, and pointed Abram's gaze to the heavens to show him that his descendants were to be as numerous as the stars. In other words, they would be more than he could count. To establish this promise, God entered into a covenant with Abram. A sacrifice was made and,

in accordance with tradition, God's presence traveled between the pieces (see Jeremiah 34:18) but Abram did not. Normally, both parties in a covenant would travel between the pieces but in this case it was God alone who made the promise. Abram did not walk between the pieces for it was God who took responsibility to fulfill this promise—it was a promise based on grace alone.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What were the requirements for Abram to receive God's promise? (*None—Abram simply believed. It was God who called out to Abram. It was God who made the promise. And it was God who made a covenant with Abram to mark his promise.*)

What are the requirements for us to receive God's promise? (*None—we simply need to believe. God's salvation of us does not come by anything we do; it comes by way of Jesus, who lived a perfect life and passes that righteousness on to all those who believe.*)

PRAY:

Thank God for his grace and faithfulness to keep his promises. Ask God to help you believe and to have saving faith so that you might be included as a recipient of his promises.)



Where is Jesus?

God made a promise to Abram that through him all nations would be blessed.

Abram himself would not be the one to bless all peoples; the one who would one day fulfill that promise is Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in Galatians 3:28-29 that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. Once we were slaves to sin but through faith in Jesus Christ, God adopts us and makes us sons Each of us who puts his or her faith in Christ is like. one of those stars that Abram saw when he looked up to the sky!

TALK ABOUT IT:

When God told Abram to look up into the sky did he have us in mind? (Yes. When God sent Melchizedek to Abram, when God appeared to Abram, when he pointed Abram to the stars, and when God passed through the sacrifice, he had us in mind. He had us in mind because God had Jesus in mind, the fulfillment of his covenant with Abram.)

PRAY:

Thank God for his plan. God's story is an amazing demonstration of his grace to us. Ask God to pour out grace upon us that we might have Abram's faith to believe.



THE STORY: ROMANS 4:18-25

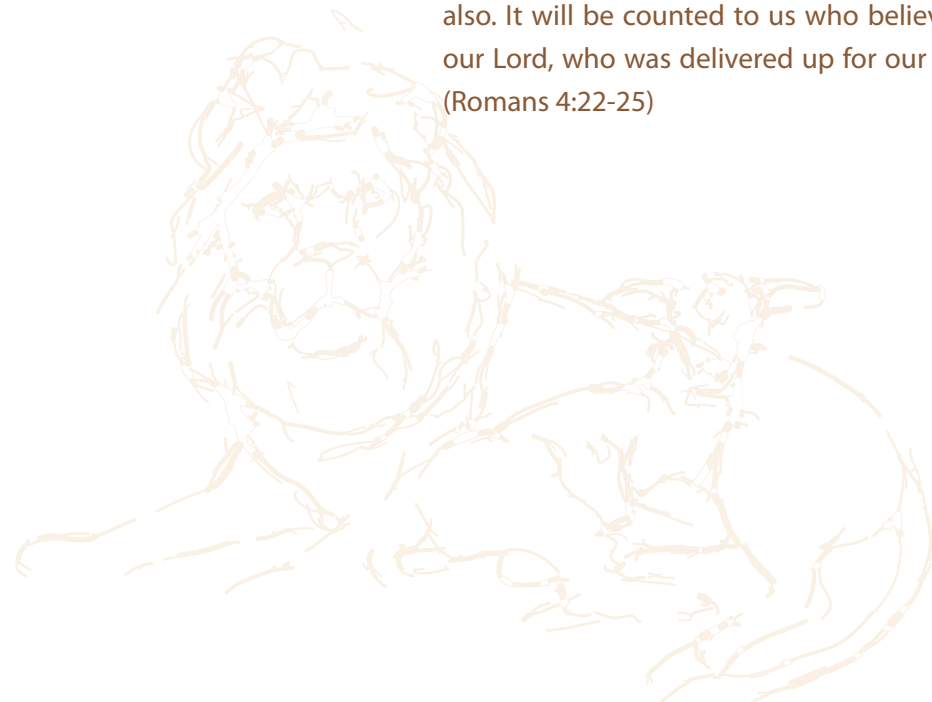
THURSDAY

Abraham's faith in the Lord was credited to him as righteousness and is recorded for our benefit.

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Abraham's faith in the Lord was credited to him as righteousness and is recorded for our benefit. Paul in his letter to the Romans explains Abraham's belief. "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised."

Paul continues in Romans 4. "That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.' But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:22-25)



TALK ABOUT IT:

What does it mean that his faith was counted or credited to him as righteousness? *(In a game we always want to know what “counts” toward our score but in salvation we cannot score at all. Good works cannot count for righteousness because they can never remove our sin and unrighteousness. What counts is faith that Jesus’ death on the cross takes away our sin. What counts is faith in Christ’s righteousness. If we have that kind of faith [that Christ gives us as a free gift], it counts for righteousness because Christ’s righteousness, his score, counts as ours.)*

If that kind of faith counts, then isn’t that something we have to “do” to get close to God? *(Yes, in a way that is true but we must remember that faith itself is a gift God gives us (see Ephesians 2:8). Again, it’s all of grace.)*

PRAY:

Ask God for an Ephesians 2:8 gift of faith that you might have a Abram-sized trust in a grace-filled God.



THE STORY: PSALM 6:4

FRIDAY

On the road to Emmaus.

In Psalm 6:4, David cried out to God, “Save me for the sake of your steadfast love.”

John 3:16-17 tells us “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

TALK ABOUT IT:

How does David’s prayer line up with the purpose of God in John 3:16-17? *(God’s salvation is based upon his steadfast love for us.)*

How does this compare with what we have learned about Abram? *(It all fits together. God reached out to Abram with the same love in which he reaches out to us. God’s love for Abram and God’s love for us are based upon God alone—not our works.)*

PRAY:

Thank God for his steadfast love and, like David, cry out and ask that God save you for the sake of his steadfast love.

