



Bound Together: A Covenantal Relationship
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“Cutting a Covenant”
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Key Verses: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-18

Key Thought: We can trust in God's promises to us, because— even while Abram wavered— God was resolute in fulfilling his promises to Abram.

Points to Consider:

- Covenants involve a solemn promise in which at least one party pledges to bless or serve another. They can be unilateral or bilateral, unconditional or conditional.
- Meditating on biblical covenants can 1) provide us with a framework for understanding the whole message of Scripture, and 2) reveal God's character to us.
- As Abram struggled to trust, God kept encouraging him:
 - i. 15:1-5: Abram questioned God, and God reaffirmed his promise.
 - ii. 16:1-6; 17:1-8: Abram sinned with Hagar, and God reaffirmed his promise.
- 15:7-10, 17-21: God “cuts a covenant” with Abram, and seems to place the burden of faithfulness solely upon himself. A known practice of the ancient world, two parties would cut and pass through animals to depict the punishment of the party who breaks the covenant. Incredibly, God (symbolized by the smoke and fire) passes through while Abram lies passively asleep. The moment anticipates God's deliverance in the Exodus, and— even more— God's deliverance in Jesus Christ.
- Philip Yancey tells a parable of tourists, who were ever awed by the routine eruptions of “Old Faithful,” while the staff who no longer even noticed them.

Discussion/Prayer Prompts:

- What strikes you about Abram's journey of spiritual formation? Why?
- Is there a promise of God that you need to cling to right now? Is there a promise of God that you are tempted to doubt?
- What's the difference between “doubt” and “unbelief,” and how can we be encouraged by the story of God's faithfulness amid Abram's wavering?
- Unpack the significance of the moment at 15:17.
- While Abram was a true “spiritual pioneer,” we have the privilege of looking back on an expansive history of God's faithfulness... Where are you in Yancey's parable?
- Take a moment to ask God to encourage your trust in his promises.