

Sunday 21 January 2024

## Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

Title: Why Every Christian Needs A Multi-Generational Vision

Key Text: Genesis 12:1-5

Do you want to enjoy the best family life? Do you know that God wants to bless you and every generation of your family?

Today most people are living shortsightedly, whether or not they are physically short sighted. They are focussed only on the immediate, the here and now, the short term and whatever will provide instant gratification.

As Christians, we certainly need to have a short-term vision where we live for God every day and receive our daily bread from heaven. But we also need to have a very clear long-term vision of God's plans and purpose. Every Christian needs a multi-generational vision. Just as naturally short-sighted people need help to have a longer distant vision, whether with glasses, contact lenses or laser surgery, so most of us need help in adjusting to a longer-term Biblical vision.

With this in mind, we start this new series based on one of the most significant descriptions of God in the Scriptures that reveal his purposes to all generations. Time and again in the Bible, God is referred to as the God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob. This phrase is mentioned at key moments in both Old and New Testaments, and it speaks of God whose promises continue throughout all generations.

The great figures of the Bible were confident to serve God in their generation because they knew that they were part of a long line of spiritual descendants from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:6; Exodus 3:16; 1 Kings 18:36; Matthew 22:3; Acts 3:13; Acts 7:8). This description of God is foundational to understanding who God is. He is not some vague and unknowable cosmic force. He is not a god made of wood, stone or metal. He is not one god among many. He is the one true God, creator of the heavens and the earth, who is clearly

identifiable by the eternal promises He has to specific historic individuals, namely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and who is finally and fully revealed in his only Son Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham.

Coming to an understanding of the importance of this description of God will greatly help you to value your spiritual history. It will shape your identity and it will enable you to step into your destiny as part of the long-established people of God. At the start of this series, we see:

1. God is committed to bless families (Genesis 12:1-5)
2. God wants to bless every generation of families (Genesis 17:7; Genesis 26:3-4; Genesis 28:13-14; Psalm 105:8-10; Galatians 3:29; Psalm 103:17-18)
  - 2a. You need to train your descendant in the ways of the Lord from a young age (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)
  - 2b. You need to do all you can to ensure that your child marries a fellow believer (Genesis 24:3-4; Genesis 28:2)
  - 2c. You need to stay in faith and pray that there will be fruitfulness not barrenness in each generation (Genesis 25:21; Genesis 30:1; Genesis 30:22-24)
3. God promises to multiply the influence of families (Genesis 15)

## Apply

**1. God is committed to bless families.** Real Biblical Christianity is rooted in family life, not buildings. It begins in the heart and is nurtured in the home. If you want to see strong churches and strong nations, then you must prioritise the development of strong families. In the Bible we see that God entrusted one family with the responsibility to bless the families and nations of the world: the family of Abraham. God chose Abraham and made binding and eternal promises to him which is called a covenant (Genesis 12:1-5). God started a new family line after Abram left his father's household. At first it was just him, Sarah and his nephew Lot, but later along came his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. Even so they were just a small family and, as the Bible makes clear, they were far from perfect. Lot was a selfish, me-first character. When Abram gave him the choice of land, Lot selected the best well-watered land

for himself rather than his uncle who always looked out for him. Abram himself was also not without faults. Once he was so scared that foreigners would kill him on account of his beautiful wife that he made her pretend she was his sister. Consequently, a King took her and very nearly slept with her before God warned him in a dream and saved Sarah. Imagine what that would have done for Sarah's feelings towards a husband who was prepared to sacrifice her to protect his own life. The same thing happened when later Isaac also pretended that his beautiful wife Rebekah was his sister, which resulted in her being at the mercy of other men. This is what is known as iniquity, a particular area of family weakness or sin. Further down the family line you find Jacob who was a serial deceiver especially towards his brother who in turn wanted to murder him. Despite their imperfections, God had his hand on this family, and He made great promises to Abraham and his family. And God can do great things in your family, whatever problems you have. For when someone in the family starts to really believe and obey God, whole families can be changed. God can heal broken families. God can take hold of imperfect families and use them greatly. Church history is full of such examples (i.e. the Wesley, Booth, Graham and Castellanos families).

**2. God wants to bless every generation of families** (Genesis 17:7; Genesis 26:3-4; Genesis 28:13-14). God confirms to three foundational generations, His eternal promises of land (which Israel today still takes as their mandate from God), many descendants, and continuing blessings. Many who do not accept the authority of the Bible or the God of the Bible dispute all of the above. But for all who do accept the Bible as God's word then we see that God is not just focussed on one present generation but that He also has plans for generations to come. He is the God of Abraham's generation, of Isaac's generation, of Jacob's generations and every succeeding generation, including ours (Psalm 105:8-10). The New Testament makes clear that through our faith in Christ, we also come into the line of blessing (Galatians 3:29). So, God wants to bless you and all your descendants after you. That's the dream, that's the plan of God, and that's why God gives so many promises about children and children's children (e.g. Psalm 103:17-18). But such blessings do not go uncontested. There are battles to win and strategies of Satan to be overcome, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all experienced. You are going to have to watch and pray and believe and play your part in seeing faith in God effectively passed on from one generation to another.

- **You need to train your descendant in the ways of the Lord from a young age** (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)
- **You need to do all you can to ensure that your child marries a fellow believer** (Genesis 24:3-4): Through their history the Jewish people were warned of the dangers of inter-marriage with those who followed other gods. This was such an important issue that there are 61 verses detailing how Isaac ended up with a beautiful and godly wife. Later Isaac blessed Jacob and commanded to do the same (Genesis 28:2). His rebellious brother Esau did just the opposite, marrying a woman from the corrupt and immoral Canaanite culture and consequently caused a lot of grief. In today's independent Western culture, many people sneer at the idea of such parental involvement in the choice of a partner. Of course you need to marry someone you love, but you would be wise to listen to the counsel of godly parents. And parents should not passively accept a developing relationship but pray hard and talk wisely with your spiritual descendant. Be in a place of faith that the person your son or daughter will marry will be wholeheartedly committed to the Lord so they can be a powerful team for God.
- **You need to stay in faith and pray that there will be fruitfulness not barrenness in each generation:** Barrenness is a basic way of stopping the reproduction of godly seed. Abraham's wife Sarah, Isaac's wife Rebekah, and Jacob's wife Rachel each had difficulty conceiving. Abraham and Sarah had to wait a long time for their promised baby, so did Isaac and Rachel (Genesis 25:21). The blockage to continuing the line of blessing into the third generation was revealed (Genesis 30:1), and happily, Rachel later had a baby, Joseph, who was to become one of Israel's greatest figures (Genesis 30:22-24).

Maybe you can identify with some or all these challenges to continuing a godly family line but as we zoom out and see the big picture, we see that God helped each generation to overcome every obstacle and ensure that the line of blessing continued for the next generation. And we to can experience the same conquests.

**3. God promises to multiply the influence of families.** The limitless multitudes that God promised Abraham in Genesis 15 became a reality. After the three generations conquered their destiny, the 12 tribes of Jacob became the take off point for a great nation and huge numbers of natural and spiritual descendants that continues to this day. Similarly, you see great strength in a family with godly grandparents, parents and children. The same is also true

when one person can form a second-generation team of 12 disciples and they, in turn, each form a third-generation team of 12 disciples. Then the 144 becomes the point of take-off, of acceleration and multiplication. Today when we receive a multi-generational vision, we can see great transformation in our lives, families, churches and even nations. For the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wants to bless our generation and all generations to come.