



Stepping into God's Story – Episode Two

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Glenn Garvin

BIG IDEA – A Promise and a People

scripture focus - **Genesis 12:1-3 NLT** The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.

God had not spoken since the promise to Noah (God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.” Genesis 9:17 ESV) Then God speaks to Abram 400 years later (The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you.” Genesis 12:1 NLT).

The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan’s temptation, humanity rebels and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan’s head.

The personal study for this week reveals that things got a whole lot worse than just two people being embarrassed by their own nakedness!

Episode Two

God – Genesis 12-15.

The story of God takes us from the creation of the world and humanity to the establishment of a new covenant people. As the story unfolds, we’ll see how God is faithful to keep His promises from the very beginning. Genesis follows the family line of Adam, through Noah, and leads us to Abraham. But there was a lot of evil perpetrating on innocence in those 400 years.

Cain kills his brother, Abel, in cold blood. Evil and sin spread like a wildfire. By Genesis 6, God had enough.

Noah’s Story

When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart. Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." Noah, however, found favor with the Lord.
Genesis 6:5-8

Noah's story is found in Genesis 6-9. At the end of Genesis 11, we find the brief background on Abram's father – Terah.

Terah's Story

Genesis 11:31-32 NLT

One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. Terah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.

The Bible confirms that Terah was an idolater, worshiping other gods (Josh. 24:2)

It is important to note that God called Abram out of a pagan world, a pagan family and made astounding promises to him. The passage also points up the faith of Abram, and teaches that faith obeys God. Abram was middle-aged, prosperous, settled, and thoroughly pagan. The word of the Lord came to Him.

Abram's Story

Genesis 12:1-3 NLT

"The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

Okay, what do we know about Abram so far:

- His dad was an idol worshiper.
- He was considered to be a pagan, a non-God believer.
- God pursues him, speaking to him, promises are made.
- At 75 years old - he listens, believes, and obeys God.

Later we find out...

- Abram was wealthy.

- Sarai was stunningly beautiful, but barren, she could not have children.

The Promise

The promise – Genesis 12:1.

- Abram believed God and obeyed. "So Abram settled in the land of Canaan..." Genesis 13:12 NLT
- God reconfirms His promise. "After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession. And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you." Genesis 13:14-17 NLT

The Contract

The contract – and the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15.

- God, again, affirms His promise to Abram, Genesis 15:1.
- Abram tries to figure out how the promise could be fulfilled because he and Sarai were barren and old!
- Even still... Abram believes God!
- Abram asks God how it will happen! Maybe you were taught or believed that you could not ask God questions. Maybe you were taught that questions equal doubt or disbelief. I am here to tell you – that's just not true. Here we have the most famous, ancient patriarch of Judaism asking God a lot of questions! Now, you realize, God did not answer him with specifics, but continued to reinforce His promise and His ability to fulfill that promise. Abram asks about future kids, God says "look at the stars, count them – that's how many kids you'll have." God didn't give details He gave an object lesson in truth and trust!
- The most extraordinary verse in the Old Testament reveals what God wants of us - Genesis 15:6 "And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith."
- Abram asks God another question, still completely believing it will happen, but he's curious about how it will happen. Genesis 15:8 "But Abram replied, "O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?" God is not mad at Abram for asking!
- This time God physically makes a blood pact with Abram, Genesis 15:9-13. God gives us the most powerful illustration of who He is, who we are and what He is willing to do to get us back!
- Genesis 15:9-12, 17-21 NLT
- The Lord told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not,

however, cut the birds in half. Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away. As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.



- For more on this look up the links in the notes on [Ancient Contracts or Blood Pacts](#). And [here](#) as well.

The Doubt

The very next chapter the story goes from triumphant crescendo of God's power to make and keep His promises to the shaky, fear-filled doubt we all experience as human beings! This is another reason to see our own story tucked into God's Story. God is faithful, but we continue to screw up and struggle in our faith!

Sarai gets weary of waiting, gives up on God's plan and makes her own. She is totally convinced that this is what God wants for them – make your own thing happen, forcing God's will to be done.

Genesis 16:1-3 NLT

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

If you really want to understand these passages, I can tell you with 100% confidence - you've got to watch the movie, [His Only Son](#), by David Helling. It's beautifully written and visually stunning. It's slow, but powerful in its capacity to get us to understand this struggle with our faith. In the movie Sarai continues to ask Abram, "how do you know, how can you believe." And Abram confesses, "I just do – God spoke, and I believe Him!"

How many of you understand that when we move forward with our plans, contrary to what God has said, we will absolutely cause a lot of chaos and pain for ourselves and everyone around us?

Have you ever moved forward with a plan that you knew was contrary to God's plan? What happened? How did it go?

The Ishmael/Isaac story is one of the most famous feudal fiascos of all time!

The faith

It seems as though the miracle of having a child at 90 years old happened immediately after Ishmael is born, but it was 13 years later. Isaac, which means "he who laughs," and it seems that God got the last laugh by not only giving Abram and Sarai a son by Sarai herself, but also the evidence of the promise God had made to Abram all along.

The fulfillment

Isaac is born and everything looked like this massive promise to Abram would be fulfilled. Then God did a very strange thing, commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son!

Genesis 22:2 NLT

"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

At this point, Isaac wasn't a little boy either, he was at least a young adult, 18-20 years old! Try getting your young adult to lay down on an altar to be sacrificed!

God and the Bible takes a lot of heat for even suggesting that a man would, could or should kill his only son as an act of obedience and faith. Remember, this isn't my story, your story or any podcast pundit – this is God's story.

It's a powerful moment in Genesis 22.

I will say this, when Isaac is tied up his son, lays him on the altar then raises a knife to take his son's life – the Bible says the "Angel of the Lord," calls out to Abraham saying, "don't lay a hand on the boy."

God forbid human sacrifices. Plus, Isaac was a poor substitute sacrifice anyways because he was not innocent or perfect. There is however, a heartbreaking picture that hangs in that moment when Jesus himself stops the taking of Isaac's life...

When Jesus is dying on the cross. When the Roman soldiers, experts in torture and prolonging death raised their sledgehammers to come down with such force it would drive a stake through human flesh and into the wood of the cross.

There was NO father, NO voice, NO one to yell out like in Genesis 22:12 - "Don't lay a hand on the boy! Do not hurt him in any way." Heaven was silent when Jesus willingly gave His life for us.

God eventually repeats His promise to each of these family members: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What lessons are to be learned from this part of God's story, told through these three men?

What applications can be made for you and me?

1. God often chooses the least likely people to accomplish His purposes. Maybe God is calling you to listen, obey and follow, no matter where He leads.
2. God makes and keeps His promises. He did then, He does so today. What has God spoken to you? A promise of hope? A promise for a friend or family to recognize and surrender to Jesus? A promise to care and provide for you physically, emotionally, or financially? God is faithful and we can stake our lives on that.
3. It's critical that when we believe we don't try to circumvent or shortcut a process or promise that God will supernaturally perform.

God wants us to listen for His voice, His leading.
God wants us to believe and have faith in Him.
God wants us to obey and follow him, even if no one else does.

NOTES

Scriptures

Genesis 6:5-8 NLT

The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. And the Lord said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them." But Noah found favor with the Lord.

Genesis 11:31-32 NLT

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After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. **So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your**

descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.

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Genesis 22:2 NLT

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Week 2 Teaching Outline

God often chooses the least likely people to accomplish His purposes.

To understand the story, we have to understand this family:

Abraham

1. Abraham leaves.
2. Abraham sleeps.
3. Abraham laughs.

Isaac

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we are brought into this family of faith.

Jacob

We can't work our way to God; He comes to be with us. Jesus is the “ladder.” (John 1:51)

Group Questions

Discussion Guide

1. What reaction did you have about God often choosing unlikely people to accomplish His purposes? How might that be a key to understanding the whole story of God?

Read Hebrews 11:8–9 and 11:11–12 aloud.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and set out for a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents as did Isaac and Jacob, coheirs of the same promise.

11 By faith even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the one who had promised was faithful. 12 Therefore, from one man—in fact, from one as good as dead—came offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and as innumerable as the grains of sand along the seashore.
Hebrews 11:8–9, 11–12

2. What did God ask Abram to leave behind? What promise was made?

For clarity on the previous questions, look up Genesis 12:1–3 and read it aloud.

3. How would you explain the concept of covenant? How is a covenant different than a promise?

4. What is significant about the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15:17–18? Explain.

5. Why did Abraham and Sarah laugh at God?

6. How does the story of the sacrifice of Isaac point to Jesus?

For clarity on the previous questions, look up Hebrews 11:17–19 and read it aloud.

7. What has God asked you to leave or give up in order to follow Him in faith? What happened?

8. When have you laughed at God? What happened?

Personal Study

This week, the story of God takes us from the creation of the world and humanity to the establishment of a new covenant people. As the story unfolds, we'll see how God is faithful to keep His promises from the very beginning. Genesis follows the family line of Adam, through Noah, and leads us to Abraham.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN: CREATION AND FALL

The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan's temptation, humanity rebels and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan's head.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED: PROMISE AND A PEOPLE

God pursues Abraham, a man from an idol-worshipping family who has no children with his wife and promises that he will be the father of many nations. God promises land to Abraham and assures him that all nations will be blessed through his offspring. God continues to be faithful to this family. He restates the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob (who is renamed Israel). A famine strikes the promised land, so Jacob and the family move to Egypt where one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, is already there to provide for the family.

DAY ONE: Brokenness & Blessed Exchange

In the beginning of God's story, we saw Him lovingly create humanity. We were the crowning work of His creation, and everything was perfect. The second chapter in Genesis ends with a statement of peace:

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame. Genesis 2:24-25

No shame. Can you imagine life with no shame?

No guilt from your past mistakes. No regrets over choices you made or did not make but wish you had. No grief over words you said or did not say. Absolutely no shame.

Of course, all that changed in the very next chapter of Genesis when humanity rejected God's rule. Sin entered the world and shame came along with it. Peace was broken. The entrance of sin into the world was not a minor adjustment to God's creation. It affected everything.

Read Genesis 3:8-19 to see the aftermath.

PEACE WITH GOD WAS BROKEN.

They hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8

Adam and Eve realized they were naked and hid from the Lord among the trees. Instead of running to God, they ran from him. The “no shame” in Genesis 2 was traded for shame, guilt, and remorse.

PEACE WITH EACH OTHER WAS BROKEN.

Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you. Genesis 3:16

Instead of caring for his wife, Adam turned on her. Like a little kid who points the finger at his sibling, Adam defended himself before God by blaming Eve. Clearly this is not the type of leader a man should be—shirking responsibility, shifting blame, and passively watching the Enemy tempt his wife.

As a consequence of her sin, God told Eve that there would be relational tension between her and her husband. If you're married, you have experienced this. But husbands and wives aren't the only ones to feel the strain. Office politics, broken friendships, and business relationships gone south are all examples of broken peace.

PEACE WITHIN OURSELVES WAS BROKEN.

You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. Genesis 3:17

God told Adam that work would now be filled with painful labor. As a Christian, you know that your job—even if it is an awesome one—will not ultimately satisfy you. Work does not quench because our souls can only be quenched by God.

PEACE WITH OUR WORLD WAS BROKEN.

The ground is cursed because of you. Genesis 3:17

Because of the fall, all of creation bears the weight of corruption. Sin has ravaged our world, and you daily face the ramifications. Cancer, disease, natural disasters, unfruitful harvests, and death are all the results of living in a broken world.

Q: Is there any solution for our brokenness? For the shame we now face?

Thankfully we can read about the shame of Genesis 3 with our eyes fixed on Jesus. When the apostle Paul wrote about marriage several thousand years later—he referenced Genesis 2 to show us how Christ loves us. He wrote:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:31-32

The word mystery here does not refer to something too deep or complex to understand, but to something that was hidden in the Old Testament that has now been revealed for our understanding and enjoyment. And Paul made the

mystery clear: "I am talking about Christ and the church." When one becomes a Christian, one is united with Christ. When Adam and Eve were first united, they felt no shame. When we are united with Christ in faith, there is no shame. Martin Luther called this the blessed exchange:

"Faith unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul; everything which the soul has becomes the property of the Christ. Christ possesses all blessings and eternal life: they are thenceforward the property of the soul. The soul has all the iniquities and sins: they become thenceforward the property of Christ. It is then a blessed exchange commences."³

Q: How has Christ turned hopelessness into hope in your life? How have you personally experienced that hope?

DAY TWO: More Strife, Better Blood

One of the devastating results of sin entering the world is relational conflict, evidenced by hatred and even violence toward one another. We've all been there. We have fought with our parents, our friends, our coaches, and our teachers. Anger has festered in our hearts and bitterness has robbed us of our joy. Even as kids, we fought on playgrounds and sucker-punched kids we didn't like. We can be ruthless. All this began in the garden of Eden.

If only sin had stopped in the garden. But it didn't. It escalated. That's how it always works, apart from God's grace. We see this clearly just one generation after Adam and Eve's devastating choice. Their children demonstrated the devastating and natural progression of sin.

Read Genesis 4:1-16.

Cain was furious because the Lord looked with favor on Abel's offering and not on his. So despite the Lord's warning about being mastered by sin (v. 7), Cain killed his own brother.

Why did God not receive Cain's offering? What is really going on here? Some verses in the New Testament cast more light on the two brothers.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

HEBREWS 11:4

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another, unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

1 JOHN 3:11-12

God receiving Abel's offering and rejecting Cain's was not based on what they offered with their hands, but on the condition of their hearts. Abel offered in faith. Cain's heart was evil, and he proved his evil by killing his brother.

Is that what the world today is really like? Are things really that broken here? Genesis 4 shows us that, indeed, things are not as they were designed to be. The first son born into this world was a murderer.

Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed."

GENESIS 4:10-11

Q: What current events show that things are not as God designed them to be? Explain.

Cain's sinful rage caused him to spill the blood of his brother, and that blood condemned him. By God's grace, we have a rescue from this sin, from this hatred! The New Testament tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word, a different word than the blood of Abel.

... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which says better things than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:24

Both Jesus and Abel were innocent and killed by sinful and hateful men. But their spilled blood speaks different messages. The blood of Abel condemned Cain; the blood of Jesus justifies us. The blood of Abel spoke against Cain; the blood of Christ speaks for us. The blood of Abel cries out for Cain's condemnation; the blood of Christ cries out for our forgiveness and justification. We have been like Cain. We have hated, been angry, acted cruelly, and held bitterness and jealousy in our hearts. Thankfully, Jesus' blood speaks a better word! We are not condemned. As Jesus' blood fell to the ground, our liberation and salvation were secured. We are not sent to wander the land but are welcomed to Him.

Consider a recent time that your life reflected Cain's response. If you've not repented for this thought or action, take time now to do so. Then, thank God that the blood of Christ has rescued us from condemnation for our sins.

DAY THREE: Cosmic Reboot

The space allocated in the Bible to the account of Noah (four chapters) indicates it is a significant event in the story God is telling. When you read the first six chapters of Genesis, you may think, Wow, that escalated quickly. In Genesis 2, everything is perfect. God had created everything, declared it to be good, and told Adam and Eve to multiply and steward creation. They enjoyed God and each other in perfect harmony. There was no shame, no sin, no pain, and no death.

Then Adam and Eve rebelled, and their cosmic rebellion had an impact on everything. We still feel the effects. Adam represents all of us, for all of us have sinned. The image of God is still in us, but it is distorted.

Following the sin of Cain, who murdered his brother, sin spread rampantly. And already by Genesis 6, God has had enough.

When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart. Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." Noah, however, found favor with the Lord.

Genesis 6:5-8

Noah was not a perfect man, but God expressed grace to him and his family. Noah did not earn God's favor, but rather God graciously gave it to him. God told Noah to build a massive boat out of wood, an ark, so he and his family could be saved from the floodwaters that would destroy the whole earth. Noah and his family took pairs of animals and birds on the ark with them so that life would continue once the flood was over.

Genesis 7:1-10

The flood was absolutely devastating.

The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet. Every creature perished—those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils—everything on dry land died. He wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the earth, from mankind to

livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

Genesis 7:20-23

Sin violates God's holy character and must be punished, yet God is also loving and gracious. So to both punish sin and pardon people, God poured out His wrath through a flood while simultaneously using Noah and an ark to rescue people.

Q: How do we see Christ in this story?

Centuries later Jesus came to be our pardon. Just as Noah saved his entire family from the just wrath of God, Jesus saved His family—those who believe in Him— from the punishment for sin.

After Noah and his family were saved and left the ark, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, He said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, even though man's inclination is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done." Genesis 8:20-22

God made a covenant with Noah and promised to never flood the whole earth again. This is the first time we see covenant used in God's story. A covenant is an agreement backed with a promise.

"But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it." Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, "Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:7-13

Though hurricanes, tsunamis, and other disastrous effects of a fallen and broken world will still strike our world, the whole earth will never be flooded again. Every

time we see a rainbow, we can remember that we have a God who keeps His promises.

As you close today, reread Genesis 9:7 and notice the command God gave Noah. God restated the command “Be fruitful and multiply,” which He first gave to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 1:28). God flooded the earth because of our sin, but He did not give up on humanity. He gave them a new start and continued to pursue them. Just as He continues to pursue us. Just as He continues to pursue you.

Q: What evidence in your life shows that God has not given up on you?

Just as God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply over the whole earth, He told Noah to do the same. But instead of multiplying and spreading over the whole earth, humanity chose to cluster together. Chronologically, the story of the tower of Babel fits sometime in the middle of Genesis 10—which gives us an account of the people who filled the earth. Before the people spread out speaking their own languages (Gen. 10:5), the following event took place.

DAY FOUR: More of Living for Ourselves

The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come, let’s make oven-fired bricks.” (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.) And they said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let’s make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth.”

Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans were building. The LORD said, “If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let’s go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city. Therefore it is called Babylon, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

Genesis 11:1-9

The people in this story wanted community, security, and identity. They wanted community expressed in a city. They wanted security expressed in a tower that would protect them from others. And they wanted identity expressed in a name for themselves. They wanted good things for the wrong reasons and by the wrong means. Everyone wants to have a secure future, people who love them,

and a sense of how and why they are on the planet. But these people wanted this for their own glory, and they were going to earn it themselves.

Q: How have you sought community, security, and identity in the wrong ways? What were the consequences of your actions?

Building ourselves up runs in the same vein as Adam and Eve's sin. It speaks of wanting to be the ones who decide what is good and evil, reflecting our desire to be in charge.

So God divided the people into multiple languages and “scattered them over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:8). Their desire to achieve community, security, and identity apart from God was halted since they could not complete their building project. The people were also pushed outward, spread across the land as God commanded

Genesis 1:28; 9:7

All this was in God's plan. Today, He doesn't receive worship in just one language, but many languages. And when His story concludes, He will be worshiped by people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 5:9-10).

As we move forward to the next session, Genesis 12 will show us that God was going to bless all the nations through one man—a man willing to leave his community, his security, and his identity. He trusted God for all three instead of foolishly attempting to earn them on his own.

Q: How have you found community, security, and identity in Christ?

Look back over the personal study.

10. What was especially meaningful or helpful in understanding the story of God and your life with Christ?

- Day 1: Brokenness & Blessed Exchange
- Day 2: More Strife, Better Blood
- Day 3: Cosmic Reboot
- Day 4: More of Living for Ourselves
- Day 5: Reflection

11. How does the takeaway affect your view of Scripture? How will you respond to this part of the story?

Commentary
Bible Knowledge Commentary

Genesis 11:27–32 (BKC): This brief section accounts for the three sons of Terah, and their marriages. (See the chart “Terah’s Family.”) It also accounts for Lot, Abram’s nephew, who figures prominently in the narratives about Abram.

Terah was an idolater, worshiping other gods (Josh. 24:2). Perhaps the home of Terah was originally in Haran because many of Terah’s ancestors’ names are similar to place names in the land of Aram where the city of Haran was located. If so, then the family had migrated southeast approximately 600 miles to Ur, capital of Sumer, where Terah’s youngest son Haran was born and (Gen. 11:28) died. God’s call to Abram (12:1) initially came in Ur, and the family then moved back to Haran and settled there (11:31), where Terah died (v. 32). Because that was not the Promised Land, Abram moved on to Canaan, where God appeared and confirmed the location.

The call of Abram (12:1–9)

In this narrative the direction of the book changes. This passage records how **God called Abram out of a pagan world and made astounding promises to him, promises that later became part of the formal Abrahamic Covenant.**

The passage also points up the faith of Abram, and teaches that faith obeys God. Abram was middle-aged, prosperous, settled, and thoroughly pagan. The word of the Lord came to Him—though it is not known exactly how—and he responded by faith and obediently left everything to follow God’s plan. That is why he is the epitome of faith in the Bible (cf. Rom. 4:1–3, 16–24; Gal. 3:6–9; Heb. 11:8–19; James 2:21–23).

The religio-historical point of the passage certainly is the call of Abram to found a new nation. Israel would learn by this that her very existence was God’s work through a man who responded by faith and left for Canaan. It would be a message to convince Israel of the divine call they were facing, and their need of faith for their move from Egypt to Canaan

Internet Links

[The calling of Abram](#)

8-week overview

CREATION AND FALL

The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan’s temptation, humanity rebels and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on

humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan's head.

PROMISE AND A PEOPLE

God pursues Abraham, a man from an idol-worshiping family who has no children with his wife and promises that he will be the father of many nations. God promises land to Abraham and assures him that all nations will be blessed through his offspring. God continues to be faithful to this family. He restates the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob (who is renamed Israel). A famine strikes the promised land, so Jacob and the family move to Egypt where one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, is already there to provide for the family.

RESCUE AND LAW

The family becomes a nation while living in Egypt, but also becomes enslaved to the Egyptians. God raises up Moses to lead His people to freedom. During a tenth plague, God strikes dead the firstborn son of everyone living in Egypt, but "passes over" Israel as they put the blood of lambs on their doorposts. After miraculously rescuing His people, God gives His people the law. He also instructs them to build a tabernacle and offer sacrifices so He may dwell among them.

LAND AND KINGDOM

God brings His people, through their leader Joshua, into the promised land. When God's people worship the gods of the nation's surrounding them, God disciplines them through the attacks of surrounding nations. God raises up judges (or rulers) to rescue His people and call them to repentance. They beg for a king to be like other nations, and God gives them Saul. God raises up a new king, David, and promises that his kingdom will never end. The family that turned into a nation is now a kingdom. David's son, Solomon, builds a temple to replace the tabernacle.

EXILE AND RETURN

Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers, and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people, but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

JESUS

A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises

from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

A NEW PEOPLE

After His ascension to heaven, Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit and His disciples turn the world upside down preaching the good news of Jesus. In the midst of intense persecution, the gospel spreads, and Gentiles and Jews form a new people. Churches are planted in cities, and apostles write letters encouraging and instructing the people in the grace of Christ and their response to His grace.

A BETTER BEGINNING

A time is coming where God's people—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have been rescued by Christ—will enjoy Him and His rule forever in perfect harmony. Satan will be crushed, the effects of sin will be reversed, and all things will be made new.

This first week will ease you into the story with just four scriptures setting the stage for our epic journey. Weeks 2–8 will dive deeper into each day's personal study. Ideally, you'll have time to read one passage of Scripture each day for four days leading up to the first group session, plus one day of personal reflection. If you don't have the full week or you didn't receive your book in advance, that's OK—read what you can before your first discussion begins.