

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 2
Genesis 12-20

Key Concepts: The key concepts this week concern God's choosing of Abraham and Sarah to be the bearers of God's promise (blessing) to fix the human condition. At the heart of the promise is the Covenant; an agreement between Abraham, his descendants and God.

Stories: This section of scripture contains the following stories: Abram is called by God, Abram travels toward the Land of Promise where he gives Sarai to Pharaoh...then gets her back, defeats a number of kings in battle, meets Melchizedek who is a priest of the Most High God, struggles with his childlessness, continues to receive promises and blessings from God, enters into a covenant with God, has a son by his wife's servant girl, circumcises himself and the males in his household, encounters and laughs at God, and then bargains with God. In addition we witness the inhospitableness of the men of Sodom leading to its destruction and then Abraham (he gets renamed along the way) once again giving away his wife Sarah, only to get her back with more gifts.

Brief Summary of Stories: We begin week 2 with humanity being in quite a fix. They had tried to replace God and God's desires for the world with their own sense of what ought to be. The results have been sin as reflected in shame, fear, murder and violence. The questions become: will God fix this mess and if so how?

The answer comes in the opening verses. God will fix this mess and God will do it through Abraham and his descendants. At the opening of chapter 12 we hear God calling Abram to pack up his family and journey to a new land. If Abram will do this God promises that not only will Abram be blessed but that he will be a blessing to all of the families on the earth. In other words God is going to somehow use Abram and his offspring to fix the world which God had created as being very good.

The blessing to Abram becomes a recurring theme in this section. The blessing will come in three parts. They are land, seed and blessing. First, Abram is to receive land that will belong to himself and his descendants. Second, Abram will have many, many children. They will be as numerous as the sands on the shore or stars in the sky. Third, he will be blessed, which in this case means he will become rich and powerful (and will be a blessing to all of the families of the earth). What is interesting about these promises is that Abraham does not receive them all in his life time. While he does become rich and will eventually have children, the land will remain an elusive promise. Neither will all the families of the earth be blessed through Abraham in his lifetime. What this lack of instant fulfillment does for us is that it reminds us that we need to keep looking for God's continuing actions in the Biblical story which are intended to make these promises a reality.

Finally we have the creation of the Covenant. This covenant with Abram is an irrevocable agreement that God will watch over and care for Abraham's offspring. The covenant comes with new names for Abram and Sarai; Abraham and Sarah. The covenant is sealed on Abraham's part by circumcision; an act of faithfulness. Circumcision will be one of those ways in which God's people are distinctively marked. We leave the story with Abraham and Sarah still without a child to fulfill God's promises.

1. Consider what being blessed means to you.
2. What do you think about Abram's bargaining with God?
3. How would you link circumcision and baptism?
4. Think about the issue of hospitality and what it ought to look like today.