

# GENESIS

## The Life of Abraham





Let the Word dwell in you.

With *Explore the Bible*, groups can expect to engage Scripture in its proper context and be better prepared to live it out in their own context. These book-by-book studies will help participants—

- › grow in their love for Scripture;
- › gain new knowledge about what the Bible teaches;
- › develop biblical disciplines;
- › internalize the Word in a way that transforms their lives.



Connect



@ExploreTheBible



facebook.com/ExploreTheBible



lifeway.com/ExploreTheBible



ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible

*EXPLORE THE BIBLE: Genesis—  
The Life of Abraham*  
© 2015 LifeWay Press®

ISBN 978-1-4300-4546-5  
Item 005768559

Dewey decimal classification: 222.11  
Subject heading: ABRAHAM \ FAITH \  
BIBLE. O.T. GENESIS 12–24—STUDY

**ERIC GEIGER**

*Vice President, Church Resources*

**MICHAEL KELLY**

*Director, Groups Ministry*

**AFSHIN ZIAFAT**

*General Editor*

**JEREMY MAXFIELD**

*Content Editor*

Send questions/comments to: Content Editor, *Explore the Bible: Small-Group Study*; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152.

*Printed in the United States of America*

For ordering or inquiries visit [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com); write to LifeWay Small Groups; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152; or call toll free 800.458.2772.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit [www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline](http://www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline).

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers®. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

# ▶ ABOUT THIS STUDY

## CHANGE IS INEVITABLE. IT'S PART OF LIFE. TO GROW IS TO CHANGE.

But change isn't always easy. We often prefer the known and the comfortable to difficult challenges.

God may call us to make major changes of direction in life as we follow Him. These changes can stretch us in ways that force us out of our comfort zones and cause us to trust Him completely.

The first verses of Genesis 12 record that God called Abram to move to a new land far away. God directed him to leave the familiarity of home and go to a place he knew nothing about. He was to respond in obedience to the Lord even though it would involve life-altering changes.

*Explore the Bible: Genesis—The Life of Abraham* reminds us of the importance of trusting God in the big and small issues of life. This Bible study encourages us to trust God even when we don't know exactly where He's leading. We're encouraged to obey God even when that leads to difficult and uncomfortable changes. Like Abraham, each of us must choose whether we'll live the great adventure and blessing of walking with God by faith.

The *Explore the Bible* series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:** This page explains the original context of each passage and begins relating the primary themes to your life today.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT:** These pages walk you through Scripture, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

**OBEY THE TEXT:** This page helps you apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

**LEADER GUIDE:** This final section provides optional discussion starters and suggested questions to help anyone lead a group in reviewing each section of the personal study.



For helps on how to use *Explore the Bible*, tips on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading, visit:  
[www.ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible).

# ➤ GROUP COMMITMENT

As you begin this study, it's important that everyone agrees to key group values. Clearly establishing the purpose of your time together will foster healthy expectations and help ease any uncertainties. The goal is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience leading to spiritual growth and true community. Initial each value as you discuss the following with your group.

## PRIORITY

Life is busy, but we value this time with one another and with God's Word. We choose to make being together a priority.

## PARTICIPATION

We're a group. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one dominates.

## RESPECT

Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions. All questions are encouraged and respected.

## TRUST

Each person humbly seeks truth through time in prayer and in the Bible. We trust God as the loving authority in our lives.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything said in our meetings is never repeated outside the group without the permission of everyone involved. This commitment is vital in creating an environment of trust and openness.

## SUPPORT

Everyone can count on anyone in this group. Permission is given to call on one another at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group provides care for every member.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in the loving ways we decide on. Questions are always welcome. Unsolicited advice, however, isn't permitted.

---

I agree to all the commitments.

---

Date

## ➤ GENERAL EDITOR



**Afshin Ziafat** is the lead pastor of Providence Church in Frisco, Texas. Before assuming his current role in October 2010, Afshin spent more than a decade traveling nationally and internationally and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in churches, retreats, camps, conferences, and missions. He also helped launch Vertical Bible Study at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Afshin partners with Elam Ministries and regularly travels to the Middle East to train Iranian pastors. His passion is to teach the Word of God as the authority and guide for life, to preach Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Redeemer of humankind, and to proclaim the love of Christ as the greatest treasure and hope in life. He and his wife, Meredith, currently reside in Frisco, Texas, along with their daughter, Elyse.

Afshin's prayer is that by studying Genesis—specifically the life of Abraham—we too will be moved to put our faith in the God who's always faithful to His promises.



...ard, which  
our eyes, whi  
and touche  
the word of  
manifest, and  
it, and proclai  
which was w  
made manife  
which we have  
claim also to  
fellowship wi  
ship is with  
his Son Jesus  
writing this the  
plete.

5 This is the  
have heard fro  
you, that God  
darkness at al  
fellowship with  
darkness, we li  
ing to the truth  
light, as he is  
fellowship with  
blood of Jesus  
all sin. 8 If we  
sin, we deceive  
is not in us. 9  
sins, he is fait  
forgive our sins  
unrighteousnes  
not sinned, we  
word is not in

2 My little  
writing this  
not sin; but if a  
an advocate  
Christ the rig  
he is the expi  
sins, and not f  
the sins of the  
this we may be  
if we keep hi  
who says "I k  
his command  
truth is not in

## ➤ CONTENTS

<i>Session 1</i>	<b>When God Calls</b> ( <i>Gen. 12:1-9</i> ) . . . . .	6
<i>Session 2</i>	<b>Waiting for the Promise</b> ( <i>Gen. 15:1-7,13-16</i> ) . . . . .	16
<i>Session 3</i>	<b>A New Name</b> ( <i>Gen. 17:1-8,15-22</i> ) . . . . .	26
<i>Session 4</i>	<b>Wickedness and Compassion</b> ( <i>Gen. 18:20-25; 19:12-16</i> ) . . . . .	36
<i>Session 5</i>	<b>Keeping His Promise</b> ( <i>Gen. 21:1-8</i> ) . . . . .	46
<i>Session 6</i>	<b>The Faith Test</b> ( <i>Gen. 22:1-14</i> ) . . . . .	56
<i>Leader Guide</i>	. . . . .	66
<i>Tips for Leading a Group</i>	. . . . .	78

# WHEN GOD CALLS

God called Abram to obey Him in faith.



...re w  
...ght wa  
...light fi  
...d the light  
...ess he called  
...ng and there  
  
... God said, “  
...ament in the  
...ers, and let it s  
...waters.” 7A  
...ent and sepa  
...were under th  
...ers which wer  
...And it was so.  
...ament Heave  
...and there  
...day.  
...d God said, “I  
...under the hea  
...er into one pla  
...ppear.” And  
...the dry land Ea

## ➤ ABOUT GENESIS

In Genesis God revealed the origins of all things except God Himself, who is eternal. Genesis 1–11 addresses big-picture events such as creation, the fall, the flood, and the formation of nations. Genesis 12–50 focuses primarily on God’s creation of a covenant nation through Abraham and his descendants. This nation would be the people through whom God would eventually send the Savior, Jesus Christ. This study will explore chapters 12–22.

### **AUTHOR**

Most conservative, evangelical Bible students agree that Moses was the human writer of Genesis, as well as the four books that follow Genesis: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. While none of the five books explicitly name the author, there are references throughout the Bible to Moses’ work as their writer. In particular, Jesus taught that Moses had written about Him in the law (see Luke 24:44; John 5:46).

### **DATE**

The time of events in Genesis spans from the creation of the world (when time began) until the death of Joseph around 1804 B.C. The writer’s life span can be dated around 1526 to 1406 B.C. Moses likely recorded the Book of Genesis (and the other books of the law) not long after the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt around 1446 B.C. To write a faithful record of events that occurred before his time, Moses received direct revelation from God and likely also drew from carefully preserved oral histories of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### **THEME**

The theme of Genesis points to the formation of a covenant people—initiated through the call of Abram/Abraham—through whom God would bless all nations. That blessing would culminate in God’s sending Jesus Christ as a descendant of Abraham to provide the only way of salvation from sin. The story of God’s plan to redeem fallen humanity begins in Genesis and unfolds throughout the remaining books of the Bible. Genesis provides both the context and the proper perspective for understanding where we as human beings came from, what happened to us, and where we’re headed in the future.

“THE CALL OF CHRIST  
ON YOUR LIFE ISN’T  
JUST TO BELIEVE THE  
RIGHT THINGS ABOUT  
HIM BUT TO FOLLOW  
HIM REGARDLESS  
OF THE COST.”

—Afshin Ziafat

## ➤ GENESIS 12:1-9

### Think About It

*What's the one command in this passage?*

*What promises did God make?*

*What words or phrases describe Abram's response to the Lord?*

**1** The LORD said to Abram:

Go out from your land,  
your relatives,  
and your father's house  
to the land that I will show you.

**2** I will make you into a great nation,  
I will bless you,  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

**3** I will bless those who bless you,  
I will curse those who treat you with contempt,  
and all the peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.

**4** So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. **5** He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people he had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, **6** Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. **7** Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your offspring." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. **8** From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to Yahweh there, and he called on the name of Yahweh. **9** Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.

# ➤ UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

USE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO PREPARE FOR YOUR GROUP TIME.

Moving to a new home in a faraway place can be challenging. Friends and family are left behind. The familiar is replaced with the new and different. The unknown future replaces the known past. Change can be difficult. We often prefer the known and the comfortable to difficult challenges.

Genesis 11 introduces readers to Abram, whose name God would later change to Abraham. The story of this man is very prominent through the middle of the first book of the Bible and, indeed, throughout both the Old and the New Testaments. The biblical writers and even Jesus Himself frequently refer to Abraham's story. Abraham's prominence is such that it's difficult to understand many parts of the Bible without a basic understanding of him and his story. His story is so central to the Bible's message that it aids tremendously in understanding the redemptive work of God throughout the ages.

Genesis 11 includes the genealogy leading to the birth of Abram. It traces his lineage from his ancestor Shem, the oldest son of Noah, to his father, Terah. This chapter also introduces Abram's wife, Sarai (her name later changed by God to Sarah), and his nephew, Lot.

Genesis 12 reminds us of the personal nature of God and of His desire for a personal relationship with people. He's often described in the Old Testament as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," reaffirming His connection with people. The theme of faith is an overarching theme found in Abraham's life and story, and the lessons of faith exemplified in his life are valuable to believers in every generation.

Hebrews 11:8-10 refers to the Genesis account of Abram's call and obedience, noting that Abram "went out, not knowing where he was going" (v. 8). The reader is reminded of the great faith required for Abram to follow the Lord into the unknown.





## ➤ EXPLORE THE TEXT

### **GOD CALLS** (*Genesis 12:1-3*)

**<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you.**

God clearly communicated to Abram what He expected of him. There may be times when we're uncertain of what God wants us to do. Very often, however, God unmistakably tells us what to do. Through the Bible we know many specifics of what God wants us to do and to avoid. When we see God's clear Word, we're in a position to obey or disobey. God emphasized the magnitude of what He was asking of Abram. Abram was to leave the land where he lived, the family he loved, and the home he knew. The old, familiar places and many of his family and friends would be left behind. God further pointed out to Abram that he was to follow this call of obedience even though he didn't know the final destination. It was a call to faithful obedience. It was a call to trust the Lord with the future even though God hadn't revealed all the details of that future. This is a challenging call to radical obedience. The Lord asked Abram to live by faith and obey His word. There would be great change and upheaval, but the Lord was calling Abram to trust Him enough to obey Him.

***What are some examples of difficult things God may call us to do today?  
How do these compare with the directive given to Abram?***

**<sup>2</sup>I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**

God spoke to Abram of the blessings that would come with obedience. God was going to make Abram into “a great nation” (v. 2). This would be fulfilled in the people of Israel who would become his descendants. Note that this was at a time when Abram and Sarai had no children. This great promise was not just for Abram alone. Abram was blessed by God in order to be a blessing to others. The interaction people had with Abram would determine their own blessings or curses. The life of obedience to the Lord results in opportunities for others to be blessed by that life or to reject those blessings. Every life lived in obedient faith to the Lord has an impact and a blessing. Not only is the individual blessed by his or her faith, but that faith also serves to bless the world as well.

This promise was fulfilled most fully in the person of Jesus. Jesus, born of the lineage of Abraham, is the means by which people of every tongue and tribe can be blessed with the greatest gift—eternal life. This promise to Abram foreshadows the coming of the Messiah who would remove the curse of sin through the cross and bless with everlasting life all who trust Him. Through Christ men and women can be set free from the bondage of sin and find the freedom that comes with salvation. The gospel message is the means by which all who are dead in sin can gain eternal life through the Lord Jesus.

***In what ways has Abram’s obedient faith been a blessing to the world? In what ways can our obedient faith be a blessing to others?***

## **ABRAM GOES (*Genesis 12:4-9*)**

**<sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. <sup>5</sup>He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people he had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ...**

### **KEY DOCTRINE**

*Evangelism and  
Discipleship*

It’s the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.

### BIBLE SKILL

*Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.*

Biblical writers sometimes repeated key words to emphasize a theme or a message. In Genesis 12:1-3 the verb *bless* and the noun *blessing* occur several times. Another repetition in these verses is even more meaningful. Identify the two-word phrase repeated six times in these verses. (Hint: Look for a verb and its subject.)

Whom does the pronoun in this phrase denote?

What's the significance of the verb's tense?

What implication do these repeated words have for God's people today?

Despite all the difficulties of following the Lord into the unknown, Abram obeyed the Lord. Simple obedience demonstrates our faith in God. Without any argument recorded, Abram followed the Lord's command. Obedience to the Lord has no age limit. Rather than arguing with the Lord about the reasons he couldn't leave his home at the age of 75, Abram simply obeyed. All the blessings that followed resulted because of this first step of faith. If Abram hadn't been willing to follow the Lord at 75, he wouldn't have seen the blessings that would come with the birth of Isaac years later. Abram didn't leave alone. What a blessing it must have been for others to join him on this great journey of faith. With only faith in God's call, Abram led this entourage to pack all they had and travel into the unknown horizon. That first step began the great adventure that would impact their lives and eternity.

*In what ways might it be easier to follow the Lord as you get older? In what ways might it be more difficult?*

**<sup>6</sup>Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your offspring." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.**

Abram's entrance into the land of promise is marked by the recognition that "the Canaanites were in the land" (v. 6). This fact was certainly a reminder that God's plans would include some genuine adversity and possible conflict. But God reiterated His promise that this land would be given to Abram's "offspring" (v. 7). Abram's response to God's promise was worship. This was an act of faith in God's promise for the future and an act of worship to God for His presence in Abram's life. This altar, of course, was a physical structure, a tangible reminder that God had been with Abram to this point and would provide for his future. It was a visual reminder of the promises God had made for both children and land. But the altar was also a spiritual structure that stood for the faith Abram placed in the God who had promised. It represented for Abram the greatness of the Lord who was leading him into the future.

*What are the challenges of waiting on God's promises? How can waiting be a benefit?*

**<sup>8</sup>From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to Yahweh there, and he called on the name of Yahweh. <sup>9</sup>Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.**

Abram continued the pattern of worship that would mark his life. This wasn't merely an altar where a religious ritual was performed. It was an altar where genuine worship of the Lord occurred. Though the Lord had not yet completed all His promised work in Abram's life, Abram was committed to worshipping God. Worship is an integral part of a life of faith. It's a reminder of the greatness of God, His worthiness of our praise, and the personal connection we have to Him. The long journey of Abram's obedient faith continued as his contingent of people made their way to the inhospitable desert region south of Judah. But faith in the Lord had led Abram this far, and he continued to need faith for the adventures to come.

*What are some ways people today can designate or remember a meaningful time of worship?*



## ➤ OBEY THE TEXT

God seeks people who will faithfully follow Him even if that means leaving the comfortable. God's call requires us to act on our faith even while facing risk. The blessing of God is reserved for those who demonstrate faith in Him through obedience. Worshiping God is one way to demonstrate obedience to God.

*What's God asking you to do that will stretch your faith in Him? What roadblocks are keeping you from taking steps of obedience? Pray, asking God to strengthen your faith as you take the first step.*

*Think of ways your group has recently been blessed by God. How can the group use these blessings to help others? Decide on one blessing and then plan a course of action to implement it.*

*Evaluate your current expressions of worship. How can you worship God more wholeheartedly? How can your life also be an act of worship?*



### MEMORIZE

"I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."  
Genesis 12:3

Use the space provided to make observations and record prayer requests during the group experience for this session.

## MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from the group experience.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you will put into practice the truth explored this week.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

