

New Life Christian Fellowship

Homework Packet

God's Covenant w/ Abraham

Genesis 15-17

Dates- February 19-25, 2012

**In this packet: Sermon Outlines for adults,
youth and children; Homework suggestions,
lyrics for worship**

Sermon Outline for Adults and Youth- Standing on the Promises of God

Last week we looked at an introduction to Abram and I read a very general passage in Genesis 12:2 where God said, “2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

As the story of Abram’s life unfolds further, we see this theme revisited over and over. God keeps promising, and Abram keeps doubting. Why? Because he has no son. His wife Sarai is a barren woman.

When we get to Chapter 15, God again tells Abram that he will have many descendants and Abram begins to lament his life and the fact that he has missed out on God’s faithful blessing.

Look at Genesis 15:1-6. God continues to promise and Abram continues to be skeptical.

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6 ESV)

Let’s just unpack the promises God makes to Abram in these verses:

1. God promises that He will be Abram’s protection. “Fear not, I am your shield.”
2. God promises that He still plans to bless Abram in a mighty way...”Your reward shall be very great.”
3. God promises a son still forthcoming. “Your very own son shall be your heir...”
4. God promises that Abram’s offspring will be as many as there are stars in the sky.

Wow! Some pretty amazing promises.

Now let's look at Abram and Sarai's skeptical, disobedient approach is after God's amazing promise.

In chapter 16, Sarai goes to Abram with a plan, that he would lie with her servant, Hagar and she would provide a vessel by which family lineage and inheritance might become possible.

Look at the passivity of Abram...Did he not just have an incredible encounter with God and receive from the Almighty a number of promises???

The results of taking things into their own hands:

1. They sinned by not submitting to God's plan and promise
2. Immediately that sin led to broken relationships
3. Abram's lineage, legacy and loyalty became confusing
4. The world would ever be affected as Ishmael would pave the way to the Muslim faith

God refused to quit on Abram...He was faithful even in the midst of Abram's sin

Genesis 17- God's covenant with Abram becomes tangible

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:1-8 ESV)

Again God promises:

1. I will multiply you greatly
2. I will be faithful to all your offspring
3. God gives Abram a new name...Abraham
4. I will give you a special land

In verses 9-14 God gives definition to the sign/seal of the covenant.

Again, Abraham is skeptical regarding the promises of God.

1. God also gives Sarai a new name Sarah
2. God again tells Abraham that he and Sarah will birth a son and Abraham laughs at the thought
3. Abraham asks “But what about Ishmael?” verse 18

A covenant is different than a contract. A contract is a legal agreement. A covenant is a spiritual agreement. Breaking a contract has legal consequences. Breaking a covenant has spiritual consequences.

An understanding of covenant- “A covenant made with God should be regarded not as restrictive but as protective.” ~ Russell M Nelson

Let’s apply today’s lessons:

1. God has a plan for your life! Jeremiah 29:11
2. Our responsibility is to align ourselves with God’s will for our lives.
3. But often we, like Abram and Sarai, take things into our own hands. We refuse to be patient.
4. Even when we thwart the plans of God, He still is faithful to us and brings about His will in spite of our rebellion.
5. There are consequences to our disobedience that often affect the remainder of our lives.
6. God’s ways are better than our ways.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV)

7. We are called to submit to Him even when we do not understand.
8. God's mercy is new every morning.

Notes regarding Lent:

This Easter season begins on Wednesday and continues until Easter Sunday with is April 8th. Some years we have had an Ash Wednesday service as a kick-off for the Easter Season. This year we are not because we have so much happening in The Journey every week.

The season of Lent is man's creation to help focus his attention on the cross and the tomb. Sometimes people give up something during this season to help remind them of the sacredness of the season. This sacrifice is designed to help draw their attention to God's amazing plan.

This season, rather than subtract something to your life, I want to challenge you to add something to your life. This can be even more difficult because our lives are already busy. But my Easter challenge for you is to insert the following:

Sacred Space- Create a special place in your home to define as your own personal Sanctuary. This can be as simple as a special chair you sit in or it can be a corner of your home that you decorate and prepare. This is the place you will share special times with God.

Sacred Time- Make the commitment to spend time with God every day. If you are not having a devotion every day, commit to 40 days of prayer and Bible study. Other things that you can incorporate include worship, journaling, and meditation upon the Word of God.

Oral Tradition- The gospel has forever been shared in the form of personal story. It is God's story. But for all of us who are Christians, it has become our story of faith. Begin to share your story with the people you love and cherish. Write your own personal testimony of how you came to know the Lord and be willing to tell it to your children, grandchildren and friends and neighbors.

Simplicity- In order to accomplish this, you may well need to simplify your life.

Sermon Notes Page for Children

New Life Christian Fellowship

Today's Date: February 19, 2012

Today's Scripture Passage: Genesis 15-17

Stops Along the Journey:

1. In Genesis 15:1-6, God promises Abram that He will be his _____.
2. God promises Abram that he and his wife Sarai will be blessed with a _____.
3. In Genesis 17 God changes Abram's name to _____ and Sarai's name to _____.
Can you find which verses record these changes? ____ & ____
4. Who does Abram have a child with other than his wife Sarai?

5. What was the child's name? _____
6. Essay Question: How did this show that Abram and Sarai did not trust God? _____

7. What was the name given to the son that God promised?

8. How old was Sarah when she had the baby? _____
How old was Abraham? _____
9. Hard Question: How can we know that God will make good on His promises? Write your answer and then discuss it with your family this week. _____

Parents Help with this!!!

There are many promises in God's Word that we can trust to be true. Find at least five this week and list where they are found in the Bible:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Feb 19 Parents Page

This week we are looking at Genesis 15-17, with a specific look at Abraham and Sarah trying to rush God's plans and create their own ancestors through Hagar in Genesis 16. Here are a few suggestions for extenders on this story at home:

1. Suggestion from this week's "The Story" lesson that we saved for families:

Define the word promise together and have family members name some promises that have been made to them. Discuss:

How important are promises?

Do people take promises seriously?

What would affect how seriously you take a promise?

What are some promises that God has made to his people? Does God make promises to us now?

Brainstorm some promises that your family members have made to others (5-6). Then talk about some promises you have made to God.

Is it hard to break a promise? Why or why not?

For added thought, write a line to end this verse and then sing the verse together, using the tune to "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know."

God promises me, this I know

That he will always love me so.

I make this promise just to him,

That _____.

Conclude with prayer for your family to trust God and obey Him this week.

2. Suggestion from "The Story" parent letter from this week:

For added emphasis about living out a real faith, bring your family around a computer and do a search for "Stained Glass Masquerade video." Then click on the YouTube video from Casting Crowns that's three minutes and 54 seconds long. You can also search for the songs lyrics if you want to read along.

After watching the video, ask:

••What do you think the song means by "happy plastic people"?

••According to the song, is it OK to fail?

••How should the church treat people who fail?

Explain that the Bible is filled with people who failed and didn't have the faith to fully trust God. But God forgives and gives us a second chance. He doesn't want us to be plastic and pretend everything's OK when it isn't. We need to be real with God and each other. When we have faith in God, his love can help us live authentically as the person he's created us to be.

3. KidsSundaySchool.com object lesson on trusting God (plus a little added by Pastor Tina in the discussion questions)

Pass a US dollar bill around the room and have your family take a good look at the back of the dollar bill. Once everyone has had a chance to look at the dollar ask, "Was there anything really neat on the back of a dollar bill?" Allow for answers and wait until someone mentions that it had "In God We Trust" printed on it. If no one does, bring it up yourself. Ask if they knew that "In God We Trust" is the official motto of the United

States of America and this motto is printed on all USA currency; paper currency, as well as coins. In November 1861, Secretary Chase stated "No nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defense." Early Americans new the importance of trusting God, the wisdom in this should be considered by each and everyone one of us today as well. A nation or a people that trusts in God is wise indeed.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it wise to trust in God?
2. Is anything more trustworthy than God?
3. Can we trust God during good times?
4. Can we trust God during bad times?
5. What did Abraham and Sarah need to trust God to do?
6. Did having Ishmael show they trusted God or didn't trust God?
7. Are there things you don't know if you trust God about?

4. <http://childrenschapel.org/biblestories/abraham5.html> is a NEAT version of the text for this week that is written for children in words they can understand. You may choose to read it from this website instead of directly from Scripture with your child if Scripture contains too large of a vocabulary for your young child right now.

5. I Trust God Handout (attached)

Consider writing on the sheet things that your child trusts about God or trusts God to do or believes about God. Have them hang it on the door to their room.

6. Consider teaching your child this 5 statement pledge of faith from Beth Moore (one for each finger and you hold up the fingers on your hand as you say the pledge, adding a finger each time until your whole hand is open) It is a good thing to say together at a set time each day- as you leave for the day or before dinner or after devotions or before bed for example.

Thumb: God is who He says He is

Index finger: God can do what He says He can do

Middle finger: I am who God says I am

Ring finger: I can do all things through Christ

Pinky: God's Word is alive and active in me!

Forever by Chris Tomlin

Give thanks to the Lord
 Our God and King
 His love endures forever
 For He is good, He is above all things
 His love endures forever
 Sing praise, sing praise
 With a mighty hand
 and outstretched arm
 His love endures forever
 For the life that's been reborn
 His love endures forever
 Sing praise, sing praise
 Sing praise, sing praise

Yeah

Forever God is faithful
 Forever God is strong
 Forever God is with us
 Forever
 Forever

From the rising to the setting sun
 His love endures forever
 By the grace of God
 We will carry on
 His love endures forever
 Sing praise, sing praise
 Sing praise, sing praise

Your Love Oh Lord by Third Day

Your love, oh Lord
 Reaches to the heavens
 Your faithfulness stretches to the sky
 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains
 Your justice flows like the ocean's tide
 I will lift my voice
 To worship You, my King
 I will find my strength
 In the shadow of your wings

You Never Let Go by Matt Redman

Even though I walk through the valley of the
 shadow of death
 Your perfect love is casting out fear
 And even when I'm caught in the middle of the
 storms of this life
 I won't turn back
 I know you are near

And I will fear no evil
 For my God is with me
 And if my God is with me
 Whom then shall I fear?
 Whom then shall I fear?

Oh no, You never let go
 Through the calm and through the storm
 Oh no, You never let go
 In every high and every low
 Oh no, You never let go
 Lord, You never let go of me

And I can see a light that is coming for the heart
 that holds on
 A glorious light beyond all compare
 And there will be an end to these troubles
 But until that day comes
 We'll live to know You here on the earth

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
 Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail
 not
 As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!
 Great is Thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see;
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
 Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
 Join with all nature in manifold witness
 To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
 Strength for today and bright hope for
 tomorrow,
 Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

I TRUST GOD

Think about who you trust and why. God is the most trustworthy person in your life. Color this poster and take it home. Look at it every day and remember that you can trust God with everything!

I
TRUST
GOD!

Name _____

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

There's a lot of material here. Going through all of it in the course of one week might seem impossible, but it's not meant to be discouraging. This was designed in way to allow you to take the pieces you can implement and make them a part of your family's devotional life this week. Here are some tips based on how this was written that might help you do just that.

1. Monday, Wednesday, Friday: These days are weighted with more content. An every other day approach to formal family discipleship can often be more accessible than an every day grind. For that reason, these days have been given the central bits of teaching to the week's passage while Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday have been given more supplemental materials.
2. Formal vs. Informal suggestions: You'll notice there are some sections that are labeled FORMAL and INFORMAL throughout the week. The FORMAL heading denotes times of teaching where the family might gather to read scripture, ask questions, pray, and reflect on what they read. These times will often be the most successful if they are given a specific time in the day or the week when the family commits to coming together for the express purpose of study. The INFORMAL heading is for things that are better suited to being made part of daily life. They can happen "along the road," so to speak, and can be built into the fabric of everyday life.

PLEASE NOTE: Especially for teens, the INFORMAL times of teaching are often far more important. These are the pieces that have a way of becoming the fabric of faith in the life of your family. If you can only do one of the two types of study I would suggest that you make it a point to focus on the INFORMAL opportunities for teaching. Experience and research have shown that these are the sorts of things that are more likely to develop a lasting faith in a person's life (For more on this visit www.stickyfaith.org and check out their resources for parents on developing a faith that sticks).

3. Suggested activities: Students often benefit most from experiential learning. These suggested activities are meant to be ways to engage more tactile senses and the imagination as a way to internalize the teaching for the week. While it might be difficult to do them all, I would recommend picking at least one for your family to do together during a week.
4. We are Christians reading the Old Testament and as such we need to read these passages through Jesus. There are questions throughout to help you do this, but you can also help your family by simply asking, "How does this passage point us to Jesus?"

Week 7: The Covenant with Abraham

Monday: God's covenant promises

FORMAL

Read: Genesis 12:1-9; Genesis 15; Genesis 16:16-17:8

<http://marker.to/KecoUt> (This link will take you to a webpage where I have highlighted the places in Genesis where God makes and revisits his covenant with Abraham starting in Genesis 12)

1. What are the main points of God's covenant with Abraham? What are the obstacles to seeing the promises of God fulfilled?
2. Plot the timeline for these accounts. How old is Abraham when God first approaches him, when Ishmael is born, and when God tells him that Isaac will be born? How would you have felt if you had been this old and had to wait this long to see God fulfill his promise of something as important as a son? Describe a moment when your faith might have wavered.
3. Why is it important for us that Abraham trusted God to fulfill his promise? What do you think God is doing by establishing this covenant with Abraham?

Possible Activity: Make a timeline as a family that tells the story of Abraham from Genesis 12 - 21. Plot out the major stories and include the times and places where God talks to Abraham about the covenant he has made with him. What do you notice about the stories that surround the covenant between God and Abraham? In what ways do you see God at work to actively protect his covenant with Abraham?

INFORMAL

We all live in an immediate access culture, but teens today are even more accustomed to having access to whatever they want when they want it. In this world it can be difficult to imagine waiting an entire year for a promise to be met or fulfilled let alone waiting the 25 years that Abraham had to wait before Isaac was born. Help your teens better understand the importance of faithful patience by creating events in the future that they have to anticipate and wait for, but that calls them to a certain level of commitment in order to get to participate. Maybe it's a special dinner, a trip to Kings Island, or a very special vacation, setting these markers will help them develop more patient hearts. Then be sure to fulfill your end of the bargain and make the promise a reality. This way they will be shown in a small part something of the faithfulness of God to Abraham.

Tuesday: God's Covenant Promises Fulfilled

FORMAL

Read: Genesis 17:1-8; Galatians 3:15-18

1. Paul says in Galatians that Jesus fulfills the promise of blessing to come through Abraham's offspring/seed. Review the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 17. How do you see Jesus fulfill these promises?
2. By connecting Jesus to the promises made to Abraham, Paul draws a line all the way through the Old Testament that connects the beginning of God's people with God's ultimate solution in Jesus. How does this change the way you read the Bible as we continue on the Journey through the Old Testament?

INFORMAL

God's promise to Abraham was that his family would be the blessing for the whole world. Part of what Jesus did in fulfilling this covenant is to open up the family of Abraham to all who would believe. In this way, Christians have traditionally viewed their shared faith as an extended family. Look for ways that you can connect to other families in the church, and use language that shows the importance of such families, so that your teens see the world in terms of an extended family of brothers and sisters made available in Christ.

Wednesday: The Sign of the Covenant

FORMAL

Read: Genesis 17:1-14

1. What is God's requirement of Abraham and his family in order for them to keep the covenant with God?
2. The act of circumcision definitely requires obedience on the part of Abraham and his family members, but it lacks any behavioral stipulations (in others words, God doesn't say, "Here's my covenant, now in order to fulfill your end of the relationship you have to never sin again, be nice to old ladies, and jump in the air and stay there for 20 minutes). What does this teach us about the covenant God that established with Abraham?
3. [Background Bite] Circumcision was not a practice that was unique to the descendants of Abraham. Surrounding cultures already practiced it among the men of their tribes. However, it was often used as a symbol of reaching adulthood or puberty or as a marriage rite. How does the command that circumcision occur when a boy is only 8 days old reshape it for the descendants of Abraham? What sort of impact would it have on the way someone thought about his relationship to God as he grew up? (Remember that in this

situation the circumcision is a sign of the covenant that God has made with Abraham and his family)

INFORMAL

Signs of promises are important, especially when they are relational. Create some sort of sign in your family that your teen can trust means that you will fulfill your promise no matter what. Then, make sure you fulfill your promise no matter what. One of the strongest ways to display the character of God in our own lives is to live up the promises that we make whether to our kids or to anyone else. Teens today are skeptical and believe that pretty much everyone will let them down all the time so if you do your best to always fulfill your word because of who God is, they will have a better handle for understanding the faithfulness of God in their own lives and take seriously the signs of the new covenant (such as baptism) when they participate in them or remember having done so in the past.

Thursday: The Circumcision of the Heart

FORMAL

Read: Genesis 17:1-14; Colossians 2:8-15;

1. How important was circumcision to Abraham and his descendants? In Colossians, how does Paul relate circumcision to Jesus?
2. Compare the symbolism of circumcision to baptism. How are they similar? How are they different? How does the New Testament see baptism as greater than circumcision?

INFORMAL

Do you talk about your baptism ever? Baptism acts as a sign and a remembrance of the commitment we've made to Jesus, but it also acts as a symbol of the new reality found in him. When we look back on our participation in being baptized it should remind us that we now share life with Jesus and that our life should be defined by that reality. When we talk about baptism, share in baptism celebrations with the church, and remember what it was like to be baptized around our teens, we teach them the importance of that moment in our lives and how significant of a day it can or should be for them as well.

Friday: God's Faithfulness: To Abraham and to Ishmael

FORMAL

Read: Genesis 16–17:21; Genesis 21:8-21

1. [Background Bite] In Genesis 16 Sarah offers her maidservant for Abraham to make pregnant so that they might have a son and fulfill God's purposes in their life. This was a common practice in the time of Abraham and Sarah, not something that she simply thought up on her own. Why do you think Sarah might have suggested this option? Where

are you tempted to go the ways of our culture today because it might help fulfill something you believe God might have you to do? (For example, if you believe that you will get married one day, what temptations from the culture might tempt you to make decisions that God would not be pleased with because you think it will ultimately lead to your goal of getting married one day?)

2. What are the results of Ishmael's birth? How does it impact Abraham's family? How does it impact Hagar and Ishmael? How does it impact God's plans?
3. How does God say that he is going to fulfill his promise to Abraham? What does he say he is going to do with Ishmael and his future? What does this say about God's willingness to redeem situations even when we choose to make our own path when he's provided a path for us to follow?

Possible Activity: Find a room or an open space that takes more than a few steps to cross. Set up obstacles in the room and have each person in the family take turns trying to walk through the room from one end to the other while avoiding the obstacles. Have a designated guide who will stand in one spot and give the person directions to avoid the obstacles, while others in the room shout things to try and get the person to run into the obstacles. Once everyone has gone through the room, talk about how this activity is like us trying to hear God's guidance among the voices and ideas around us. Talk about ways that you as a family can better hear God's voice in your life.

INFORMAL

About mistakes. As parents we are terrified of mistakes in our kids lives because we know the pain that they often cause, especially when the mistakes take the form of deliberate sins. Mistakes and bad choices, however, are bound to happen as teens search for their independence and the teaching opportunity comes in how we deal with them. Spend time praying about how you can be an agent of reconciliation and redemption when your teens blow it. This does not bypass the consequences of poor decisions, but it does mean that these consequences not be made more severe by a broken relationship or that the teen will be defined by their mistakes, but instead will always be defined as a person loved and redeemed by God.

Saturday: The Redemption of Evil

FORMAL

Read: John 19

1. At Jesus' crucifixion, everyone thought it was over. Imagine what people must have been thinking when he died. What did the Jewish leaders think? How about Pilate? Imagine what it must have been like to be satan at that moment? Did he expect that he had just

won an enormous victory? What would it have been like to face the pain of the crucifixion as one of Jesus' disciples?

2. God's plan could not be defeated even by the horror of the cross. How did he overcome the cross and ultimately use it for his glory and his victory? What does it tell us about following Jesus if God is even able to overcome the crucifixion?

INFORMAL

The resurrection of Jesus is God's greatest act of victory in history. It offers us life and the promise of eternal hope to come in God's new creation. It also serves to encourage us that in the face of pain and evil and suffering in this world nothing, not even death, can overcome God. How then can you react to situations in everyday life in order to glorify God? The financial crunch, the lost job, the diagnosis, the tragedy. The way we react to these things in life tell our teens a lot about what we truly believe God is capable of doing, and a lot about whether we really believe that God is even capable of raising someone from the dead.