

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (March 19, 2023)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

This morning we continue in our 2023 series of sermons based out of the book of Genesis (the first book in the Bible). This week we are asking the question, "What does it mean to believe?"

Abram did not seek God, God sought him. Abram did not make promises to God, God made promises to him. Even leaving Ur, was not Abram's idea, and we discover here it wasn't ultimately his father either, the call to leave Ur came from the Lord (verse 7).

Life requires trust. We trust certain people, and the promises they make. And then, more often than we want, those promises are broken and we're left to pick up the pieces and begin again. But when we find someone who keeps their promises, we gain confidence and our life is better, even if it's not easy. God made promises to Abram. Would Abram trust God, even when things seemed out of his control? There comes a time when we realize we cannot control our lives, or the lives of others. It's then we ask, "who can I trust to keep their promises when my life is out of control"? What will it take for you, for us, for our church, to trust God, to believe He keeps His promises?

God's Promise to Abram ... Abram's Response (Genesis 15:1-21)

^{15:1} 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.' ² 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?' ³ And Abram said, 'Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.' ⁴ 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.' ⁵ 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.' ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

⁷ And he said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.' ⁸ But he said, 'O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?' ⁹ He said to him, 'Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then

the Lord said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.' ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.'

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Gergashites and the Jebusites.'

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What does this passage tell us about Abram? About God?
2. What promises did God make to Abram in these verses?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. Abram is even older here than in chapter 12 when God made His first promises. How would you describe Abram's faith?
4. What did God mean when He asked Abram to, "number the stars ... so shall your offspring be"? Would you believe that?
5. What does, "... the Lord made a covenant with Abram" mean?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

6. What did you want to be when you were 10 years old?
7. Do you believe God speaks through dreams? Explain. What does the Bible say about this? Joseph's dreams?
8. How can you know it is God speaking to you in a dream?
9. How difficult is it for you to believe God? Explain?
10. Do you feel you are in control of your life? Discuss with others, or spend time praying and reflecting on this.
11. When your life is not going as you planned, when trouble and unanswered prayers are plenty, who do you trust, and why?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God, and God talking to you. Ask God to help you believe. Ask God to help you give up your illusion of control and trust Him. God will increase your faith and He will keep the promises He's made, because He loves you.