

The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: The Call of Abram

Genesis 11:10–12:20

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

With the call of Abram, Genesis turns from the story of the whole world to the story of God's chosen instrument of worldwide blessing, and the rest of the Bible flows from this moment. Doctrinally, this lesson establishes God's gracious initiative in salvation (He sought and called Abram, not the reverse), the nature of saving faith as trust that obeys, the threefold promise of land, descendants, and blessing to all nations, and, crucially, the goal of that promise: the gospel itself, in which all the families of the earth are blessed in Christ. Paul says God 'preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham' in these very words (Galatians 3:8).

Two doctrinal guardrails matter here and through the Abraham lessons. First, present God's choosing of Abram rightly: it was a sovereign, gracious call to a covenant purpose, that through him all nations would be blessed, not the unconditional individual election to salvation taught by Calvinism. The call is real, and Abram genuinely responds in faith and obedience. Second, begin laying the foundation for how the promises are fulfilled. The New Testament teaches that the true 'offspring' of Abraham is Christ (Galatians 3:16), that those who belong to Christ (the church, from every nation) are Abraham's heirs (Galatians 3:29), and that Abraham himself looked beyond the earthly land to a heavenly city (Hebrews 11:10, 16). Guard against premillennial and dispensational readings that make the land promise await a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel.

Formationally, Abram is the Bible's great model of faith. The aim is to call students to a faith that leaves the familiar, follows into the unknown, worships along the way, and trusts God's promises, while being honest, through Abram's failure in Egypt, that even great faith falters and that God remains faithful when we do not. Send students home ready to take their own next step of trust.

Question 1

Student Question:

In the call of Abram, God promises to make him a great nation, to bless him, to make his name great, and to bless all the families of the earth through him (12:1–3). What does this promise reveal about God's plan to rescue and bless the whole world, and how does Galatians 3:8 say it points to the gospel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The call of Abram in 12:1–3 is one of the hinge texts of the entire Bible. After eleven chapters of a world unraveling, God launches His plan of redemption through one man and one promise. Everything that follows, the nation of Israel, the line of David, the coming of Christ, the gathering of the church, traces back to these verses.

Notice the structure of the promise: a great nation, personal blessing, a great name, and then the climactic purpose, 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' The blessing is not meant to terminate on Abram; it flows through him to the whole world. God blesses Abram so that Abram becomes a channel of blessing to all peoples.

Paul tells us how to read this. He says, 'the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed' (Galatians 3:8). The promise to Abram is, in seed form, the gospel itself. The blessing of all nations is fulfilled when people of every nation are justified by faith and brought into God's family through Christ.

Set this against Babel, just covered. There, humanity tried to make a name for itself and was scattered. Here, God promises to make Abram's name great and, through him, to bless the scattered nations. What human pride could not achieve, divine grace will accomplish, gathering the nations not into a tower but into the family of faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The call of Abram as the launching of God's plan of worldwide redemption.
- The promise structured to flow through Abram to bless all nations.
- The promise as the gospel preached beforehand (Galatians 3:8).
- God's grace gathering the nations, reversing the scattering of Babel.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the call of Abram such a turning point in the Bible's story?
- How is the promise to bless 'all the families of the earth' fulfilled in the gospel?
- How does God's plan with Abram answer the scattering of Babel?

Question 2

Student Question:

God called Abram to leave behind everything familiar and secure and to follow Him into the unknown. Where is God calling you to let go of something familiar, comfortable, or safe in order to follow Him more fully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns Abram's call into a personal challenge. God asked Abram to leave country, kindred, and father's house, the three great sources of identity and security in the ancient

world. To follow God, Abram had to release his grip on everything that made him feel safe and known.

Help students see that following God almost always involves some leaving. It may not be a literal move, but it is a letting go: of a comfortable routine, a cherished plan, a relationship that pulls us from God, a security we have trusted instead of Him. Faith has a cost; it asks us to open our hands.

Be careful and pastoral. The point is not that every believer must make a dramatic break, but that all of us must hold our securities loosely and be ready to follow God when He calls us forward. The question is whether there is anything we are clutching so tightly that we would refuse God to keep it.

Invite students to name the specific thing. What familiar, comfortable, or safe thing might God be asking them to release in order to follow Him more fully? Naming it is the first step toward obedience.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Following God as involving a letting go of our securities.
- Identity and security rightly found in God, not in the familiar.
- Holding our comforts and plans with open hands.
- Discerning what we might be clutching that competes with following God.

Discussion Prompts

- What familiar or comfortable thing might God be asking you to release?
- Why does following God so often require some kind of leaving?
- What makes it hard to open your hands, and what would help?

Question 3

Student Question:

Hebrews 11:8 says, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called... and he went out, not knowing where he was going." What does Abram's example teach us about the nature of true faith, and about the relationship between believing God and obeying Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Hebrews 11:8 gives us the inside view of Abram's obedience: 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called... and he went out, not knowing where he was going.' This is one of the clearest definitions of faith in action in all of Scripture. Faith is trust in God that expresses itself in obedience, even without full information.

Draw out the relationship between believing and obeying. Abram's faith was not a private feeling that left his life unchanged; it got up, packed, and walked toward an unnamed land. Real faith always has feet. As James says, faith without works is dead (James 2:17), and Abram is the great example of faith that obeys.

Note especially the phrase 'not knowing where he was going.' Faith does not require knowing the whole plan; it requires knowing the One who does. Abram did not have a map; he had a promise and a Promise-Maker, and that was enough to take the first step.

Help students see that this is the normal shape of the life of faith. God rarely shows us the whole road. He gives us enough light for the next step and asks us to trust Him for the rest. Faith walks in obedience while the path is still unfolding.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith as trust in God expressed in obedience (Hebrews 11:8).
- The inseparable link between believing and obeying (James 2:17).
- Faith that acts without requiring the whole plan in advance.
- Knowing the Promise-Maker as enough to take the next step.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Hebrews 11:8 define faith through Abram's example?
- Why is obedience inseparable from genuine faith?
- What does it mean to obey 'not knowing where you are going'?

Question 4

Student Question:

Following God often means trusting Him with an unknown future rather than demanding to see the whole path first. Where are you struggling to trust God with what you cannot yet see, and what helps you take the next step anyway?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the matter of trusting God with an unknown future. We want certainty; we want to see the whole path before we commit. But God usually calls us to trust Him one step at a time, withholding the full picture so that we will lean on Him rather than on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6).

Help students locate their specific struggle. Perhaps it is a decision about the future, a fear about provision, a relationship, a health concern, a calling they sense but cannot see clearly. The unknown breeds anxiety, and anxiety tempts us to either freeze or to seize control.

Offer the resource that made Abram's obedience possible: the character of God. We can step into an unknown future when we are convinced the One who holds it is good, wise, and faithful. We do not know what is coming, but we know Who is coming with us.

Invite the next step. Faith is not the absence of uncertainty; it is obedience in the midst of it. Ask each student what next step of trust God is calling them to take, even without seeing the whole road, and what would help them take it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Trusting God with an unknown future rather than demanding full certainty.
- Leaning on God rather than our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- Anxiety's tempting us to freeze or to seize control.
- The character of God as the ground for stepping into the unknown.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you struggling to trust God with what you cannot yet see?
- How does knowing God's character help you step into the unknown?
- What is the next step of trust God is asking of you?

Question 5

Student Question:

Abram did not seek God; God chose and called Abram, a man from a family that served other gods (Joshua 24:2). What does this reveal about God's gracious initiative in salvation, and about His purpose in choosing Abram, to bless all nations through him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Genesis is careful to show that God took the initiative. Abram did not go searching for the true God; he came from a family that 'served other gods' beyond the River (Joshua 24:2). Out of an idolatrous background, God sought him, called him, and made him promises. Salvation begins with God's gracious move toward us, not our move toward Him.

This is the consistent biblical pattern: 'We love because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19). Before we seek God, He seeks us. Abram's story magnifies grace; there was nothing in his religious pedigree to recommend him. God chose to bless him, and through him the world.

Teach the nature of this choosing with care. God's call of Abram was a sovereign, gracious election to a purpose: through Abram and his line, all nations would be blessed, leading to Christ. It is not the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional individual election to salvation, in which God secretly selects some for heaven and passes over the rest. God chose Abram for a mission of universal blessing, and the call genuinely invited Abram's response of faith, which he gave.

Help students hold both truths: God's initiative is primary (we are saved by grace, not by our own seeking), and the human response is real (Abram believed and obeyed). Grace does not cancel response; it enables it. The gospel call goes out to all, and all are genuinely able to answer.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's gracious initiative: He sought and called Abram first (Joshua 24:2; 1 John 4:19).
- Salvation beginning with God's move toward us, magnifying grace.
- Election to a covenant purpose (blessing all nations), not Calvinistic unconditional individual election.
- Grace as primary, and the human response of faith as real and genuine.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Abram's idolatrous background reveal about God's grace?
- How is God's choosing of Abram a call to purpose, not an unconditional decree of who will be saved?
- How do God's initiative and our response fit together?

Question 6

Student Question:

Along the way Abram built altars and "called upon the name of the Lord" (12:7-8), worshiping the God who had called him. What part does worship play in a life of following God, and how does worship sustain us as we journey through unfamiliar territory?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

As Abram journeys through the land, he repeatedly builds altars and 'calls upon the name of the Lord' (12:7-8). Worship punctuates his pilgrimage. At Shechem, at Bethel, wherever God appears or leads, Abram responds by worshiping. His life of faith is also a life of worship.

Help students see that worship is not an interruption of the journey but its sustaining rhythm. Abram was a sojourner with no settled home, surrounded by Canaanite peoples and their gods, and his altars marked out a life centered on the true God. Worship anchored him.

Draw the application. As we follow God through unfamiliar and often difficult territory, worship keeps our hearts oriented. It reminds us who God is and what He has promised; it lifts our eyes from our circumstances to the One who called us. A life of following God without worship soon drifts.

Note too that Abram's altars were public, visible declarations in a pagan land. Our worship, gathered with God's people on the Lord's Day and lived out daily, is likewise a testimony in a

watching world. Encourage students to consider how worship sustains and marks their own pilgrimage.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Worship as the sustaining rhythm of a life of following God.
- Worship anchoring the sojourner amid a hostile or indifferent culture.
- Worship orienting the heart from circumstances to God's character and promises.
- Worship as a public testimony in a watching world.

Discussion Prompts

- What role does worship play in sustaining a life of faith?
- How does worship keep our hearts oriented through hard seasons?
- How is your worship a testimony to those around you?

Question 7

Student Question:

When famine came, Abram, the great man of faith, gave in to fear and told a half-truth about his wife to protect himself, and yet God still protected him and his family (12:10–20). What does this teach us about human weakness, the danger of fear, and the faithfulness of God even when His people fail?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question deals honestly with Abram's failure. When famine struck, the man of great faith went down to Egypt and, fearing for his life, told a half-truth: he had Sarai say she was his sister (she was his half-sister, but the deception concealed that she was his wife) so that the Egyptians would not kill him to take her. Fear overrode faith, and Abram put his wife and God's promise at risk to save himself.

Be honest about the failure without excusing it. The same Abram who obeyed God's call here schemes out of fear. This is a sober reminder that even the greatest saints are not beyond stumbling, and that faith is not a permanent possession but a daily dependence. One day's obedience does not guarantee the next.

Yet notice the deeper theme: God's faithfulness when His servant fails. God intervenes, protects Sarai, and even brings Abram out of Egypt enriched, despite his scheming. God's promise does not depend on Abram's perfection; it rests on God's own faithfulness. This is grace, and it is the only reason any of us can hope.

Help students hold both lessons. The danger of fear is real; it can lead even believers into compromise and harm. And the faithfulness of God is greater; He preserves His purposes and

His people even through their failures. We are called to faith, and when we fail, we are met by grace.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even great faith can falter; no believer is beyond stumbling.
- Fear as a powerful driver of compromise and deception.
- Faith as daily dependence, not a permanent possession.
- God's faithfulness preserving His promise despite His servant's failure.

Discussion Prompts

- How could the man of such great faith fall into fear and deception?
- What does this teach us about the ongoing nature of faith?
- How is God's faithfulness shown even in Abram's failure?

Question 8

Student Question:

Where does fear most tempt you to compromise, to shade the truth, cut a corner, or take matters into your own hands rather than trust God? What would faith look like in that exact situation instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question brings Abram's fear-driven compromise into the student's own life. Fear is one of the most common engines of sin. It tempts us to shade the truth, cut corners, manipulate, hide, or take control, all to protect ourselves from a feared outcome.

Help students trace their own pattern. What do they fear losing, safety, reputation, money, approval, comfort, and what compromises does that fear tempt them toward? Often our 'small' dishonesties and self-protective maneuvers are, like Abram's, attempts to secure ourselves rather than trust God.

Offer the alternative faith provides. Abram feared death and lied; faith would have trusted the God who had just promised to make him a great nation (which required keeping him alive). When we are gripped by fear, the antidote is to recall who God is and what He has promised, and to do the right thing trusting Him with the outcome.

Invite a concrete reckoning: the specific situation where fear most tempts the student to compromise, and what faith would look like there instead, the honest word, the uncut corner, the relinquished control.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Fear as a common engine of sin and compromise.
- Self-protection versus trusting God with the outcome.
- Recalling God's character and promises as the antidote to fear.
- Doing right and trusting God with the result.

Discussion Prompts

- Where does fear most tempt you to compromise or cut a corner?
- What are you afraid of losing in that situation?
- What would trusting God look like there instead?

Question 9

Student Question:

God promised Abram land, descendants, and blessing to all nations. According to the New Testament, who is the true "offspring" of Abraham, and how are these promises ultimately fulfilled (Galatians 3:16, 26–29; Hebrews 11:9–10, 16)? Why is it important not to reduce these promises to a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson and a foundation for the whole Abraham cycle, so teach it carefully. God promised Abram three things: land, descendants, and blessing to all nations. The pressing question is to whom and how these promises are ultimately fulfilled, and here the New Testament is our authoritative guide.

Start with the 'offspring' or 'seed.' Paul makes a precise argument in Galatians 3:16: 'Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, And to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, And to your offspring, who is Christ.' The true Seed of Abraham, in whom all the promises converge, is Jesus Christ. The promise was always heading toward Him.

Then see who shares in the inheritance. Paul continues: 'if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise' (Galatians 3:29), and 'in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith' (Galatians 3:26). The true children of Abraham are not defined by physical descent but by faith in Christ, and they come from every nation. The blessing to 'all the families of the earth' is fulfilled as people of every nation are justified by faith and made Abraham's heirs in Christ.

Now address the land promise directly, because this is where premillennial and dispensational systems go astray. They teach that the land promise still awaits a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel. But Scripture points elsewhere. The Old Testament itself records that God gave Israel the land He promised (Joshua 21:43–45). And Hebrews tells us that Abraham himself was not ultimately looking for an earthly plot; he 'was looking forward to the

city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God, 'a 'better country, that is, a heavenly one' (Hebrews 11:10, 16). The land was a real, historical gift and also a pointer to the greater inheritance God's people receive in Christ, ultimately the new heavens and new earth.

Help students grasp why this matters. To reduce these promises to a future political nation-state is to look backward to shadows when the substance has come in Christ (Colossians 2:17). The promises are not diminished by being fulfilled in Christ and His church; they are gloriously enlarged, reaching every nation and a heavenly homeland that cannot be shaken. Teach this confidently, and keep students' hope fixed on Christ and the inheritance He secures, not on earthly political schemes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The true 'offspring' (seed) of Abraham is Christ, in whom the promises converge (Galatians 3:16).
- Those who belong to Christ, from every nation, are Abraham's heirs by faith (Galatians 3:26–29).
- The blessing to all nations fulfilled as people of every nation are justified by faith in Christ.
- The land promise historically given to Israel (Joshua 21:43–45) and pointing to a heavenly inheritance (Hebrews 11:10, 16).
- Guarding against premillennial and dispensational readings that await an earthly, political restoration of national Israel.
- The promises enlarged, not diminished, by their fulfillment in Christ and His church.

Discussion Prompts

- According to Galatians 3:16, who is the true 'offspring' of Abraham?
- Who, then, are Abraham's heirs, and how do they become so?
- Why is it a mistake to reduce the land promise to a future political nation?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole passage. Name one specific way God is calling you to a faith like Abram's, a faith that leaves, that follows, that worships, and that trusts His promises even when the path is unclear.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this capstone to call students to Abram's kind of faith. The passage has shown faith that leaves the familiar, follows into the unknown, worships along the way, and trusts God's promises, and it has shown, in the Egypt episode, that even such faith falters and is met by grace. The question now is personal: what is God forming in me?

Press for the specific. For one student it is a leaving God is calling them to; for another, a next step of trust into an unknown future; for another, a worship that has grown thin; for another, the fear-driven compromise they need to surrender. Ask each to name one.

Close with Christ, the true Seed. Abram's whole journey was heading toward Jesus, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, including us. To be formed by this passage is to follow the God who called Abram, trusting His promises, knowing that those promises find their yes in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20), and that in Him we too are children of Abraham and heirs of a city whose builder is God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Abram's faith: leaving, following, worshiping, and trusting God's promises.
- Honesty that even great faith falters and is met by grace.
- All the promises finding their 'yes' in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20).
- Believers as children of Abraham and heirs of the heavenly city.

Discussion Prompts

- Which aspect of Abram's faith is God pressing on you?
- What concrete next step of trust is He calling you to take?
- How does it encourage you that all God's promises are 'yes' in Christ?