

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 9: The Call of Abram -- Genesis 11:10–12:20

Up to now, Genesis has told the story of the whole world: creation, the fall, the flood, the nations scattered at Babel. It has been a story sliding downward, sin spreading, judgment falling, humanity drifting from God. And then, at the end of chapter eleven, the camera narrows to a single family in a city called Ur, and to one aging, childless man named Abram. The world does not know it yet, but everything is about to change. God is going to start His rescue of the whole human race through one person.

And so comes the call, and it is breathtaking in what it asks: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” Leave everything that defines you, your homeland, your relatives, your security, your past, and go. Where? “To the land that I will show you.” Not a land God names, just a direction and a promise. Abram is asked to trade everything he can see for a God he cannot see, on the strength of a word.

But notice what God attaches to the command. Seven times in three verses He says “I will”: I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. And then the line that opens up the whole Bible: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Remember Babel, where people tried to make a name for themselves and were scattered? Here God promises to make Abram’s name great and, through him, to gather and bless all those scattered families. This single promise is the seed from which the gospel itself will grow.

And Abram goes. Hebrews says he “obeyed and went out, not knowing where he was going.” He builds altars along the way and calls on the name of the Lord, a sojourner trusting an unseen God. He is not perfect; before the chapter ends, a famine and his own fear will lead him into a shameful half-truth in Egypt, and God will have to rescue him from the mess he makes. But the great thing has begun. God has found His man, made His promise, and set in motion the plan that leads, across two thousand years, straight to Jesus Christ, the true Offspring of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth are blessed. Read this passage and listen, because the God who called Abram still calls, and He is still asking people to trade what they can see for what He has promised.

Group Discussion: God told Abram to leave his country, his relatives, and his father’s house and go to a land he had never seen (12:1). What would have made that call so hard, and what do you think it took for Abram to actually go? Where might God be asking you to step out in trust?

Personal Reflection: God’s promise to Abram ended with the words, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12:3). Abram’s call was never just about Abram; God blessed him so that he would be a blessing to others. How might God want to bless others through you, and are you living as a blessing or mainly for yourself?

Read Genesis 11:10–12:20

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Galatians 3:6-9, 16, 26-29, the gospel promised to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ and all who are His; Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16, Abraham looking for the city whose designer and builder is God; Romans 4:18-21, Abraham in hope believing against hope; Joshua 24:2-3, God taking Abraham from beyond the River where his fathers served other gods; Acts 7:2-5, Stephen recounting the call of Abram.