

GENESIS Why The Beginning Matters

Study 11

The Abrahamic Covenant: When God Calls

Genesis 12-13

Recap

Genesis 1-11 is where God calls Creation into being, whereas in Genesis 12-50 God calls New Creation into being.

Humanity's failure	God's Blessing
The Fall (Gen 3)	Promise of a seed (Gen 3:15)
The Flood (Gen 6-8)	Promise of God dwelling in Shem's tent (Gen 9:25-27)
Babel and table of nations (Gen 10-11)	Promise of worldwide blessing (Gen 12:1-3)

Part 1 of 3: The Nature of the Call

Genesis 12:1 (ESV)

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

1) a) Discussion question. Compare Genesis 12:1-3 with Genesis 11:31 and Acts 7:2, was God's calling personal or a coincidence?

Quick Verse Reference

Genesis 11:31

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.

Acts 7:2

To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran.



b) Reflection and a discussion question. Which category do you think you fall in, in your work (paid/unpaid)? Do you think this framework is suitable to assess whether you are called or not?

c) Reflection question. The word church is called “*Ekklesia*” which is a combination of the word “*Ek*” which means “out of or from” and “*Kaleo*” which means “call”. We as Christians are called out from the world to God and to Christ. Read Phil 3:12-14 the background information below and share your personal journey in this calling.

Background information

Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere. - Os Guinness

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and

straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Part 2 of 3: The Promise of the Call

Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

2) a) Objective question. Select all that apply. What were the promises that God made to Abraham according to the video lecture?

- A. Great Land
- B. Great Nation
- C. Great Wives
- D. Great Kids
- E. Great Servants
- F. Great Camels
- G. Great Houses
- H. Great Career
- I. Great Blessings

b) Discussion question. Galatians 3:7-9 say that Gentile Christians like us will inherit the blessings promised to Abraham based on Genesis 12:1-3. What are the promises that we Christians receive?

c) Discussion question. Is the promise to Abraham conditional or unconditional? (Refer to Phil 2:1-13)

Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Part 3 of 3: The Challenge of the Call

3) Fill in the blanks. The calling was not an easy task like going on a vacation, it was a journey with challenges. According to the video lecture slide, fill in the blanks on what Abraham and Christians had to leave behind and what they had to embrace.

Leave	Embrace (Abraham)	Embrace (Christians)

Background information

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Acts 7:5

He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child.

Luke 14:25-28

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Genesis 12:10-13

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you

are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

4) Discussion question. Based on the video lecture and Genesis 12:10-13, what were the challenges Abraham faced?

Genesis 12:16

He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

Genesis 13:1-2

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

5) Reflection question. Despite Abraham's mistake and choosing to lie, God still blessed Abraham. Share of times and situations in your life where God has spared you from a bad consequence of sin you deserve.

Genesis 13:7

And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

Genesis 13:14-18

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."

So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.

6) Reflection question. Despite so many challenges and even conflicts about the land, Abram built an altar after God made a promise to him on the land, recognizing God's intervention in his life. Although Christians, we are all susceptible to forget God's promise to us. How should we remind ourselves and each other of God's promises and recommit our lives to God despite the challenges in the journey to holiness and God?

Take Away

Part 1 of 3: The Nature of the Call
Part 2 of 3: The Promise of the Call
Part 3 of 3: The Challenge of the Call

a. Belonging	But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession
b. Purpose	that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
c. Story telling	Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
d. Transcendence	Extends from now to eternity

1 Peter 2:9-10

Case Study

Case 1 – Promises Out of Context

Frank Tandy loved going to his church for the past 5 years. He used to be a struggling Remisier but since attending the church, his business had turned around. He was taught to claim the promises of God and he loved the verse Genesis 12:2 – “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”.

It is clearly stated here that Abraham would have great blessings. As children of Abraham who believe in God as Abraham did, he would reap the same benefits. He started expanding his business to various states and taking out huge loans.

1) a) Discussion question. Can you discuss the verse and explain how you would counsel Frank?

b) Discussion question. How does the call of Abraham teach us about our own call to His missions?

c) Discussion question. How is our calling similar to Abraham's?

d) Discussion question. Share how you too had to leave your culture to answer His call.

Case 2 – Culture

Harbinderjeet Kaur is the CEO of a large accounting firm that is very busy. She is also the major shareholder. During an evangelistic meeting, she came to faith in Jesus. The speaker challenged her to step out in faith to trust God and she did.

She attended church regularly and went to a Life Group to be a disciple. However, her life group leader shared how when Jesus calls anyone He calls them to leave their own culture and take upon themselves a Christlike culture.

The culture at her work is to do some creative magic for the accounts of certain high-net-worth firms in order to keep their business.

2) a) Discussion question. How can Harbinderjeet Kaur display a Christlike culture at her workplace?

b) Discussion question. Consider Abraham’s call by God to go into a land that God will show to him. What culture did he leave?

c) Discussion question. Consider Daniel in Daniel chapter 1 and chapter 6. In wanting to honor the Lord, he did not succumb to the pressures of the culture surrounding him. What cultures did Daniel stand up against in these 2 instances?

Case 3 – Flippancy towards Sin

Harriet and Henry were a Christian couple (deacons) who were driving down the Federal Highway one day when they were unceremoniously pulled over by a highway patrol officer for speeding. Harriet was doing 75km/h at a 50km/h zone and she was going to get a speeding ticket and points taken off.

She immediately reached for her pocket and dangled an RM50 note before the officer who snapped it up like a hungry shark and promptly drove away. Henry was upset and embarrassed that his wife would do this. They argued about it. They had little money to pay the RM300 fine and that “this was the only way”, said Harriet. She added that if Henry was a better provider then she would not have to be forced to pay the officer off. It was all his fault.

She added that the beauty of Christianity was the grace Jesus shows all of us. She would

quickly say a prayer for forgiveness and rely on the grace of Jesus. She never gave the matter a second thought. She continues to be active in the church. Henry was not so quick to feel at ease, he felt it was a sin and they should not have done it. He grieved over the matter. He could not bring himself to confess the sin of omission as he did nothing to stop his wife from bribing the officer at the time. He stewed over the matter for months and could not accept that Jesus could forgive him nor could he even forgive himself. He does not want to go to church anymore

3) a) Discussion question. Who has the right attitude toward the failure of sin in this case, and why?

b) Discussion question. What is the right attitude to failure in our walk of faith? What are the pitfalls of failure?

Case 4 – Israel

Daniel was attending a talk in which some Jewish people were selling bonds in order to raise money to help the Israeli government build more and more settlements which would cruelly displace more Palestinians as they would first raze their settlements to the ground. The church leader supported this and said that God's covenant with Israel meant that God would never abandon Israel and that our money would be His way of preserving Israel. Daniel was troubled.

4) a) Discussion question. If you are Daniel, should you help and buy the bonds?

b) Discussion question. Does this mean that Israel will not be judged since they are God's chosen people?

c) Discussion question. How is the covenant a source of comfort and the basis of faithful living

Case 5 – Faith

We are called to live by faith and not by sight. It is easy for us to fall prey to what we see before our physical eyes but we tend to forget that our home is in heaven (a city not made with hands) and not on this earth.

Just like Abraham, we are called to go out into a land that God will show us. And just like Abraham, we are leaving the comforts of this earth for a heavenly possession.

5) a) Discussion question. Abraham sojourned in tents instead of the comfort of a permanent home. How are we (as sojourners) similar to Abraham? Refer to 1 Peter 2:11.

b) Discussion question. Abraham followed the Lord personally (not because of his friends or family). How do we follow the Lord personally?

c) Discussion question. Abraham followed the Lord unconditionally (not knowing where he will be going). How do we follow the Lord unconditionally?

d) Discussion question. Abraham followed the Lord by trusting in His grace. What does it mean to trust in God's grace?

e) Discussion question. Abraham found his security in the Lord, not in his wealth, in his class, in his country, or in his culture. How do we find our security in God?