

Scripture Text

Genesis 16-21

Context

In Genesis 12-15 God calls Abram to leave his home and go to a land God will show him. Abram obeys God by his faith, and begins to see evidence of God's promise worked out. God confirms His word by cutting a covenant with Abram in Genesis 15.

Observation and Meaning

1. Why do Abram and Sarai choose to try to fulfil God's promises through Abram's female servant? What is the result of this action?
2. Despite Abraham's failure in Ch 16, God elaborates on the covenant in Ch 17. What further details is Abraham given at this stage?
3. How does circumcision relate to this covenant? What point does Paul make about the order of circumcision and faith from this text in Romans 4.9-12?
4. How does Sarah respond to the word of the Lord in Ch 18, and how does God's response to her show us?
5. How does God's intervention in Ch 20 protect the certainty of the paternity of Isaac, born in Ch 20? Why is this important?
6. What does the birth of Isaac tell us about the faithfulness of God, and ability to accomplish His Word?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Big Idea

Despite the self reliance, unbelief, compromise, and fear of man that Abraham, Sarah and Lot display, God remains faithful to His promises. Nothing is too hard for the Lord!

Connecting to the Bible's storyline

God is intent of redeeming the world, and makes a promise to this effect. The promise does not depend on perfect obedience, but rather faith in the goodness of God. God redemption of the world climaxes in His goodness shown in Christ's death and resurrection, that we likewise trust in.

Application

1. How does Hebrews 6.12 say that we inherit God's promises? In what areas does your impatience lead to self reliance?
2. What is the covenant God has made with you (see Hebrews 8.8-12). What is the external sign of your faith in Him, and have you received this sign?
3. Which of God's promises do you find hardest to believe? How does this passage encourage you in your faith?
4. How does Lot's life serve as a warning to you regarding compromise? In what areas of your life do you need to turn back to God?
5. Where is fear of man leading you to act in a way that dishonours God's promises? How do you think God wants you to rather respond?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.