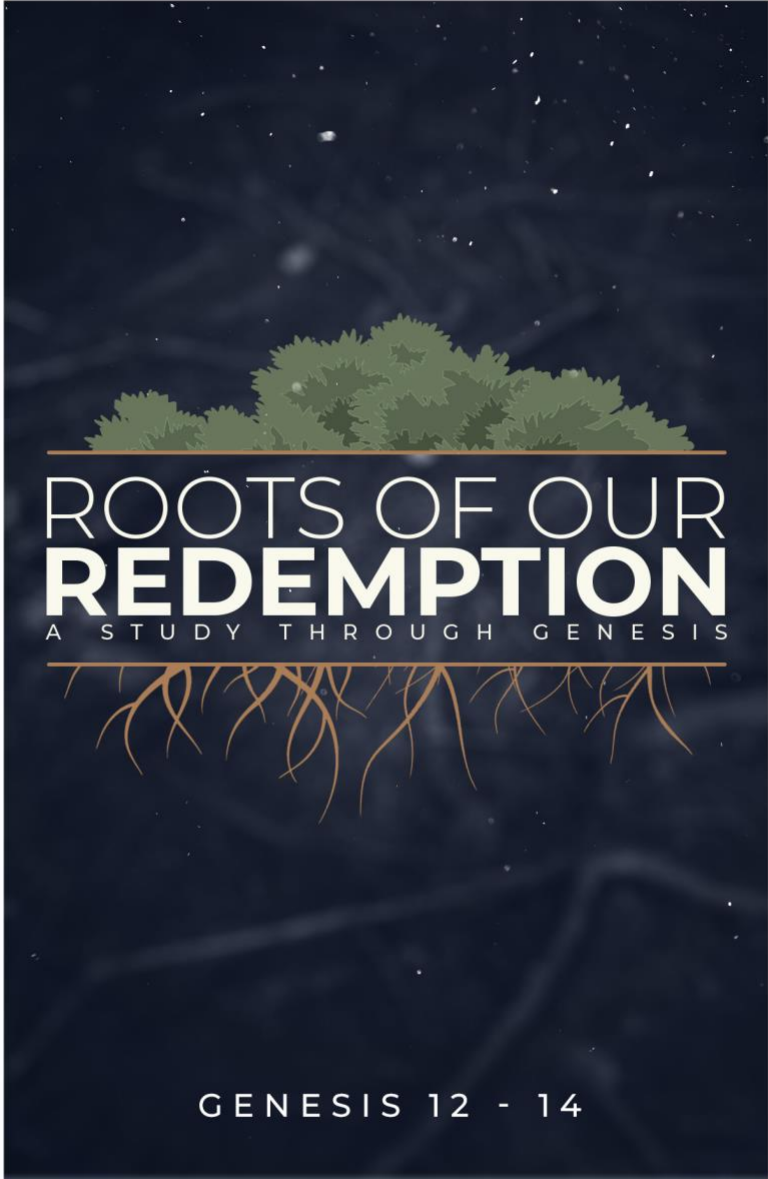


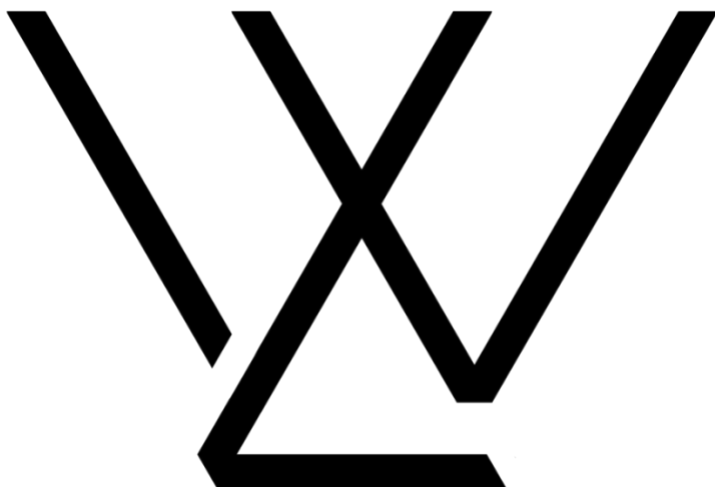


WORD TO LIFE

WEEKS 1 - 5







**Word to Life's** are sermon-aligned study guides, created to help the church dive even deeper into the passages we study together on Sundays.

Each week there will be five studies to help you prepare for the upcoming weekend sermon. This will also be a great discussion tool at your next LifeGroup meeting.

We hope you enjoy and grow deeper in your faith!

### **Contributors**

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- **Activity:** The theme of offspring is not just significant in Genesis, but in all of Scripture. Read the texts below through the lens of Genesis 12:1-9 and write down what you notice.
  - Galatians 3:16
  - Acts 3:17-26
  - Romans 4:13-25
  
- **Activity:** In your own words, summarize vv. 4-9.

## Week 1: Genesis 12:1-9

### Day 2: Living as Those Who Have Been Sent

**READ: Genesis 12:1-9**

#### **EXPLORE:**

God's calling of Abram doesn't just lay a foundation for the remaining portions of Genesis; it continues to pave the path upon which the whole biblical story unfolds. In a few simple but profound verses, we are reminded of God's attributes and their influence on people who encounter them. Most notably, we encounter how the God of creation calls and commissions people for His purposes. Let's take a closer look at the example of Abram and ask the Lord to help us see how it applies to our lives today.

In no uncertain terms, God instructed Abram to go out from his homeland toward a place that was yet to be revealed. This command came with a promise from God to give Abram land, offspring, and blessing. Although God's commissioning of Abram turns the page in a decisive way, the transition should not be necessarily surprising to us. God giving people commands to go are all over the Scriptures.

After the serpent tricked Eve and Adam in the garden, it was punished by God and it was commanded to *go out* of the garden in disgrace.<sup>1</sup> After Cain killed Abel, God dismissed him to *go away* on the earth as a fugitive and a wanderer.<sup>2</sup> In stark contrast to these negative dismissals, Noah was commanded to *go out* from the ark on dry land.<sup>3</sup> Whether in banishment or commissioning, Genesis clearly establishes God as one who sends people. This is especially visible in Abram's example.

In a later summary of Abram's call, the author of Hebrews wrote, "*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where*

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis 3:14 for reference.

<sup>2</sup> See Genesis 4:12 for reference.

<sup>3</sup> See Genesis 8:16 for reference.



*he was going.*"<sup>4</sup> Abram's obedience embodies a fundamental truth that the people throughout time have been called to embrace. If God is indeed a sending God then His people ought to be a going people. It is that simple. God's people are identified many times as sojourners, exiles, ambassadors, and pilgrims.

This brief excerpt of Abram's life makes a few things abundantly clear. First, we can embrace a lifestyle of ones who have been sent because God's commission to us is abundantly and sufficiently clear.<sup>5</sup> Second, we can embrace a "sent" mentality because the promises of God are sure.<sup>6</sup> Finally, we can embrace a "sent" mentality because of the certainty of God's presence along the way.<sup>7</sup> The true question and challenge from this text is not about whether we have a sending God, but about whether we are responding to His call as a going people.

**BIG IDEA: The God of Scripture clearly and compellingly sends His people. Our response is to obediently and worshipfully go when we are called.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** When in your life have you heard and heeded a calling from God to go or to remain steadfast and stay? Has there been a time when you tried to refuse when you were called by God?
- **Activity:** Today's study highlighted the clarity of God's commissioning, the certainty of His promises, and the nearness of His presence as critical factors in obeying the call of God. Read Psalm 105:12-15 and reflect on God's promise to a sojourning people.

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<sup>4</sup> See Hebrews 11:8 for reference. Abram is later renamed Abraham by God in Genesis 17.

<sup>5</sup> See Genesis 12:1 and Matthew 28:18-20 for reference to this concept.

<sup>6</sup> See Genesis 12:2-3 and Matthew 19:29 for reference to this concept.

<sup>7</sup> See Genesis 12:8 and Hebrews 13:14 for reference to this concept.

## **Week 1: Genesis 12:1-9**

### **Day 3: One True God**

**READ: Genesis 12:6-7**

#### **EXPLORE:**

In obedience to God, Abram and his family journeyed south through the land of Canaan and stopped in the city of Shechem which is about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. The name Shechem means ‘shoulders’ because this area is flanked by two mountains and smack dab in the middle of Canaan. This is the first of many important events that happened at this location (Gen 33:18-20; 34; 48:22; Josh 24:32; 24; Jn 4:5-6). The text tells us that Abram set up camp near the Oak of Moreh. This great tree was a terebinth tree and a known Canaanite shrine where sacred rituals were performed. Moreh means ‘teacher’ which suggests that oracle information was gained there. This location had spiritual significance to the people of the land, and we can sense the pagan opposition that Abram would face in the promised land. It is here, among idol worship, that God appeared to Abram reminding him that this was the land to be given to his descendants. In response, he built an altar to Yahweh over and against the existing shrines. Among the pagan place of worship, Abram proclaimed the one true God. He showed no signs of wanting to distance himself from the religion of the land nor destroy or dominate people with different beliefs. Instead, he worshipped and trusted in God to do what He had promised.

So how should we behave when we encounter people who do not believe the same things we do? I (Cean) think it is important to look at the various aspects of this topic. First, within the faith. We have freedom in Christ and are not restricted to worshipping God in a certain manner. If a Christian wants to commemorate the Old Testament festivals or celebrate a traditional Western Christmas according to their conscious and the wisdom of God, we should recognize we have that liberty and offer grace to those who practice otherwise. A house divided will not stand, and the Church needs to stop making mountains from non-salvific molehills (Mk 3:25).

Second, outside the faith. We don't need to beat others over the head with our beliefs, but rather we should speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15). Like Abram, we should establish worship of the one true God, confess our belief, and declare our faith, not pull away from the culture or berate the unbelievers around us. Our conversation should be gracious and seasoned with salt because people have a hard time separating ideas from identity. If we jump to assault their beliefs and traditions, they will shut down and not be receptive to the Gospel message. Like Abram, we are surrounded by people who say, "I believe in god," and yes, there are some similarities between various religions. However, common ground is not the stopping point and it is up to you to show others that we do not all worship the same God. How? 1) Ask questions to better understand. 2) Point out differences or discrepancies. 3) Remember that actions are louder than words. 4) Live a life of morality, strive to please and obey God, extend hospitality, and love others. 5) Build relational bridges that the Gospel message can cross. We should welcome people instead of pushing them away.

Jesus will turn their heart of stone into flesh (Ezk 36:26). True worship (with words and actions) subverts idolatry. This happens naturally and should not be forced. We don't need to burn down altars, flip over tables, or excommunicate those who don't believe what we do. Love is patient and kind (1 Cor 13:4) and more importantly, God is sovereign and will do what He has promised. You be you and let God be God.

**BIG IDEA: God's word divides, but you shouldn't be (Heb 4:12).**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** What do you tend to think or do among people with different beliefs? Fight, flight, or fellowship?
  
- **Challenge:** Next time you are in an uncomfortable situation act as Jesus would.

## Week 1: Genesis 12:1-9

### Day 4: Between the Promise and the Fulfillment

**READ: Genesis 12:1-9**

#### **EXPLORE:**

I (Stephen) wonder if you've ever had the experience of waiting a long time for a promise to become a reality. Whether an example came immediately to mind or not, I am certain that you have had this experience. For some reading this study, the space between a promise and its fulfillment is not just theoretical, it is the very backdrop of your life at this very moment. The good news is that our focus this week pulls us into that spiritually fertile place of waiting for a promise to be fulfilled.

When we look to Genesis 12, it is abundantly clear that God is the principal partner in His promise to Abram and Sarai. It was God who initiated, God who spoke, God who called, and God who promised. Specifically, God promised Abram land, offspring, and blessing. It is not an understatement to say that this promise becomes thematic for Genesis, the Pentateuch<sup>8</sup>, and beyond.

God's promise of a land to be revealed echoes throughout the Bible. In a bold act of obedience, Abram left his home and its accompanying familiarity to travel into the unknown with the God who knows it all. God's promise of offspring came also to Abram and Sarai in the assurance that He would *make them into a great nation*.<sup>9</sup> It is important for us to know that God's heart was not merely to make their offspring numerically great, but great in significance. This promise is especially profound when we consider the age of the chosen couple and their many years of barrenness. God's promise of blessing was an assurance of protection and honor for Abram and his descendants. Interestingly, this week's passage mentions

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<sup>8</sup> The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

<sup>9</sup> See Genesis 12:2 for reference.

*“bless/blessing”* as many times as Genesis 1-11 combined. Fundamentally, God’s threefold promise ought to be a blessing to Abram and through Abram to the world.

As the story of Genesis continues to unfold, we will encounter not only the greatness of God’s promises, but the severity of their waiting. The difficulty of their waiting was increased because of the magnitude of God’s promise. Almost the entirety of this section of Genesis exists in that uncomfortable space between a promise and its fulfillment. We need to remember that the wait was more challenging than Abram and Sarai thought, but the promised blessing of God was more wonderful than they could have imagined.

In many ways, you and I live in the space between the promises of God and their fulfillment in time. In Christ, we have immensely great promises. In this world, we have incredibly challenging waiting. As we continue our study of Genesis, my prayer for your heart and mine is that we would wait well upon the God who has promised to be our God, make us into His people, and dwell in our very midst.<sup>10</sup>

**BIG IDEA: We ought to remember that God’s promises are great even and especially when our waiting is challenging.**

**APPLY:**

- **Questions:** Would you agree that the greatness/magnitude of the promise increases the difficulty of our waiting? Why or why not? Depending on your answer, give a personal example.
  
- **Questions:** What are some promises of God which are made available in Christ? What threatens your ability to be faithful between the promise and its ultimate fulfillment?

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<sup>10</sup> See Leviticus 26:11-12, Exodus 6:7 and 29:45 for reference.

## **Week 1: Genesis 12:1-9**

### **Day 5: Called Out**

**READ TOGETHER: Genesis 19:17, 1 Peter 2:9-10, Colossians 1:21-23**

***Instructions:** We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

### **EXPLORE TOGETHER:**

Have you ever been called out? Normally, we think of this expression in negative terms. Maybe we have been called out by a teacher when we were caught daydreaming or for disrupting the class. Maybe we have been called out by a parent for breaking a household rule or for forgetting to do something. However, sometimes being called out is a good thing like being picked first on a team or being promoted in a job. Abram being called out was not just a good thing, but a glorious thing. Abram was being called out to be the father of our faith, to have the Messiah descend from his seed!

Abram was called out to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. This call was glorious, but it was also challenging. Abram had to leave everything he had known. It probably wouldn't be a stretch to say that Abram grew to love his country, and it is certain that Abram loved his extended family (kindred) and his father's house. But these three pillars of life needed to be let go so that Abram could take hold of God in a land that God would show him.

God also calls us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. We must leave our country, which is this world. Sometimes we must even leave our families, or they push us out when we become Christians. But God unites us into a new family, His church. Like Abram, what we receive in Christ is much more glorious than whatever we must leave behind. Abram left his land for blessing. When we become Christians, we leave our old life for blessing. We must see what is ahead (the promises of God) through the eyes of faith like Abram. God's eternal promises help us maintain obedience to God and spur us on when life is challenging.

**BIG IDEA: What we leave for is greater than what we leave behind.**

**APPLY TOGETHER:**

- **Question:** In Genesis 12:2-3 what do you think is the greatest blessing and why?
  
- **Question:** What has God called you to leave behind to follow Christ?

## Week 2: Genesis 12:10-20

### Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

**READ:** Genesis 12:10-20

#### **EXPLORE:**

*Instructions:* Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity:** While reading, include some observations in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Question:** If God promised Abram and Sarai offspring and blessing, why do you think they were so fearful upon entering Egypt?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Question:** What happened to Abram as a result of Sarai ending up in Pharaoh's house?



- **Question:** After he and his house experienced plagues, v. 18 reveals that Pharaoh was made aware of Sarai's relationship status. How do you think Pharaoh learned this news about her?
  
- **Question:** If you had to make a central point of what we are supposed to learn about God, about Abram, and about Sarai using Genesis 12 as a whole, what would it be?
  
- **Optional Activities:** Using an online study tool or a physical concordance, track every occurrence of the following phrases
  - *"Down to Egypt."*
  
  - *"There was a famine."*
  
  - What do you notice as you write down what you observe?

## Week 2: Genesis 12:10-20

### Day 2: When Desperation is Dangerous

**READ: Genesis 12:10-20**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Have you ever been so hungry that your standards for food became dangerously low? Have you ever been so tired that your patience became critically thin? Have you ever become so anxious that you sinfully shifted trust into your own plan rather than God's? Whether you have had these exact experiences or not, I (Stephen) am certain that you know what it is like to have the desperation you experience in your life become dangerous.

When we read the story of Abram and Sarai this week, we can tell that they experienced the same dynamic. Genesis 12:10 reads, *"Now there was a famine in the land. So, Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land."* This is the first time in Scripture that the reader is introduced to the phrases: *"there was a famine"* and *"down to Egypt."* We will see these concepts interwoven on many painful pages throughout Scripture.

Only a few verses after reading of God's promised land to Abram's descendants and the patriarch's corresponding worship, we read about how a famine led them to move down to Egypt. Certainly, the famine was severe, and Egypt was incredibly fertile, but an important question needs to be asked. Should Abram have gone down to Egypt in the first place?

To understand the weightiness of this question and its ramifications, we need to contrast it with what we read in the previous section. When Abram was called to leave his homeland, it was the voice of God that moved him on. When the Lord appeared to Abram with a word of promise, it was the voice and direction of God that led him to sacrificial worship. In contrast, there is no reference to Abram calling upon God or worshipping God between Genesis 12:8 and

13:4. Unlike other instances in we read in Genesis, Abram did not receive a command from God to go.<sup>11</sup> It seems unlikely, when we consider the surrounding context, that God actively called Abram to leave the region of promise in order to travel into Egypt.

It is interesting to notice and powerful to remember that even when Abram's desperation became dangerous, God was still faithful. Despite the poor decision-making that is present throughout their story, it is clear that God remained more resolutely committed to the future of Abram and Sarai than they were themselves. This moment in the Scriptures can provide us with a few potent truths. First, dangerous desperation that is not brought before the Lord quickly becomes devastating. Second, God has given us several methods of discerning His will. Third, any of our methods for decision-making in desperation pale in comparison to following God's lead. Finally, God is capable of bringing good things even from the moments when we sinfully compromise because of dangerous desperation. The reality is that it often takes far less than a famine to derail my dependence upon God. My prayer for you today is that the example of Abram and the graciousness of God to preserve him and his bride would stir your heart to seek the Lord's direction and not your own.

**BIG IDEA: Desperation that is not entrusted to the Lord will become dangerous and destructive. Even still, God remains faithful despite our faithlessness.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** When in your life have you encountered a desperate situation that becomes dangerous? How might your experience have changed if it were entrusted to God?
  
- **Question:** If you were in Abram's position, would you have chosen to go to Egypt? Why or why not?

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<sup>11</sup> See Genesis 12:1, 26:2-6, and 46:2-3 for reference.

## **Week 2: Genesis 12:10-20**

### **Day 3: The Damage of Distrust**

**READ: Genesis 12:10-20**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Upon initial reading of this week's passage, you may have been struck by the barbaric environment of ancient Egypt where the Pharaoh took whatever woman he desired. Verse 15 even indicates that Pharaoh had others on the lookout for women to add to his "collection." This reminds us of the pre-flood environment described in Genesis 6:1-8 when the Bible talks about women being seen by the "*sons of God*" as objects to be used for their own pleasure and purpose.

It is also possible that, as you read the text and put yourself in Abram's sandals, your heart went out to him as he tried to navigate the difficult situation he was in. His life was at stake because he knew that Pharaoh would desire his beautiful wife. How was Abram to keep himself, his wife, and his nephew safe? The answer is simple, trust. Last week, we saw that God had already promised to make Abram's family into a great nation.<sup>12</sup> We could discuss and debate his decisions and motivations, but the end result is the same. Abram chose to trust his own plan instead of God's provision. This is a decision that always produces damaging results.

It is no coincidence that this blatant distrust in God appears so early in the account of Abraham's life. Although he is remembered as a person of great faith,<sup>13</sup> like every one of us, he had moments of doubt. It is important to note that an emotion of doubt or uncertainty is not sinful. It becomes sin when we let that doubt drive us to distrust God. Distrust in God always causes damaging results.

In this moment in Abram's life, his distrust in God caused him to treat his wife the same way Pharaoh did. Instead of seeing the gift that God had given him, the beautiful woman who would be the mother of the

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<sup>12</sup> See Genesis 12:1-3 for reference.

<sup>13</sup> See Hebrews 11 and Romans 4 for reference.

promised nation, Abram saw Sarai as an object to be used for his own interests. While Pharaoh wanted to use her for his own pleasure, Abram wanted to use her to secure his safety. Additionally, Abram, the father of this promised nation, was now seen as a deceiver in the eyes of Egypt.

This isn't the last time this would happen in Abram and Sarai's relationship.<sup>14</sup> Nor is it the last time we will see someone use a gift that God has given them as an object for selfish purposes. In fact, this is the story of sin. When we sin, we are taking God's good gifts and using them for our own purposes. While it might not seem like it at first, it is an attempt to rob God of His creation and His glory.

Abram's problem wasn't his circumstances, it was not trusting God in his circumstances. His distrust in God's provision and protection caused undue heartache and difficulty for those around him. This is a needed reminder that our response to God always affects those around us. When we trust God, it positively impacts those around us. When we distrust and disobey God, it negatively affects those around us.

**BIG IDEA: Distrust in God always causes damaging results.**

**APPLY:**

- **Questions:** In what ways do you see the world around you using God's good gifts for their own glory? In what areas of life do you currently struggle with taking God's good gifts and using them for your own purposes?
- **Read:** In Genesis chapter 20, Abraham makes a similar mistake as seen in this passage. Read Genesis 20 and compare these two accounts. How are they similar? How are they different?

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<sup>14</sup> See Genesis 20 for reference.

## **Week 2: Genesis 12:10-20**

### **Day 4: Small Details and A Big Problem**

**READ: Genesis 12:10-20**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Little details matter. Any good coach, educator, mentor, or parent will teach you this simple, but profound truth. It is not just the massive that matters, but the meaningful minutia that makes the difference. The same principle holds true for us when we read, explore, and apply the Scriptures. We need to notice the little things, and the passage we have been studying this week gives us an opportunity to do just that!

If you have not done so already, take a brief moment and read through the passage we have been studying this week. As you do so, consider this seemingly small detail in the story in the form of the following question. What do you notice about the way that Abram's wife is referenced as the story progresses between vv. 10-20?

Although Sarai is initially referenced in the story by her name and honorable status as a wife, something quite tragic happens to her identification throughout the rest of the narrative. We need to notice that in verses 11, 14, and 15, Sarai ceases to be known by her name or referred to as a wife. Rather, she is referred to as "a woman" or "the woman." The little details highlight what the story was already making clear. Sarai was not being treated with dignity as a person, but shamefully as an object.

Read the depersonalization of Genesis 12:15 again, "*And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.*" The biblical text is written in such a way that her name, honor, and her very personhood are challenged by sin. In fact, apart from the

narrator's writing and God's decisive action, we don't even read Sarai's name in this specific story.

For Pharaoh and the princes of Egypt, Sarai was objectified for their own satisfaction. For Abram, Sarai was treated like an object for his own self-preservation. This story makes it clear and the whole of Scripture speaks to the fact that the treatment of people like objects grieves the heart of God. It should grieve our hearts as well. We ought to be challenged by this story not just from criticizing Sarai's mistreatment, but by realizing how we are tempted to do the exact same.

This moment in time occurred a long time ago, but the problems of this story occur each and every day. The temptation to objectify and diminish others is a daily struggle in our world, but the church is called to rally around a worldview which proclaims the value and dignity of each human made in the image of God. May the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God convict your heart, redeem your mind, and transform your life to treat others in a way that is reflective of Christ.

**BIG IDEA: The shameful objectification of Sarai ought to remind us of how each human has been designed with dignity and ought to be treated as such.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** What are some common ways that people are objectified, diminished, or depersonalized in our culture today?
  
- **Question:** How could the church better understand and apply a biblical ethic of human dignity and value in our world today?

## **Week 2: Genesis 12:10-20**

### **Day 5: Famine in the Land**

**READ TOGETHER: Psalm 105:12-15, Proverbs 29:25, Matthew 5:6**

***Instructions:*** *We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

### **EXPLORE TOGETHER:**

As we look at the state of our country, we can say that there is a famine in the land. No, I am not speaking of a famine of food, but a spiritual famine. Yes, we are blessed with many Christians in this country, and we should praise God for this! But we have also witnessed a great spiritual decline and we know that many who claim to be Christians are Christian in name only. May we pray and seek the face of God to revive us once again.

Abram settled in Canaan but there was a famine in the land, so he went down to Egypt. Abram did not plan to stay there as we are told, and he should be commended that he did not go back to his country of origin. But this is where commending Abram must stop. For not only was there a famine in the land, but there was also a famine in Abram's heart. Instead of trusting the providence and protection of God, Abram schemed a plan with Sarai to protect himself. She would say that she was Abram's sister, and the Egyptians would in turn spare his life and treat him well. What Abram didn't consider appropriately was how they would treat his wife.



Next, we see a spiritual famine in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh's princes were not looking for beauty of character, but only for beauty of appearance. Sarai was treated more as an object of beauty than as a person. But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh with plagues because of Sarai. This episode was a foreshadowing of the plagues God would send on the Egyptians during the Exodus. Even though Pharaoh did not know Sarai was Abram's sister, he was still guilty for taking another man's wife. Not being aware that we are sinning does not remove from us or others the guilt of sin.

Despite the lack of true spirituality, God was merciful to Abram and Sarai. They were able to leave together unharmed with the spoils of Egypt. What the enemy meant for evil God meant for good. Failures in life should make us all the hungrier for God and His word.

**BIG IDEA: Abram was saved by grace and was still in need of that grace on a daily basis.**

**APPLY TOGETHER:**

- **Question:** Why do you think God still punished Pharaoh even though he was unaware that Sarai was Abram's wife?
- **Question:** What can we do in response to the spiritual famine in our country?

## Week 3: Genesis 13:1-18

### Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

**READ: Genesis 13:1-18**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Instructions: Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity:** While reading, include some observations in the space below.
  
- **Question:** Why do you think it was significant for Abram to *return to where he made his first altar*?
  
- **Question:** Genesis 13:6-7 makes it clear that the abundance of Abram and Lot complicated their relationship. Can you think of any ways in which abundance complicates relationships today? If so, what are some examples?

- **Activity:** Write down bullet points to summarize how Abram treats Lot and how Lot responds in his decision making.
  
- **Question:** The Lord affirmed His promise to Abram after his mistake in Egypt. Why might that have been significant for Abram to hear again after his error?
  
- **Optional Activity:** We won't have time to explore the significance of Mamre or Hebron at length in this week's study, but you may benefit from seeing how Genesis 13:18 foreshadows some important events later in Scripture. Read the following references to Hebron in Scripture for some additional context.
  - Genesis 23:1-9, 35:27, 37:14, 49:28-33, 50:13 and Numbers 13:17-33

## Week 3: Genesis 13:1-18

### Day 2: Common Ground when Conflict Abounds

#### READ: Genesis 13:1-18

#### EXPLORE:

It is not just situations of scarcity that can cause conflict; abundance can do the same. The tension between Lot and Abram's herdsmen is an example of this truth on display. After moving into the Negeb from Egypt, both men possessed flocks, herds, and tents among other possessions. They were materialistically blessed, but on the cusp of conflict.

After moving into that new land, verse 7 tells us that *"there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock."* The Scriptures also give us an indication of conflict that will unfold later in the story stating, *"At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land."*<sup>15</sup> Truthfully, the vastness of their blessing became a burden on their relationship. It is at this moment in their story, we are invited to closely observe the gracious actions of Abram toward his nephew in a moment of conflict resolution.

First, we should notice that Abram initiated a conversation. It is incredibly important to see how Abram proactively broached the tension at hand. Abram was the social superior in that culture, and he chose to humble himself not only by starting the conversation but also by giving Lot his choice of land.

Second, Abram appealed to a deeper connection when the conflict reached its breaking point. Appealing to their bond as family members, Abram said, *"Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen."*<sup>16</sup> He pointed to the fact that they were family first and foremost. In light of that truth, he intentionally sought to make peace. A quote from Bryan Loritts has

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<sup>15</sup> See the second half of Genesis 13:7 for reference. The mention of Zoar and Sodom function similarly.

<sup>16</sup> See Genesis 13:8 for reference.

often helped me (Stephen) in this area. He wrote, “Jesus never said, ‘Blessed are the conflict-avoiders.’ He said, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’”

Finally, Abram relied upon God: before the tension, amidst the conflict, and after its resolution. There are certainly portions of Abram’s life that we would not want to imitate. Abram is not Jesus and we are not given his story in the narrative of salvation history as a collection of behavioral lessons. This does not mean, however, that we cannot learn from how he behaved and more importantly how he believed in God.

Abram’s life and actions in this chapter do challenge us to handle conflict well, but it ought to deeply remind us of the greater example embodied in the person and work of Christ. Abram was humble and proactive, but his righteousness does not even scratch the surface of what we ultimately see in Jesus. Abram was a peacemaker with his nephew, but Christ was a peacemaker for all those who would believe in His atoning sacrifice on the cross and over the grave. May the example of Abram challenge you not only in your conflict and its resolution, but also in your reliance upon God to become more like Christ daily.

**BIG IDEA: Proactivity, humility, and godly dependence are all necessary for the Christian to handle conflict well.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** Would you describe yourself as good at conflict resolution? Would you say you have become better or worse at conflict resolution over time? Briefly explain your answers. Share with your LifeGroup.
  
- **Question:** Although we can look at Abram and learn from his example, our ultimate model is Christ. Our ultimate hope is His transformative grace in our lives. How could you learn to trust God more in areas of conflict resolution?

## Week 3: Genesis 13:1-18

### Day 3: Perception vs. Reality

**READ: Genesis 13:1-18**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Have you ever seen a product online only to later realize that it was false advertising? Have you ever purchased a beautiful car only to recognize that what was under the hood was awful? Have you ever purchased a container of fruit from the store only to later notice everything under the first layer was rancid? I (Stephen) have never made these mistakes either! I am kidding. Certainly, you know that things are not always as they seem.

Whether you have had these experiences or not, you certainly know what it is like to have your discernment fail. Perception truly does not always match reality. Lot's decision in Genesis 13 has a lot to teach us about perception, reality, choices, and God's promises.

Although Abram was the social superior in the historical context of Genesis, he chose to lower himself in humility by giving Lot his choice of land. Abram asked him, *"Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left."*<sup>17</sup> In this moment, Lot had a choice to make. According to context and history, the gracious thing for Lot to do would have been to refuse the choice and allow his uncle to make the selection. It doesn't appear as though the thought crossed his mind.

In a moment of selfishness and skewed perception, Lot chose to fundamentally disadvantage his uncle. Instead of seeing the

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<sup>17</sup> See Genesis 13:9 for reference.

seemingly preferable piece of land and graciously yielding it to Abram's choice, Lot chose to settle in the easterly direction. Lot's choice might seem innocent enough at first glance, but this was not the case. We can see that this was a poor choice through a few different indicators in the biblical text.

First, the land that Lot chose is framed consistently in the story with regards its brokenness. Instead of considering what would best spur on righteousness, Lot willfully skirted a land that was known for its evil. It seems Lot made his choice based upon profit rather than purity. Second, the text is clear that Lot journeyed to the east.<sup>18</sup> This movement in an easterly direction is a biblical "type" for poor choices and distance from God's presence. For example, people migrated from the East to build the idolatrous tower of Babel.<sup>19</sup> Adam and Eve were sent out from paradise in the Garden of Eden to the east.<sup>20</sup> It may be easy for these small details to slip past us, but the ancient audiences of God's Word would have understood that Lot made a terrible decision.

**BIG IDEA: Knowing that our limited perception does not always match God's desire for us, we should be careful to choose purity instead of profit.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** Have you ever had an experience with false advertising?
  
- **Questions:** What is the best way to guard against the fact that our perception does not always match God's design and desire?

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<sup>18</sup> See Genesis 13:11 for reference.

<sup>19</sup> See Genesis 11:2 for reference.

<sup>20</sup> See Genesis 3:24 for reference.

## Week 3: Genesis 13:1-18

### Day 4: Worshipful Obedience

**READ: Genesis 13:14-18**

#### **EXPLORE:**

More than most Word to Life studies, today's exercise is going to be a little more interactive. Whether you are reading by yourself or with others, I (Stephen) want you to encourage you to complete the exercise below before reading the summary that follows. Remember, it may just be the things you personally notice that you remember the most.

Activity 1: Read Genesis 13:14-17 and write down everything that the Lord commanded Abram to do. You could either underline these imperatives/commands or write them down below.

After Abram and Lot separated, settling in drastically different lands, the Lord spoke to Abram with clear directions. Hopefully, you were able to observe God's instructions for Abram in the verses detailed above. The commands are few, but they are profound! In simple words, God commanded Abram to *lift up his eyes, to look, to arise, and to walk*. In many ways, these commands are helpful for us to know and understand as well. God instructed Abram not just to see what was promised, but to experience what was promised.

Activity 2: Read Genesis 13:14-17 again. In this reading, move your focus from what God commands to what God promises for Abram and his descendants. Think about how the promises of God fortify the commands of God.



If you are anything like me, reading these verses is a potent reminder of the power of the promise-making and promise-keeping God. His commands are clear and His promises are great! As our study of Genesis continues in the days ahead, we will be given abundant reminders of God's promise of land, offspring, and blessing to His people. In our text this week, Abram heard the commands of God and responded accordingly.

Activity 3: Read Genesis 13:18 and write down what Abram did after hearing the commands and promises of God.

The only fitting response to the grandeur and majesty of God is worshipful obedience. In fact, the Scriptures consistently remind us that the effect of a heart that is being transformed by God's grace will be spiritual fruit that aligns with repentance. This biblical text provides us with a powerful opportunity to honestly assess and willingly confess our spiritual condition today.

**BIG IDEA: The right response to God's promises and His commands is worshipful obedience.**

**APPLY:**

- **Activity:** Although Abram was imperfect, we can learn from his example and the surpassing grace of God. Pray about Genesis 13:14-18. Ask that the Lord would convict, comfort, and challenge you through His Word and by His Spirit.
- **Question:** Sometimes it may seem like the New Testament and the Old Testament are quite different. The commands of Genesis 13 are a clear example that this is not truly the case. Where else in the Scriptures do you see commands like *"lift your eyes, look, arise, and walk?"*

## **Week 3: Genesis 13:1-18**

### **Day 5: Mo Money Mo Problems**

**READ TOGETHER: 1 Timothy 6:9, Mark 10:23-31**

***Instructions:** We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

### **EXPLORE TOGETHER:**

We live in a prosperous country. Many of us are rich by global standards. Many of us desire to be rich if we are not. It is like a rite of passage in our country. It is the American dream. If we work hard, we can make it, and be successful. But we know material wealth and possessions are not everything. It is indeed a blessing as we see in Abram's life, but it does not often bring us more peace and contentment. In fact, it often does the opposite causing more strife and discontent. We must learn to be content whatever the state we are in.

Abram was both very rich and very religious. Lot was also very rich, probably due to his proximity to Abram. This wealth was a blessing from God, as we see, but it also had some unintended consequences. Abram and Lot could not settle in the same area because they had too many possessions and their herdsman could not get along cordially. Abram was a humble man and did not simply dismiss Lot from his family but wanting to keep the peace offered Lot the land of his choosing. This showed Abram's deep trust in the promises of God. Lot chose the better watered land, but also the more morally compromised area.

After Lot separated from him, God appeared and promised him all the land in the surrounding area. Abram lost a friend in Lot, but God revealed Himself as Abram's closest friend. God's faithfulness to Abram can be seen, page after page, in the Genesis account. When trouble came Abram's way God came to deliver him. When Abram's relationships drifted apart God came to be his closest friend. Our God watches over us as he watched over Abram. Problems are sure to find their way to us in a fallen world, but our Lord never leaves us and is a very present help in times of trouble.

**BIG IDEA: Abram's problems did not cease when he left Egypt, but God was there for him just the same.**

**APPLY TOGETHER:**

- **Question:** What should be the relationship between a Christian and wealth.
- **Question:** How can we maintain contentment with our station in life?

## Week 4: Genesis 14:1-16

### Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text

#### READ: Genesis 14:1-16

#### EXPLORE:

Instructions: Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Note**: A simple summary might help you make sense of a chapter which is filled with complicated names and a series of attacks.
  - vv. 1-4 The Dead Sea kings rebelled against the eastern kings.
  - vv. 5-7 The eastern allies conquer Transjordan and South.
  - vv. 8-12 The Dead Sea kings were plundered by eastern kings.
  - vv. 13-16 Abram and allies conquered the eastern allies.
  
- **Activity**: Use this space to take some notes on what you observe and any questions you have while reading.

- **Question:** In Genesis 13, Lot moved toward Sodom and pitched his tent there. What do you notice about where Lot is specifically located as Genesis 14 unfolds?
- **Question:** If you were Abram and Lot had been captured, do you think you would have responded the same way? Why or why not?
- **Question:** What do you notice about the interaction in vv. 17-24? What is Abram's response to the king's actions?

## **Week 4: Genesis 14:1-16**

### **Day 2: Downward Spiral of Sinful Compromise**

**READ: Genesis 14:1-16**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Imagine a raindrop falling from the sky in an intense windstorm. Depending on the gusts, the raindrop could land in drastically different places. Depending on the wind in this hypothetical scenario that drop of water could either descend into Lake Erie, eventually traveling through the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean. In contrast, if that same drop of water experienced different wind it could travel from streams into the Ohio River to the Mississippi River and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. A faint gust of wind could determine the destination of these raindrops for more than three thousand miles.

Similar to the raindrop, seemingly small and insignificant choices we make often hold the power to shape more than we realize. Unlike the water droplet that is unknowingly pushed this way and that, life does present us with choices for which we are responsible. No human choice holds more power than God, but it does not mean that our decisions are without consequence. Lot is an example of this painful dynamic.

The unfolding of Genesis 13 into Genesis 14 gives us the opportunity to see the dangerous, downward spiral of sinful compromise in the life of Lot. At first, Lot merely chose a land which was physically well watered, but spiritually dry.<sup>21</sup> Soon after, we learn that although the men of the land were especially wicked, Lot chose to camp as far as Sodom.<sup>22</sup> When Genesis 14 reintroduces us to Abram's nephew once again, we are reminded

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<sup>21</sup> See Genesis 13:11 for reference.

<sup>22</sup> See Genesis 13:12-13 for reference.

that he is not just encamped near the people of Sodom, he lives amongst them.<sup>23</sup> A later story that we will study in Genesis 19 reveals that Lot was a respected citizen with an important role within Sodom and its culture.<sup>24</sup> What began with a seemingly simple selection of land, resulted in a tragic downward spiral.

It is doubtful that you have shared Lot's exact dilemma, but it is certain that you have shared in his tragic experience. You have made seemingly simple choices that resulted in deep heartache. You have compromised in seemingly small ways only to find yourself at the bottom of an all-too-familiar spiral wondering what truly happened. Lot's life and example of this dynamic being played out in biblical history. Although our sinful compromises do have consequences, God's grace made available through Jesus Christ means that they do not have to be final.

For some reading this Word to Life study, Lot's pattern might fill you with gratitude for how a gracious God broke the downward spiral and lifted you up. For others, Lot's example ought to sound the alarm bells in your life and faith. Sinful compromise always grieves the heart of God. Your choices have consequences, even when they are unseen. God's grace is made available for you to turn from sin and toward Him today.

**BIG IDEA: Lot's example reminds us of how sinful compromises lead to a downward spiral.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** In your opinion, does the example of Lot that was outlined in today's study lead you to a sense of gratitude, conviction, or both? Explain your answer and potentially share with your LifeGroup this week.

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<sup>23</sup> See Genesis 14:12 for reference.

<sup>24</sup> See Genesis 19:1-3 for reference to Lot and his positioning at Sodom's gate.

## Week 4: Genesis 14:1-16

### Day 3: Abram the Hebrew

#### READ: Genesis 14:1-16

#### EXPLORE:

On first reading, it is easy to miss the expression “Abram the Hebrew.”<sup>25</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, the terms “Israelite” and “Hebrew” were used to refer to Jacob’s children and descendants. Jacob was renamed Israel, so it makes sense that his descendants would be Israelites.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, as for the term “Hebrew,” it referred not just to Jacob’s descendants, but also his grandfather Abram. So why was Abram called “the Hebrew?”

It is possible that “Hebrew” derived from the ancient near-eastern term “Habiru.” The Habiru were a multi-ethnic social class: sometimes fugitives, sometimes mercenaries, usually without land ownership, always outsiders. This description fit Abram and his 318 fighting men.<sup>27</sup>

More widely-accepted is the notion that “Hebrew” referred to the “the children of Eber.” Abram’s ancestor Eber was likely in his prime when the Lord divided the languages at Babel, and he was probably still alive when Abram was born.<sup>28</sup> Eber meant “other side” or “region across.” For example, the Lord used “*eber ha’nahar*” to express “beyond the River” when he said, “I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, to be a Hebrew was to be an outsider who had passed through from the other side. Abram, an outsider in Canaan, had passed

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<sup>25</sup> See Genesis 14:13 for reference. Although written in Hebrew, this is the first mention of Hebrew in Genesis.

<sup>26</sup> See Genesis 32:28 for reference. The term “Jew” arose much later, likely after the separation of Judah and Israel.

<sup>27</sup> See Genesis 14:14 for reference.

<sup>28</sup> See Genesis 10:21-25 and 11:9 for reference. Alternate interpretations of the genealogy in Gen. 11 are possible.

<sup>29</sup> See Joshua 24:3 and <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Dictionary/ay/ay-b-r.html> for reference.



over the Euphrates to get there. The Hebrews were outsiders in Egypt for generations, and later they passed through the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the Jordan River to enter the promised land. We who believe in Jesus have “passed from death to life,” and now live as outsiders in this fallen world.<sup>30</sup> “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>31</sup>

Let me (Jonathan O’Neill) ask you, “Have you become a Hebrew in this sense?” Have you passed from death to life by repenting of your sins and trusting fully in Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection? Do you belong now to God’s kingdom, or are you still under the domain of darkness? Just as Abram was an outsider in Canaan, your life as a Christian should seem strange to those around you who have not yet bowed the knee to Jesus. Let’s not blend in with the world around us, but let’s stand out, shining brightly as beacons of hope to people in desperate darkness.

**BIG IDEA: To be a Hebrew like Abram is to be an outsider who has passed through from the other side, by faith in God.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** Describe some ways you stand out from those around you who are still in darkness.
  
- **Question:** What is one way that you still blend in with the world, when you should look different? Confess this to God and meditate on Christ’s death on the cross for you.
  
- **Question:** Are there any ways in which it is actually good for you to blend in with non-Christians? Why?

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<sup>30</sup> See John 5:24 and 1 Peter 2:11 for reference.

<sup>31</sup> See Colossians 1:13-14 for reference.

## Week 4: Genesis 14:1-16

### Day 4: The Rising Call of Christian Love

**READ: Genesis 14:1-16 and John 15:1-17**

#### **EXPLORE:**

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” – John 15:12-13*

While Jesus resolutely moved closer toward His own death on the cross, He instructed those who were gathered about the true and sacrificial nature of love. He did not just teach this lesson; He embodied it with His very life.

In His earlier teachings, Jesus encouraged the disciples to abide in Him using the imagery of a vine and branches. Literally and metaphorically, Jesus’s teachings interweave the concepts of abiding in His love and being able to exemplify it toward others. Faithfully abiding in Christ will result in persevering love. The love that is produced from godly abiding is resolute and unwavering. We can see this sort of love put on display in the story of Abram and Lot.

At the midway point through Genesis 14 we find out that a bad situation has become even worse. Lot had been taken captive after dwelling in Sodom. His possessions were taken. All hope could have seemed lost.<sup>32</sup> Instead of forsaking his nephew amidst the chaos, Abram mustered his allies to mount a rescue attempt.<sup>33</sup> Abram’s commitment to Lot actually increased rather than decreased. When the difficulties increased, Abram’s love and loyalty toward Lot rose to meet the challenge.

The sort of love that we see embodied in Abram’s actions toward Lot, is reminiscent of the deeper love we see perfected in the life,

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<sup>32</sup> See Genesis 14:12-13 for reference.

<sup>33</sup> See Genesis 14:14-16 for reference.

death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Jesus instructed His followers to embrace this type of persevering love as a way of life toward others. A love that looks like Jesus in this world does not compromise truth any more than it is willing to give up on others in their moment of need.

Often, our love does not look a lot like Jesus or Abram for that matter. Instead of our love rising amidst the ever-increasing challenges of failure, we often abandon those we have been called to earnestly pursue. Jesus's encouragement to *love one another* was not just a command to try harder, but to abide deeper. The calling to love like Jesus is an invitation for us to pray that He would place His love for others in us. N.T. Wright expressed a similar idea writing, "The call of the gospel is for the church to implement the victory of God in the world through suffering love." It is the long-suffering love of God in Christ that holds the power to redeem the lost, sanctify the believer, and catalyze the church's mission in the world.

**BIG IDEA: Christian love is long-suffering.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** In what ways have you been on the receiving end of someone else's persevering love?
  
- **Question:** When are you most tempted to abandon those you are called to earnestly pursue?
  
- **Question:** Stephen wrote, "A love that looks like Jesus in this world does not compromise truth any more than it is willing to give up on others in their moment of need."
  - Which do you feel you are more tempted to do (1) compromise on truth or (2) give up on people.

## **Week 4: Genesis 14:1-16**

### **Day 5: The First War**

**READ TOGETHER: Judges 7:16, 1 Samuel 14:6, Deuteronomy 3:22 and Genesis 14:1-16**

***Instructions:** We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.*

### **EXPLORE TOGETHER:**

Genesis 14 is the first recorded war in the Bible. This does not mean that there were no battles before this, but none had as much spiritual significance as this one. The only reason this battle is recorded in Scripture is because it concerned Abram and Lot. This first war gives us some insight into the wars that will follow in the Scriptures.

The king of Sodom and his four friends were tired of being under the thumb of Chedorlaomer. They revolted and were swiftly defeated. Many escaped the death by sword, but they still died in slime pits. One can see through this what an utter loss one faces when you fight without God on your side. The enemy took all the possession of Sodom and Gomorrah, which included Lot and all of his possessions. Unfortunately, we are told that by this time Lot was now living in Sodom. He had gone from living near that wicked city, to now living in it. Sin always takes you places you never intended to go.

At this juncture of the war God now intervenes. One Sodomite just so happened to escape and found Abram to tell him what

happened. When Abram heard what happened to Lot, he led the men of his household in pursuit of the 4 kings. This was very brave of Abram as these 4 kings that captured Lot had just defeated quite easily five kings. Abram, foreshadowing Gideon, only had about 300 men. Abram's men were trained for battle, and they put together a strategic plan to defeat the enemy. But all these plans would be of no use if God were not fighting for them. Just as the four kings swiftly defeated the five kings, Abram swiftly defeated the four kings. We are not told that he sustained any loss. Then he brought back all the possessions which included Lot and his possessions. God fights for His people and it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit.

Abram has no selfish ambition in this battle. His only objective was to rescue his kinsman. The Lord blessed his noble ends and was faithful to keep His promises to Abram. God was making Abram's name great as He promised.

**BIG IDEA: Abram won the battle because God fought for him.**

**APPLY TOGETHER:**

- **Question:** What are some ways that sin leads us farther than we ever intended to go?
- **Activity:** List some key principles we can pull from the text of how God fights for us.

## **Week 5: Genesis 14:17-24**

### **Day 1: Exploring the Biblical Text**

**READ: Genesis 14:17-24**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Instructions: Spend time reading Genesis and complete the activities and questions below.

- **Activity**: While reading, include some observations in the space below.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Question**: Compare and contrast the actions and responses of Abram with the other characters in these verses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- **Question**: What do you notice about how Abram acted?

- **Question:** In what way or ways might this passage apply to your everyday life?
  
- **Question:** Where else in Scripture do we encounter Chedorlaomer? Where else in Scripture do we encounter Melchizedek? (*Hint: You may have to use a concordance or online study tool to learn these answers.*)

## **Week 5: Genesis 14:17-24**

### **Day 2: A Godly Perspective on Success**

**READ: Genesis 14:17-24**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Sometimes it is easier to rely on God when we are in the midst of difficult times, but can begin to feel like we rely less on God when we experience successes in our life. In this week's passage we see how Abram interacted with two kings following his victory over Chedorlaomer. Abram's reaction to the two kings gives us a good example of how to conduct ourselves when experiencing success in our lives.

The first king that met with Abram was Melchizedek the king of Salem. Melchizedek can be translated as "king of righteousness." Additionally, being the king of Salem is identified as "king of peace".<sup>34</sup> Melchizedek is also identified as a priest of God Most High. Upon meeting Abram, Melchizedek provided bread and wine and blessed Abram in the name of God Most High. Melchizedek recognized Abram's success as God delivering victory to Abram. Abram responded by giving a tenth of everything to Melchizedek. This interaction provides us with a good example of how to handle success faithfully. Both Abram and Melchizedek recognize God as the ultimate reason for success, they properly praised God Most High as Possessor of heaven and Earth. Truly, it is only when we have the proper view of God in our lives that we can rightly praise Him as the source of our success. This proper knowledge of God as the source of Abram's success also prepared him for his interaction with the king of Sodom.

Abram's interaction with the king of Sodom also highlighted Abram's faithfulness to God. In contrast to Melchizedek, by

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<sup>34</sup> See Hebrews 7:2 for reference.



providing Abram with refreshment and praising God, the king of Sodom began with a demand. *“Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”*<sup>35</sup> Abram denied the king’s demand and was faithful to the oath that he had made with God to ensure that the king of Sodom could not boast that he had enriched Abram. The king of Sodom did not have the high view of God that Abram had and sought to enlarge his own renown by engaging with Abram. Despite this, Abram properly recognized God as the reason for his success and remained faithful to God in victory.

Today, my (John Stone’s) encouragement is to make a conscious effort to recognize God as the source of success in your life. This week look for opportunities to celebrate God as the source of success with fellow believers and be thankful for the presence of God in your life. Be wary of falling into the trap of self-reliance and pride when God brings success into your life, treat it as an additional opportunity to rely on his grace.

**BIG IDEA: Abram’s interactions with king of Salem and the king of Sodom give us insight on how to interact with the world when God delivers success into our lives.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** Think of a time when God provided some form of success in your live. How did your reaction compare to that of Abram and Melchizedek?
- **Question:** Sometimes it is easier to focus on God when we experience trials than when we experience success. What actions can we take to focus on God when he provides successes in our lives?

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<sup>35</sup> See Genesis 14:21 for reference.

## **Week 5: Genesis 14:17-24**

### **Day 3: Our God Most High: Creator, Owner, and Possessor**

**READ: Genesis 14:9 and Galatians 2:20**

#### **EXPLORE:**

Our focus today is on our Most High God, first mentioned by this name in the Bible when Melchizedek said, *“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth.”* As we know, every name of God is of great significance, and we can learn so much about His character when we slow down to dig deeper.

The title of Most High God, Elyon or Elion in Hebrew, speaks to God’s sovereign dominion over all His creation and the absolute perfection of God as the everlasting and mighty one. As the possessor of heaven and earth and all who are within the scope of His creation, Most High God expresses His ownership of what He has made, in the sense that He is the maker, producer, acquirer and purchaser of all things. The founder, builder and architect of the universe is also the possessor of it all.

When a believer receives Christ as their Savior, they are filled, or we could even say, “possessed” by the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our hope of the eternal kept for us, in heaven. As Galatians 2:20 confirms, *“For I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* The Most High God, who created the first Adam and breathed the breath of life into him so that he became a living soul also knit us together in our mother’s womb, chose us as His own possession, and breathed into us His own Spirit of eternal life. The one who possesses us, is the same One who, purchased us with Christ’s own blood, and redeemed us by the Lamb of God.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; the breath of His Spirit quickened us to eternal life. This was not of our own doing. It was the gift of God Most High. How then ought we to live if we are not our own? Every good and perfect gift is from above. All we have in our possession is on loan to be stewarded and invested for the glory of God. What do we have that was not imparted to us? We are to remember we are to be good stewards and investors of God's gifts and abilities. What a privilege and honor it is to belong to God Most High who has brought us to be His own.

**BIG IDEA: The Most High God has chosen us and called us His own possession. Since we are no longer children of darkness but children of the light, let us walk thoughtfully.**

**APPLY:**

- **Question:** Have you ever considered that you are no longer your own possession, but a temple of God where His Holy Spirit dwells?
  
- **Question:** In what ways does your life reflect your true identity in Christ? If you were to inventory your daily calendar or checkbook, how would they testify to your priorities and sense of identity? This may be a good activity to discuss with your LifeGroup this week.

## **Week 5: Genesis 14:17-24**

### **Day 4: The Same God of Genesis Throughout the Scriptures**

#### **READ: Genesis 14:17-24 and Selected Passages**

#### **EXPLORE:**

In only a few short verses, a significant term is introduced in the Scriptures about the greatness of God. God is described four times in only eight verses as “Most High.” This is a statement that proclaims the exaltation of God and the absolute preeminence of God among all other things. In describing God as most high, Genesis is purposefully reminding the reader and us today of the sovereignty of God over the chaos that was ensuing in the life and relationships surrounding Abram. This was and still is a timely reminder for people.

To proclaim that God is most high is to necessarily claim that everything else falls under His ultimate authority. Throughout the Scriptures, the exaltation of God as the “Most High” is used to spark hope in the lives of those who have faith in Him and trepidation in the lives of those who find themselves opposed to His unrivaled glory. Leeanna did a good job yesterday introducing us to the concept of God Most High. My (Stephen’s) encouragement is simply to read the verses below as you remind yourself that the God of Genesis is the same throughout Scripture.

#### **Deuteronomy 32:7-8**

*Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.*

#### **Psalms 57:12**

*I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.*

### Psalm 78:54-57

*And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won. He drove out nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents. Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies, but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers; they twisted like a deceitful bow.*

### Psalm 91:1-2

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

### Luke 1:34-35

*And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."*

In title, beauty, position, intelligence, authority, rank, and various other areas, we are reminded of the uniqueness and majesty of God. He is appropriately titled "Most High." With this truth in mind, our hearts and lives should resound with reverence, gratitude, humility, and worship toward the knowable and powerful God who exists Most High.

**BIG IDEA: The preeminence of God is designed to shape every aspect of our lives.**

### **APPLY:**

- **Activity:** Spend time memorizing one of the biblical texts above. After doing so, pray that God would give you an opportunity to embody and communicate that truth throughout your week.

## **Week 5: Genesis 14:17-24**

### **Day 5: Follow-up Meetings**

#### **READ TOGETHER: Genesis 14:17-24**

***Instructions:*** We believe that Biblical study and spiritual growth are meant to be shared. This Word to Life has that exact focus in mind. For some, Day 5 might be a good opportunity to lead your family in a devotional. For others, this study might serve as a simple reminder to tactfully communicate your faith with those around you. Regardless, Day 5 of each week is designed to help you grow in your faith by sharing it with others.

#### **EXPLORE TOGETHER:**

Follow up meetings are often just as important as the event itself. They bring resolution and clarity to what has just happened. They help us to plan well for the next event. After Abram's victorious battle he holds two important follow up meetings.

Abram's first follow up meeting was the most important one because it concerned a more important person. This meeting was with the mysterious king of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of the Most High God Melchizedek. The identity of Melchizedek has often been debated, but in my (Sabino) opinion, I think that a convincing case can be made that He is likely the pre-incarnate Son of God. This is because Melchizedek is both a priest and king like our Lord Jesus. He also brought out bread and wine to celebrate Abram's victory and to nourish Abram's army. The bread and wine should make us think of our Lord's meal in the upper room. He blesses Abram. Who else on earth at the time could be seen as greater than Abram in God's sight? Surely the Son of God would be considered greater. Abram gave him a tenth of everything, which is later what the Israelites will be required to give to their God. Regardless of who exactly Melchizedek is, this

encounter with the priest of God shows us that the glory of this victory belongs to God alone.

Abram's second follow up meeting was with the king of Sodom. The king of Sodom humbly asked for his people back but believed Abram worthy of all the possessions of his people. This was a reasonable request but one that Abram had to turn down. Abram had to turn this proposal down because he had made a vow to the Lord before the battle. The vow was that if God gave him the victory, he would not even take the least of the king of Sodom's possessions. In our vernacular he would not even take a shoelace. This is because Abram did not want anyone else to receive glory that was not theirs on that day. This battle belonged to the Lord.

**BIG IDEA: God receives the credit and the glory for Abram's victory.**

**APPLY TOGETHER:**

- **Question:** Who do you think Melchizedek is and why?
- **Question:** How can we give credit and glory to God today in substantive ways?







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