Session 3: No Faith, No Future	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.	
BALL III.	
Main Idea When we allow God to lead us and trust in him through obedience, he allows us to play a part in	
his redemptive plans.	
Head Change	
To know that God has chosen us and we can trust him with our future.	
Heart Change	
To feel inspired by Abraham's obedience as we face choices to follow God's leading or to go in own way.	
Life Change	
To obey God's call God's way in God's time,	
always.	

DISCUSS	
Charlie called Genesis 12 "the turning point of	
Genesis" and also "the turning point of the entire	
Bible" because it is not only Abram's story but	
also the introduction to God's plan of salvation.	
How familiar are you with Abram/Abraham?	
Which event in his life do you most easily	
remember?	
Read Genesis 12:1–3. In choosing Abraham, God	
was initiating a unique relationship with his	
children—a relationship marked by faith. Charlie noted that it was not Abraham who chose God	
but God who chose Abraham, just as he chooses	
us today. Do you think you chose God or did	
God choose you? How does faith play into our	
relationship with God now?	
What difference does it make to know God	
chose you as his child?	
Note : To explore God's covenant with Abraham	
in Genesis 12, 15, and 17, go to Go Deeper	
Section 1 below.	
Now read verse 4. Abraham believed God and	
obeyed his call. What does Abraham's response	
to God's call reveal about his faith? How often	
do you think about faith as action?	
Reflecting on God's directions to Abraham to	
leave his family and homeland and travel to a	
place he'd never heard of, Charlie said, "God	
reserves the right to relocate us physically,	
geographically, relationally, and vocationally." As Lord, God has authority over everything in our	
lives. And sometimes he asks us to do difficult	
things. When have you sensed God sending	
you into unusual or challenging	
circumstances?	
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Note : To learn more about places significant to Abraham's life and faith, go to Go Deeper	
Section 2 below.	
Abraham's informal title of "Father of the Faith" is	
well-earned. Abraham, as Charlie said, "was a	
superstar because he obeyed God, not because he sought him." In the same way, God seeks our	
obedience when he calls us. What comes to	
mind when you think about obeying God right	
now? What is one step you can take to obey	
him?	
Turn to Genesis 21 and read verses 1–7. By	
chronicling Abraham and Sarah's saga of having a	
miracle baby, God shows us that he's letting us participate in the drama of redemption. He chose	
them to have a child, one who would carry on the	
family line that would produce the world's savior	
—Jesus. We may not participate in God's plan	
through biological children, but we can grow,	
encourage, train, and commission new believers.	
How would you describe your part in	
furthering Gods' family? What role do you	
play in God's plan to redeem his people?	
Note : For insight into Abraham's nephew, Lot,	
and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis	
19, go to Go Deeper Section 3 below.	
Read 16:1–16 and 21:8–21. Sometimes we don't	
listen very well. Abraham and Sarah tried to have	
a child their way, but victimizing Hagar produced	
injustice and conflict that remains today. When	
have you tried to make something happen	
"creatively" but not in a godly way? How did	
that decision work out?	

Note : To explore Hagar's story more fully, go to Go Deeper Section 4 below.	
Note : To investigate Abraham's lies about Sarah, go to Go Deeper Section 5 below.	
Read Chapter 22:1–19. God's command for Abraham to take Isaac up to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him seems contradictory, even appalling. But Abraham saw sacrifice as worship. What was he trying to communicate to God through his obedience? How would letting his one and	
only son die—at his own hand—demonstrate his faith in God?	
Hebrews 11:17–19 explains how Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead	
and return the boy to him. He not only believed God had the power of life over death, but he also believed God would keep his word about Isaac	
being his chosen heir. Which parts of your life have you entrusted to God? In what ways	
could your beliefs about his character affect the decisions and choices you face right now?	
Abraham trusted God through leaving his home, childlessness, family disputes, and much more. Putting our faith in God can sound simple, but it's much more difficult to put into action, as	
Abraham did. What does trusting God with your life—your job, your family, your friends,	
your finances, your health—look like for you today? In what ways is it difficult?	
What could you and your group do to encourage each other to put your faith into	
action?	

LAST WORD

Abraham grew in his trust and allegiance toward God through the different experiences God put before him. When he failed, he backed up and tried it God's way. When he obeyed immediately, he experienced God's blessing. Charlie ended his teaching with an encouragement from Abraham's life: If we lean on God and trust him, we will see that the Lord provides. He's trustworthy and able, like none other.

GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:

- 1. It can supplement your small group discussion with topics your group may be interested in. We've highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.
- 2. These sections can also function as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Genesis.

1. God's Covenant with Abraham

One of the most significant events in the entire book of Genesis is God's covenant with Abraham. It is a unique agreement, one rooted in relationship and initiated through oaths and ceremonies. You can think of covenants as a kind of marriage, in which two parties bind themselves together to reach a specified goal. In Genesis 12, 15, and 17, we see God making a covenant with his servant Abraham, one which would lead to the founding of a nation and the salvation of the world. Read Genesis 12:1–3.

What does God command Abraham to do?
What three things does God promise to do for Abraham?

God promises Abraham a specific land, to make his family into a great nation, and to bless the world through him. But God does not immediately give Abraham what he promised. Turn to Genesis 15 and read verses 1–21.

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Abraham prepares the covenantal ceremony but,	
in an unusual twist, God performs the ceremony without Abraham in verse 17. So, what is going	
on here? Abraham, like all of us, was deeply	
flawed. If God's covenant was based on Abraham's faithfulness, it would have failed	
before it began. But God, in his abundant mercy,	
made the covenant based on his own unchangeable nature. So even when Abraham	
was faithless, God's promise would remain. What	
does God's provision for Abraham's	
faithlessness teach you about God?	
God's promises are sure even when they are not	
immediately fulfilled. Abraham was seventy-five	
years old when God first promised him land, a	
nation, and blessing in Genesis 12, but the	
covenant wasn't confirmed until Abraham was	-
ninety-nine. After twenty-four years, he had no	
son, no land, and was more trouble to the people	
around him than he was a blessing. In what ways	
do you feel like you have been waiting too	
long for God to come through on his	
promises? How could God's faithfulness to	
Abraham encourage you as you wait?	
Pond Connects 17:1 16 What is the sign of God's	
Read Genesis 17:1–16. What is the sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants?	
Why do you think it is important that Abraham's descendants inherit the benefits of	
his covenant?	
Over two-and-a-half decades, God made a	
promise, sealed it with a ceremony, and	
confirmed it with a sign. His covenant would not	
die with Abraham but would extend through his	

descendants: the people of Israel and eventually

through Jesus Christ.

This covenant teaches us that God is faithful even when we are faithless and that his promises are sure, even when we have to wait for them. What are you waiting on God for? What could it look like for you to wait patiently and with expectant hope in God's faithfulness?	
2. The Significance of Place in Genesis	
When God settled Abraham in the land of	
Canaan, he camped near what would be known	
as the town of Hebron. It served as a kind of	
home-base, though he and his entourage	
traveled as far as Egypt and back. During	
Abraham's eventful lifetime, God intervened in	
many situations and different locations.	
Sometimes those places became significant in the	
history of Israel. And sometimes Abraham (and	
his descendants) would give a location a specific name related to God's working at that place so	
later generations would remember the stories of	
God's provision.	
Moriah	
In Genesis 22, the disrupted sacrifice of Isaac took	
place on a mountaintop in the "region of Moriah"	
(vv.1–2). No other mention is made of this	
location in Genesis, but Jewish scholars believe	
the name Moriah can mean "the place which I will show you"—referencing God's original call to	
Abram in 12:1. It can also be translated as "the	
place of appearance," or "the place of	
revelation"—both of which fit the context of	
Abraham's experience with Isaac.	
Turn to 2 Chronicles 2:1 During the beight of the	
Turn to 2 Chronicles 3:1. During the height of the kingdom of Israel, Solomon built the temple on	
Mount Moriah. Here, God's presence would	
dwell, and the temple would become the	
centerpiece of national worship. Chronicles also	

reminds the reader that King David had bought Moriah to build an altar to God as part of his repentance for the census (see 2 Samuel 24:18–25). Moriah held a special place in the religious lives of Israel, and it all started with Abraham's obedience there.	
Beersheba (Genesis 21:22–34) Abraham was prospering and his neighbors could see that his God was blessing him. After a dispute over a well of water, Abimelek, a neighboring king, made a treaty with Abraham to live peacefully and honestly with one another. Abraham gave Abimelek seven ewe lambs as a sign of his sincerity, so they "shook hands" and named the place Beersheba, which can mean well of seven and well of the oath.	
Beer Lahai Roi When Hagar ran away from Sarah into the desert, she stopped by a spring of water where God came to her in comfort and assurance. She named him "You are the God who sees me," or "El Roi." Genesis 16:14 says, "That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered."	
Giving credit to God and his good character often motivated people to rename a location in his honor. The new name would stand as a witness to God's character and activity in the lives of the Israelites, who would then retell the stories for their children.	
If you were to rename certain locations based on your testimony of God's faithful work, which places would you focus on? What names might you give them? Share or write down one of those meaningful stories of God's faithfulness.	

For further study on place names given later in	
Genesis, after Abraham's time:	
Bethel: Genesis 28:10–22 Mizpah (Galeed): Genesis 31:22–55	
Peniel: Genesis 32:22–32	
El Elohe Israel: Genesis 33:18–20	
2. Abraham Cod and Cabratian	
3. Abraham, God, and Salvation In Genesis 18, we find an incredible story that	
illustrates God's justice, mercy, and the power of	
prayer. Read Genesis 18:20–33. Do you think	
God is changing his mind based on Abraham's	
prayers? What in the passage makes you think	
he does or does not?	
Sodom and Gomorrah were exceedingly evil	
places, so much that the people in the	
surrounding areas were calling on God to	
administer divine justice upon them. Their sin was	
blatant and a standing affront to God. As he stood with Abraham overlooking Sodom, God	
fully intended to answer these prayers and punish	
the wicked. Based on verses 20–21, what was	
God doing before executing justice on	
Sodom?	
Before God punished Sodom and Gomorrah,	
Abraham approached him and interceded for the	
godly minority living in the wicked cities. Interestingly, this was the first time in the Bible a	
human initiated a conversation with God. What	
specific justice was Abraham pleading for in	
verses 23–25?	
What sort of punishment do you think evil	
people deserve? Do you think Abraham is	

wrong for asking God to be merciful? Why or why not?	
God is just, hearing the prayers of his people and	
will not leave evil unpunished. What comfort does God's justice give you as we are	
increasingly aware of injustices and evil all around us?	
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Abraham was not asking God for a favor. Rather,	
he appealed to God's unchangeable character, particularly his justice, to secure mercy. We don't	
often think of justice and mercy working together, but they are both perfectly exhibited in	
God. Because God is just, he will uphold	
righteousness and destroy all that is evil. He is	
also merciful, willing to forgive those who turn	
from evil. In both cases, evil is done away with.	
Abraham's prayer was not for the righteous to be	
spared—God's justice ensures that they wouldn't be treated like the wicked—but for the wicked to	
be shown mercy. Abraham was interceding for	
Sodom and Gomorrah, pleading for their physical	
salvation. What low bar of righteousness did —	
these cities need to meet in order to be spared	
in verse 32?	
When is it appropriate for us to show evil	
people mercy? To what degree should we be	
willing to forgive people who wrong us?	
Before God pronounced judgment on Sodom,	
Abraham secured God's mercy for the city.	
Through Abraham's prayers, we see that God is	
willing to be merciful, to show patience (sometimes called his long-suffering) and hold	
back his justice for a time. What comfort does it	
give you to know that God is merciful with our	
sinfulness?	

We see in this story that God welcomes us to approach him and to intercede for the people in our lives. Whom could you intercede for today?	
4. Hagar (Genesis 16–17) Each of the three major characters in Genesis 16 —Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar—are guilty of sin against one another. And each of them finds grace from God. Read Genesis 16:1–16.	
Sarah assumed her age had prevented her from conceiving a child, so she offered Abraham her servant Hagar. Only later, in Genesis 17:16, is Abraham told that Sarah is to be the mother of his son whom God will use to further his covenant.	
• Where did Sarah go wrong? When Hagar became pregnant, she became Abraham's second wife, an elevated social status that threatened Sarah. When Abraham allowed Sarah control over Hagar, calling her "your slave" (16:6), Sarah mistreated her so badly that Hagar ran away. Jealousy and resentment led to oppression. In what ways have you seen relationships damaged by jealousy or resentment?	
Sarah waited another thirteen years, not realizing she would become a mother herself. In Genesis 17:16 and 21:1–7, we see her greatest desire fulfilled with the promise and birth of Isaac. How did Sarah react in 21:6–7? What does Sarah's story teach us about faith?	
 Where did Abraham go wrong? When Sarah asked Abraham to resolve the conflict, he relegated his authority as 	

patriarch into his wounded wife's hands, "Here, your slave is in your power; do whatever you want with her" (16:6). He "passed the buck," pawning off his responsibility to someone who had unrighteous intentions. While it can be tempting to avoid getting in the middle of others' conflicts, righteousness sometimes demands courage and compassion. What lessons can you learn from Abraham's passivity?

We see God's grace to Abraham through the birth of both Ishmael and, later, Isaac. God never wavered in fulfilling his promise, and he graciously made provision for Ishmael's well-being. How has God shown grace to you despite your wavering faith? Where has he redeemed your poor choices?

Where did Hagar go wrong? In showing contempt for Sarah, she became too proud of her newfound status. Her attitude backfired, and she ended up running away into a desperate situation. Read Proverbs 16:18. How does Hagar's situation resemble what we read in this Proverb? In what ways has your own pride tripped you up?

In Genesis 16:7–14, God met the abused slave girl in the desert, showing her how she had sinned then reassuring her of her unborn son's future success. "I see you," he said, in essence. "Have I actually seen the one who sees me?" she wondered in verse 13. Hagar is the first recorded person to give a name to God in the Bible. His appearance to her gave her the courage to return to a difficult situation and wait for the fulfillment

of his promise to her. Do you believe God sees you in your trials? Why or why not?	
Take some time to reflect on Hagar's revelation that God sees and loves the outcast, the lowly,	
the hurting, the desperate. He sees you and loves you, and he has plans for you.	
5. Abraham Lies about Sarah	
Abraham is famous for his faith, but he wasn't perfect. Read Genesis 12:10–20. Abram, the man	
later known as the father of the faith, the patriarch of the Israelites, blatantly lied about his wife.	
In Genesis 12, Abram and Sarai went to Egypt due to a famine. But Sarai was so beautiful that Abram was afraid that Pharoah would kill him to	
steal his wife. So, he asked his wife to pretend to be his sister What does Abram's behavior tell	
us about his trust in God?	
In what ways can fear override our convictions and lead us to ill-advised behaviors?	
Abram's fears were realized, and Pharaoh indeed	
took Sarai into his harem. But, instead of being killed, Abram was rewarded as the patriarch of	
her family with livestock and slaves, making him a wealthier man. Abram accepted the gifts but had	
to rely on God to get his wife back. His foolishness and unwillingness to trust God	
contrasts with God's rescue of Sarai. What does God's rescue of Sarai—despite her and	
Abram's disobedience—teach us about God's	
character?	
Read Genesis 20:1–18. It's the same song, second	
verse Asking his wife to pact like his sister	

appears to be Abram's standard operating procedure when he encounters powerful men (20:13). We learn in 20:12 that Sarah was his half-sister, so Abraham was only telling a half-lie—or a half-truth. In what ways can you identify with the decision to protect yourself with a half-truth? In what ways have half-truths make situations more complicated for you?

God uses flawed people to further his plans.
Abraham's folly shows us that it took a long time for Abraham to fully trust God. Have you ever been your own worst enemy? How have you seen your faith develop over time despite your base inclinations?

As you think about your character, consider the flawed "Father of the Faith" whom God rescued from his own foolishness, and take heart. In what ways is Abraham's faith journey encouraging to yours?

Write out a prayer of thanksgiving to God, acknowledging where you know he rescued you from your own poor choices. Thank him for his grace in your life as you've grown in your faith.

6. Weekly Reading Plan

Genesis is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during each of these sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to your group.

Session 3 focused on the choosing of Abraham and the miraculous birth of his son. Abraham's

story includes intrigue, family drama, and events that reveal more about him as a man of faith who was also flawed like anyone else.

<u>Day 1</u>: Abraham Gains Prominence in the Land (Genesis 12–14)

<u>Day 2</u>: Father Abraham (Genesis 15–17)

 $\underline{\text{Day 3}}\text{:}$ Lot and the Judgment of Sodom and

Gomorrah (Genesis 18–19)

<u>Day 4</u>: Isaac's Birth and Abraham's Testing (Genesis 20–22)

<u>Day 5</u>: Establishing Abraham's Legacy (Genesis 23–25:18)