



### UNDERSTANDING

(for your preparation as a leader)

Page 32 - 37

### DISCUSSION

(to use with your group)

Page 38 - 43

**Goal:** That through God's covenant with Abraham and his struggle with Lot, all participants would learn to be faithful to God.



**UNDERSTANDING**

# **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?**

*Read Genesis 12:1–5, 15:1–6, 15:12*

## **CONTEXT**

### ***Context in the Story of Salvation: A Faithful Lineage***

After Noah, humanity once again falls into rebellion, culminating with the Tower of Babel, and the human family is thrust into further exile. However, the line of Noah's son Shem remains faithful — and one of his descendants, Abram, is chosen to receive the Lord's next covenant.

### ***Context for Our Story Today: Three Promises***

#### **Genesis 12:1–3**

God gives Abram a command, followed by three promises: Abram is to leave his land, his kindred and his father's household. In return, God promises to bless him with a great nation, a great name, and bring about a worldwide blessing through Abram's line. This is an incredible series of promises since, at this point in time, Abram is 75 years old and has no children.

In the ensuing chapters of Genesis, God's promises to Abram will be elevated to three covenants. In Genesis 15, God will make a covenant with Abram regarding land (great nation); in Genesis 17, God will make a covenant with Abram regarding a royal dynasty (great name); and finally, in Genesis 22, God will make a covenant with Abram regarding a worldwide blessing.

These covenants lay out a road map for the rest of the covenants in the story of salvation. The covenant of land will be fulfilled with Moses; the covenant of royal dynasty will be fulfilled with David; and the covenant of worldwide blessing will be fulfilled with Jesus Christ. (See the chart below.)

Promise to Abram	Covenant with Abram	Fulfillment in Salvation History
Land/Nation (Gn 12:2)	Genesis 15	Covenant with Moses
Royal Dynasty (Gn 12:2)	Genesis 17	Covenant with David
Worldwide Blessing (Gn 12:3)	Genesis 22	New Covenant through Jesus Christ

## **CLIMAX: ABRAM'S "LOT" IN LIFE**

### **Genesis 12:4–5**

God calls Abram to leave everything behind, including his extended family, and travel to a new land. Amazingly, Abram responds faithfully to this call—mostly. We read, “So Abram went as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him.” But who is Lot? In Genesis 12:5, we learn that Lot is Abram’s nephew (his brother’s son), one of his kin. Lot isn’t supposed to come.

Abram was willing to sacrifice so much by traveling to a new land. Why would he also disobey the Lord's command by bringing Lot? First, remember that Abram has no descendants: If he remains childless, none of God's promises will be possible. He will have no one to carry on his name or inheritance, two very important concerns for the people of Abram's time. So what is Abram doing? As one study suggests, he is trying to be faithful to God and his own plan (Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins, *Walking with God* 34 – 36). Lot is Abram's "exit strategy" or "security blanket," just in case God's promises don't work out. Abram is keeping his options open by bringing Lot, a kind of surrogate son. He is being faithful, but he is also covering his bases.

## **APPLICATION: COUNT THE STARS**

### **Genesis 15:1–6, Genesis 15:12**

Even after Abram lets go of Lot (Gn 13:11), he still has room to grow. The Lord speaks to him, telling him not to fear, but Abram respectfully reminds God of his problem: He has no son, no heir to inherit this promised reward. The name "Abram" means "exalted father," which seems more like a cruel joke than anything else to this elderly man.

God responds to Abram by bringing him outside: "Number the stars, if you can," He says; "just so shall your descendants be." Scripture then tells us that Abram put his faith in the Lord. This is a breakthrough moment for Abram — but the author includes a subtle detail later in the chapter that makes this story all the more dramatic. In verse 12, it says, "as the sun was about to set." This means that when God asked Abram to count the stars, it was actually broad daylight. So, in fact, Abram couldn't count the stars. He is told that his descendants will be like these stars...which he couldn't see. With this image, God is once again reminding Abram, "You can trust Me. Even though you can't see

how this is possible, it will happen.” Abram “believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gn 15:6). God then elevates his promise of land and a nation to a covenant (Gn 15:7 – 21).

Oftentimes, we are afraid to let go of our “Lot” because we can’t see the outcome. Regardless of whether the reward is visible, we must trust in God’s faithfulness. This does not mean we trust Him to give us what we want or eventually make our plans come true; when we give everything to God, we won’t necessarily be rewarded by getting it all back. But what He promises is far more satisfying: He gives us Himself. In the face of our problems, His answer is always, “I am with you”—not necessarily, “I will fix it.”

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, we learned that God made three promises to Abram, each one corresponding to the next three covenants in the story of salvation. God elevates these promises to covenants that extend to Abram’s entire tribe. We also discussed Abram’s struggle to let go of Lot and how we need to let go of our own “Lot” in life. Finally, we discussed Abram’s faithfulness, even though he couldn’t see how God was going to fulfill His promises. The symbol of the stars reminds us to be faithful, even when we can’t see how things are going to work out.

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DISCUSSION

# DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

*Genesis 12:1–5, 15:1–6, 15:12*

**Reminder to the leader of the goal of this chapter:** That through God's covenant with Abraham and his struggle with Lot, all participants would learn to be faithful to God.

**OPENER:**

1. **Have you ever known you needed to change or let go of something in your life, but you just couldn't do it?**

*(Share aloud with your group.)*

Today we will explore arguably the most important figure of the Old Testament: Abram — or, as he is later known, Abraham. With Abram, God is going to lay out a roadmap for the rest of the covenants within the story of salvation. But, before we look at Abram, let's review where we've been and what's happened in our story since last time.

2. **Does anyone remember the first two covenants and who they are with? (You can ask for the symbols of each covenant as well.)**

*Adam. One Couple. Sabbath.*

*Noah. One Family. Rainbow.*

*(Share aloud with your group.)*

Also, here's what's happened in our story since last time: After Noah, humanity once again fell into rebellion, culminating with the Tower of Babel, and the human family was thrust into further exile. However, the line of Noah's son Shem remained faithful — and one of his descendants, Abram, is chosen to receive the Lord's next covenant.

## **CONTEXT: THREE PROMISES**

**Read Genesis 12:1–3**

**3. What is God asking Abram to do, and what does He promise in return?**

*Answer: God asks Abram to leave his land, his kindred (or extended family) and his father's house. In return, God promises to bless him with land, a great name or dynasty, and a line of descendants that will bring about a blessing for all the families of the earth.*

**4. Reference the Covenant Roadmap Chart below. Explain to your group how Genesis 12:1 – 3 is a roadmap for the rest of God's relationship with Abram and for the future covenants in the story of salvation. Show your group the chart.**

Promise to Abram	Covenant with Abram	Fulfillment in Salvation History
Land/Nation (Gn 12:2)	Genesis 15	Covenant with Moses
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Worldwide Blessing (Gn 12:3)	Genesis 22	New Covenant through Jesus Christ

## **CLIMAX: ABRAM'S "LOT" IN LIFE**

### **5. Looking at Genesis 12:4 – 5, does Abram obey God's request?**

*Allow the group to discuss. Note to the leader: Most likely, your group won't mention Lot. If they don't know the answer or don't give the right answer, move on to the next question.*

### **6. Small details in Scripture can mean big things. One small detail in this passage is that Abram brings Lot with him. Who is Lot, and does bringing Lot along go against God's command?**

*Answer: Lot is Abram's nephew (Gn 12:5). Yes, this goes against God's command! God asked Abram to leave his kindred behind (Gn 12:2).*

### **7. Why do you think Abram brings Lot anyway?**

*Answer: Abram brings Lot because he has no children: At 75 years old, his biggest fear is that he will have no heir (despite the fact that, for any of God's three promises to come about, He would need to give Abram a son). Lot was likely Abram's backup plan in case God's promises didn't work out. He may think that, if he holds onto Lot, he can still have a surrogate son.*

### **8. Like Abram, each of us can sometimes have our backup plans to God's plan — our own "Lot" — and keeping our "Lot" can lead us into trouble. What is your "Lot" in life?**

*Allow the group to discuss. Note to the leader: This can be a tough question. Don't be afraid to wait for an answer. Be prepared to give an example from your own life if necessary. Feel free to re-word the question to get your group to share.*

## **APPLICATION: COUNT THE STARS**

**Read Genesis 15:1 – 6.**

**9. God speaks to Abram, telling him not to fear, but Abram is still frustrated that he does not yet have an heir. So God tells Abram to go outside and count the stars — at which point Scripture says, “Abram put his faith in the Lord.” Why do you think this experience was so meaningful for Abram?**

*Allow the group to discuss.*

**10. Now, there is a twist to this episode with Abram and God. We get an interesting piece of information just a few verses later. Could someone please read Genesis 15:12? What does this tell us about the moment when God asks Abram to go outside and count the stars?**

*Answer: It was daylight, so Abram couldn't see the stars.*

**11. With this added piece of information, what is God showing Abram?**

*Answer: God is showing Abram that he will have an heir, even though Abram can't see how it is possible. God is helping Abram to place his trust in Him to accomplish what seems impossible.*

**12. Sometimes it's difficult to let go of something because we don't know what will happen next. Have you ever experienced this before?**

*Allow the group to discuss.*

## **SUMMARY**

*(Share aloud with your group.)*

In this chapter, we learned that God made three promises to Abram, each one corresponding to the next three covenants in the story of salvation. God elevates these promises to covenants that extend to Abram's entire tribe. We also discussed Abram's struggle to let go of

## **Discussion / Abraham (Part 1)**

Lot and how we need to let go of our own “Lot” in life. Finally, we discussed Abram’s faithfulness, even though he couldn’t see how God was going to fulfill His promises. The symbol of the stars reminds us to be faithful, even when we can’t see how things are going to work out.

Note: Has your group began praying *Lectio Divina* with Scripture? Your group can either download the *Lectio Divina* guide online (<https://focusoncampus.org/content/the-story-of-salvation>) or sign up for the daily email (<https://focusoncampus.org/content/story-of-salvation-daily-lectio>).

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