

# Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 15: December 27 – January 3

## Genesis 15

Sometimes the most difficult part of our spiritual journey is trusting in God's timing. Before Genesis 15, God had already declared His promises to Abram three times (Gen. 12:2, 7; 13:15-16). However, many years went by and Abram still had no son of his own. Furthermore, Lot had separated from Abram and was no longer considered the adopted son of Abram (if he ever was). As time marched on, Abram kept wondering when and how God would fulfill His promise. This chapter provides an important lesson for Christians today. Our journey of faith includes both believing in God's promises and trusting in His timing.

### Read Genesis 15:1-11

1. What did the LORD say to Abram in verse 1?

One of the most common commands in the Bible, "do not fear," appears for the first time in this text. Perhaps the vision itself was a frightful experience. More likely, Abram was concerned about retaliation from the Mesopotamian kings he embarrassed. The "shield" was in contrast to the lack of protection Lot received from the Canaanite kings. The "very great reward" was in contrast to the rewards Abram turned down in the previous chapter (Gen. 14:21-23).

2. How did Abram address God in verse 2?

This divine title, "*Adonay Yahweh*," is only used 291 times in the Old Testament; 210 of those are in the book of Ezekiel. Paul Kissling notes,

In using this unusual designation for God Abram expresses his confidence in God's gracious power while at the same time asking an honest question. Lot is now obviously permanently gone. Abram is somewhere between 75 and 86 years of age at this point and his wife ten years younger. He has been "stripped" of any hope for descendants. In fact, with Lot now gone he has no heir and a servant, Eliezer, will inherit the wealth that the Lord had given him.<sup>1</sup>

3. Why did Abram think that his servant would be his heir? (15:2-3)

4. What did God tell Abram in verse 4?

5. How did God illustrate the promise He made to Abram in verse 5?

6. How did Abram respond to God's word in verse 6?

James Smith observes,

Abram's senses told him that he would never father a child. Yet he believed God! Here is the first use in the Bible of the important verb believe. God revealed to Moses that he credited that faith to Abram as righteousness. To be righteous is to measure up to the demands of God. No man is righteous, no not one. God's plan, however, accepts obedient faith as equivalent to righteousness (Rom 4:2f.; Jas 2:20–24).<sup>2</sup>

7. What did God want Abram to remember in verse 7?

8. What did Abram ask God in verse 8?

9. What did God tell Abram to do in verse 9?

10. What did Abram do with the animals after he brought them to the Lord? (15:10-11)

Kissling writes,

The Lord does not tell Abram how to prepare and arrange the animals, so Abram most likely knows this from his own cultural experience of covenant making. It is commonly understood that the dividing of the animals into halves was part of a covenant formation ceremony. The parties would walk between the animal halves. The logic was that the parties to the covenant placed a curse upon themselves, in effect saying, "If I break my commitment to this covenant may I become like one of these animals."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Kissling, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Genesis Volume 2* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2009), 98.

<sup>2</sup> James Smith, *The Pentateuch* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 130.

<sup>3</sup> Kissling, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Genesis Volume 2*, 102.

## Read Genesis 15:12-21

11. What happened to Abram as the sun was setting? (15:12)
12. How long would the descendants of Abram be in slavery? (15:13)
13. What was God planning to do to deliver the descendants of Abram? (15:14)
14. Why was it going to take so long before the descendants of Abram could take possession of the Promised Land? (15:15-16)
15. What did Abram see after the sun had set? (15:17)

The smoking firepot and the blazing torch are mysterious images to our modern eyes. John Walton provides the following explanation.

Mesopotamian rituals of this period feature a sacred torch and censer in the initiation of rites, particularly nocturnal rites of purification. Purification is accomplished by the torch and censer being moved alongside of someone or something. While in Mesopotamia the torch and oven represent particular deities, here they represent Yahweh, perhaps as the purifier. This is one of many instances where the Lord uses familiar concepts and motifs to reveal himself.<sup>4</sup>

16. How did God describe the land that He was giving to the descendants of Abram? (15:18-21)
17. In verse 6, Abram believed God. But in verse 8, Abram still wants something from God that will give him greater assurance. What can we learn from this that will help us when we are struggling with doubts?
18. When have you struggled to trust in God's timing?
19. What can we do to strengthen our faith in God's word?
20. Which promises of God do you want to remember and pray about this week?

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<sup>4</sup> John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 423.

Sermon Notes 12/27/20

## The Faith of Abram

### How should we respond to Genesis chapter 15?

1. Do not be \_\_\_\_\_.  
Genesis 15:1  
Romans 8:31-34
2. Look up at the \_\_\_\_\_.  
Genesis 15:5  
Isaiah 40:26
3. \_\_\_\_\_ in the promises of God.  
Genesis 15:6  
Galatians 3:6-9
4. \_\_\_\_\_ God for help.  
Genesis 15:8  
Philippians 4:6-7



*“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”—Isaiah 40:26*