

The Life of Abraham

by

Mark J. Lenz

Leader's Guide

Lesson One—Whatever YOU Say, Lord	3
Lesson Two—You First.....	6
Lesson Three—I Love You, Lord.....	11
Lesson Four—But You Promised!	15
Lesson Five—When God Stops By.....	19
Lesson Six—Prayer Makes a Difference.....	23
Lesson Seven—Sometimes God Gives Tough Tests	26
Lesson Eight—The Calm Contentment of Faith.....	30

All rights reserved.

This leader's guide is not a copy master. Normal copyright restrictions apply. The purchaser of this kit may obtain additional leader's guides from Northwestern Publishing House. Order stock #22N0960.

New edition, 2008

Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N. 113th St., Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284
©1997 by Northwestern Publishing House.
Published 1997
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-0-8100-0700-0

Using the computer CD included in this Bible study kit

Thank you for purchasing an NPH Bible study kit. The computer CD included with this Bible study offers resources to help you prepare to teach God's Word to his people.

What will I find on the CD?

Each CD contains two text files, GUIDES.TXT and RESOURCE.TXT, and two directories, GUIDES and RESOURCE.

Read the short text files first. The GUIDES.TXT file tells you what is in the GUIDES directory. It lists the various formats for the student's guide copy masters. The RESOURCE.TXT file tells you what is in the RESOURCE directory. It contains a list of articles and resource material you may find helpful in preparing to teach the course.

How do I open the text files?

There are no programs on this CD. In other words, there is nothing you need to install on your computer and run. These are simple files, such as a letter or sermon you might save on your hard drive. To use these files, simply open them as you would any other file.

Most word processors have a menu from which you can navigate to various places to locate files. You will need to tell your word processor that you want to find a file on the drive in which you inserted the Bible study CD. This will usually be drive c: or d:. If you are using a Windows™ word processor, click on drive c: or d: in the Open File window. When you have selected the appropriate drive, it will list the files and directories that are on the Bible study CD.

What if no files or directories appear? Some word processors are set to show only files created by or for that program. You need to indicate that you want to see *all the files* on the CD. A pull-down menu in the Open File window gives you the options for the types of files you want the program to list. Choose "all files" or the equivalent. All the files and directories on your CD should appear. At this point you should be able to open the two text files. By navigating to the GUIDES and RESOURCE directories, you will be able to view the file names and open their contents as well.

How do I use the files in the GUIDES directory?

The GUIDES directory contains the student's guide copy masters and leader's guide.

The files in the GUIDES directory are provided in both RTF and PDF formats. We have made every effort to provide you with the capability of adapting this Bible study to your needs. However, some degree of reformatting may be necessary to use the RTF files on your computer.

The files included on this CD can be used by both IBM and Macintosh systems.

If you have any questions about using the CD, please call NPH at (414) 615-5721.

Microsoft is a registered trademark and Windows is a trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

Lesson One

The following sources may prove helpful in preparing to teach the lesson:

Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986, pages 12,28,29,322,1889.

Jeske, John C. *Genesis of the People's Bible* series. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991, pages 117-122, 140-144.

Kautz, Darrel. *The Contemporary Bible-Study Guides. Vol. 3, Israel's Founding Fathers*. Milwaukee: Darrel Kautz, 1970, pages 4-6.

Kretzmann, Paul E. *Popular Commentary of the Bible. Old Testament Vol. 1*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923, pages 27,28,33,34.

Meditations, Vol. 17, No. 3, page 47; Vol. 4, No. 4, page 3; Vol. 10, No. 2, page 89; Vol. 36, No. 4, page 38; Vol. 10, No. 1, page 3; Vol. 22, No. 2, page 3. (The texts of these meditations are found on the computer disk.)

Whatever YOU Say, Lord

Worship

Our sinful nature rebels at God's commands and prefers to do its own thing. It thinks that a life of self-centered, sinful pleasures is true freedom and ultimate fun. The new man judges things in a totally different way. It sees a self-serving life as the worst kind of slavery and sinful pleasures as leading to unhappiness, dissatisfaction, emptiness, and eternal ruin.

Introduction

Ask for volunteers to put the proper expression into the phrase. In the case of those who unwillingly resign themselves to the will of another or who are being sarcastic, it will not be hard to convey that feeling. In the case of those who are filled with respect and willing submission, the phrase will be spoken gently and sincerely.

Studying God's Word

Trusting God's promises

1. Haran.
2. The purpose of this question is to get the class to focus on the promises God gave to Abraham. His life of trust and obedience began with these promises, and everything he did was done because of them. All of Abraham's obedience must be considered in the light of God's promises. His faith was in God's promised blessings, centering in Christ. That was the hub around which all his obedience revolved. Our imitation of Abraham must begin with imitating his faith in God's gracious promises to us.

All of these promises are interrelated. They center in Christ. It is important to note that Abraham's life of faith began when God started speaking to him.

God promised Abram:

- (a) He would become a great nation. This included numerical, political, and especially spiritual greatness. This promise must have been a test to Abram's faith, since he was 75 years old and his wife only 10 years younger. No doubt, though, he felt honor and gratitude.
- (b) God would bless him. To be blessed meant to be favored. Abram could look forward to physical blessings, but the greatest blessing was the knowledge of God's favor. This created a profound sense of humility in Abram's mind. He knew he didn't deserve God's blessing. It was a gift from God to him.

- (c) God would make his name great. A person's name is his or her reputation. Although Abram was an obscure tent-dwelling nomad, people throughout the world would know about him. What would Abram's name signify? Faith in God's promises and trust that God would fulfill them. This would be coupled with obedience to God's commands. People who possess these qualities are people whom God

considers to be great and worthy of our emulation.

The Bible calls Abraham a friend of God, the father of believers, the father of the Israelite nation, and the ancestor of the Savior. The very fact that we are studying the life of Abraham is a fulfillment of this prophecy.

(d) God would make Abram a blessing. To be a blessing to others means to help them in some way. As we will see, Abram helped his nephew Lot escape from the kings of the east. But that hardly exhausts the meaning of this verse. Abram would be a blessing by being an example of faith and trust. Hopefully he will be a blessing to us in this class. But there is more. Abram would be a blessing to all people because from him would come the promised Savior. What joy filled Abram's heart when he thought about the many people who would be blessed through him. Certainly he kept in mind that he too would be blessed by his Descendant's work.

(e) God would bless those who blessed Abram; (f) God would curse those who cursed Abram. Abram's life was bound up in God's plans for all people. To oppose Abram was to oppose God, and to stand with Abram was to stand on the side of God himself. What confidence this inspired in Abram! He had the promise of divine protection.

(g) All peoples on earth would be blessed through Abram. Here God repeats and expands the fourth promise. Not just some people, but all people would be blessed through him. Abram knew that would never happen through his own life and deeds. From this promise Abram knew he was part of the world-wide promise God had given to Adam and Eve, and later to Noah and his son Shem. Abram knew he was the forefather of the Savior.

His Word in My Life

Option 1 (in student's guide)

The purpose of this exercise is to lead the class to see how intimately they are bound up with this man Abraham who lived so long ago.

God's promises to Abraham certainly are relevant for us. First, God's promises to Abraham teach us how God deals with us sinners—not by giving us demands, but by coming to us with promises. Only through his promises can we have confidence that our sins are forgiven and that God will deal with us in love.

Since God told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him, we can be sure that we are included in the promises God gave to Abraham.

1. God told Abraham that he would become a great nation. That is speaking about you and me. No, we are not physical descendants of Abraham, but we are his spiritual descendants. We are members of the great nation God was speaking about in this promise. See Romans 4:16,17.

2. It is very important that God bless Abraham. Only if he (and his descendants) were blessed, would the Savior be born. Even his physical wealth was important. The people in Canaan could easily have killed a poor shepherd. But the Lord used Abraham's wealth to give him a certain respect in the eyes of the people of the land.

3. The children of a great man share in his greatness. We are children of Abraham and share in his status as a friend of God.

4. We have been blessed by observing Abraham as the pattern we are to follow—a pattern of faith and trust in the Lord.

5 and 6. This principle still applies to God's church. Those who bless his church (and the individual members of his church) are confessing faith in God and his Savior. God will bless them. The opposite is true. Those who curse them because of their faith will end up being cursed by God.

7. All the above promises find their center in this promise. The promise of a Savior whose work would save the entire world includes all of us. See Paul's interpretation of this passage in Galatians 3:6-8. Note how he applies it directly to the Galatian congregation.

These promises relate to you. Just as God came to Abraham, a sinner from birth, and blessed him with promises of physical and spiritual blessings, so God has come to you sinners and given you the same promises. Just as God dealt with Abraham on the basis of his promises, so God deals with us sinners on the basis of his promises in Christ.

Option 2

Agree or disagree: God helps those who help themselves.

If this means that we dare not just sit back and wait for God to do something, then it could be understood correctly. However, if it means that we are actually leaving God out of the picture, then it is improper to say this. Somebody once put it this way: We need to pray as though everything depends on God because it does, and we need to work as though everything depends on us—because it does.

Going where God directs

1. Abram went because God had given him great promises and now told him to go.
2. Abram did not know where he was going.
3. Abram took everything he had and left. He did not maintain a second home in Haran in case things got difficult in his new home.
4. The Canaanites
5. Abram had no tangible evidence, only the Lord's promises.

His Word in My Life

Option 1 (in student's guide)

When God called Abraham to leave his family in Haran and go to a land he knew nothing about, Abraham was faced with a great decision. But God's promises were greater—so great that Abraham went immediately. There is no indication that Abraham struggled with his decision.

Yet there must have been many thoughts going through his mind.

Ask the class for stories from their own lives when they had to make a big decision. It could be a business decision, a major move, or something relating to the family. Encourage them to relate something that had spiritual implications. What struggle went on in their minds? How did secular reasons and spiritual reasons enter into their decision? Could God's promises in Christ have played a greater role?

Option 2

Your pastor has served your congregation well for a number of years. He recently received a call to a foreign mission field about which he knows next to nothing. Leaving would be very difficult for him because he has many friends in the area, he recently purchased his own home, and his children are still in school. Must he take the call because it is a call to a mission—and a foreign mission at that? Can personal considerations play into the decision? Is he displaying lack of faith and trust in God if he does not take the call?

The call a pastor receives today is not quite like the call Abraham received. Abraham's call might better be compared to a general call to service in the church or even to the call to faith. Like Abraham, a believer today wants to follow the Lord's call to serve in whatever ways he or she is able.

When called workers receive a call (whether to a foreign mission or to another congregation) they must determine where the Lord wants them