

INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE
Week 5

SESSION TITLE: "Promise: What's The Plan"

FOCAL PASSAGE: (Genesis 12:1-9)

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner discover the truths of Abram's obedience and determine in his/her life to follow God's plan in faithful obedience.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Ask the following question:

"How difficult was it for you and your family the last time you had to move?"

Allow time for responses.

Next ask - How difficult would it be for you to move if you were 75-years old and had been living in the same house your whole life and were asked to move to a far away land that you knew nothing about?

This is exactly what Abram was told to do by God. He received his instructions and the promise of a blessing and uprooted everything he knew in faithful obedience.

Ask - Would anyone like to share an example where you took a step of faith based on a promise of blessing from God?

State - Today we are going to discuss Abram's obedience to follow the will of the Lord and how we should live a life of obedience following God's call.

B. Optional Method – Share the following formation:

'Intelligent Design' Enters Classroom, Gains Convert
January 24, 2005

Harrisburg, Penn.—Last week, a Pennsylvania school district became the first to require biology students to hear about "intelligent design," a controversial alternative to the theory of evolution. Intelligent design states that the universe and humans are so complex that they couldn't have developed by chance and had to have been created by an unspecified, intelligent, guiding force.

Lawsuits are still pending over the Dover Area School District's decision. Richard Thompson, who's defending the district, said, "This is the first step in which students will be given an honest scientific evaluation of the theory of evolution and its problems."

Two opposing groups say intelligent design is just a secular version of creationism. "It's not science; it's a theocratic idea," said former Dover science teacher Bryan Rehm.

According to a Gallup poll, 35 percent of Americans don't believe in evolution. "We're teaching our children a theory that most of us don't believe in," Dover resident Steve Farrell said of evolution. "I don't think God creates everything on a day-to-day basis, like the color of the sky. But I do believe that he created Adam and Eve—instantly."

Professor Michael Behe, a leading intelligent design advocate, rejects claims that he's a creationist. "Our starting point is from science, not from Scripture," he said. "What we find in the cell is stuff that looks strongly like it was designed by an intelligence."

Intelligent design recently swayed a prominent atheist into accepting the existence of God. British philosophy professor Antony Flew, 81, said he "had to go where the evidence leads," adding that "the findings of more than 50 years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design."

Flew, who hasn't embraced Christianity, presently describes himself as a deist, one who believes that God hasn't intervened in human affairs since Creation. Flew said he accepts Charles Darwin's theory of evolution but doubts it can explain life's origins. Although Flew still rejects ideas of an afterlife, as well as divine revelations, including the Bible, he expresses openness to the possibility.

Sources: Associated Press, Washington Post, existence-of-god.com

Ask – What is the significance of the scientific community coming to the realization that the complexity of life could not have just happened by an accident? (It would point to the need of a Creator, an "Intelligent Designer.")

We serve a God who is in control and has plans for our lives.

Next - Share the following illustration:

Ever wonder if the Lord really knows what you want and need?

David Smallbone felt God leading him to promote Christian concerts in his homeland, Australia, where only 5 percent of the people believed in Christ. When too few fans filled his seats during one major tour, however, David took a \$250,000 bath in red ink.

Creditors repossessed his home, and the father of six looked for work elsewhere. A top artist offered him a job in Nashville, so the Smallbones sold their furniture and other possessions and purchased tickets to the United States.

A few weeks after they arrived, however, David was informed that his position was "no longer available." He literally could not get out of bed for several days. When he and his wife explained to their children what happened, they all got on their knees and asked God to help them.

Interesting things began to happen. God provided bags of groceries, a minivan, and odd jobs. Then the biggest surprise of all—a recording contract for David's oldest daughter, Rebecca, age 15. She recorded her first album using an old family name, St. James.

Flash forward to today. David promotes his own daughter's sold-out concerts. Rebecca St. James has become one of the hottest Christian artists in America. *Christianity Today* magazine has named her one of the top 50 up-and-coming evangelical leaders under age 40.

All along—no surprise—God knew what he was doing!

Christian Reader (January/February 2002), pp. 13-14

State – What a great picture of God's plan being lived out in a faithful follower.

Read – (Genesis 12:1-3)

State - Today we are going to discuss Abram's obedience to follow the will of the Lord and how we should live a life of obedience following God's call.

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip "Pearl Harbor"

Start: 2:19:35

Stop: 2:20:10

Synopsis: In the movie "Pearl Harbor" the story of the aftermath of the Japanese attack is lived out. In this scene the following conversation occurs:

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Raph (Ben Affleck) and Danny (Josh Hartnett) are called into Colonel Jimmy Doolittle's office. They have succeeded in downing seven Japanese planes.

Doolittle (Alec Baldwin) stands behind his desk and addresses the cocky pilots somberly.

"You've both been awarded the silver star. You're just about the only pilots with combat experience. I need you for a mission I've been ordered to put together."

Raph and Danny look nervously pleased. Doolittle looks them over carefully.

"Do you know what 'top secret' is?" he asks.

Raph responds with a wry smile. "Yes, sir! It's the kind of mission when you get medals, but they send them to your relatives."

Ignoring the remark, Doolittle continues, "Top secret means you train for something never done before in aviation history—and you go without knowing where you're going. You do it on that basis or not at all."

Honored to be asked, yet unsure of what they are committing to, both men agree to go.

State – This is exactly how Abram must have felt. He was given his instructions and told to uproot everything he had known to travel to a foreign land.

Read (Genesis 12:1-3)

State - Today we are going to discuss Abram's obedience to follow the will of the Lord and how we should live a life of obedience following God's call.

II. Book

A. **Utilize** the discussion guide to examine the Scripture passages.

III. Look

A. **Distribute** the handout "Commit To His Plan" and guide members through it. (Note: This would be an excellent group activity.)

IV. Took

A. **Share** the following quote:

At the spiritual level, planning means taking the initiative. It's not about sitting around until you are absolutely certain God is calling you to a particular task, direction, country, or ministry. Nor is it waiting for the doors to open so you can go there easily. Planning is an act of faith. Jesus never told his disciples to wait for an invitation. He told them to go.

Brother Andrew in *The Calling*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 40, no. 8.

State - This week take a step of faith and "go" into uncharted territory. Maybe it is talking to a neighbor or friend about Christ. Maybe it is helping with an ABF mission project. Maybe it is committing to go on a mission trip. Whatever your uncharted territory is jump into it all the way and do not look back.

B. Optional Method – Ask the class to share what lessons of life they have gleaned from the passage today. Record them on the board as they are mentioned.

Suggested lessons:

1. Have ears open to hear God.
2. Have eyes open to see God's plan.
3. Have willing feet to follow God.
4. Be willing to put it all on the line for God.
5. Proceed with faith when God calls even if you do not know all the details.
6. Worship God as a God of grace.
7. Realize that God has a plan for your life.

Have the class bow in prayer as you ask the following questions.

1. What has God been trying to tell you that you have not taken the time to listen to?
2. What has He spoken to you that you have not acted on because you did not know all of the details?
3. How tied are you to your "stuff"? Would you put it all on the line for God?
4. Will you let Him have all of you today?

Close in prayer.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Teacher's Copy)

1. What was the Lord's first word to Abram in (12:1)?
("Go" He told him to step out leaving all that he knew behind.)

2. What are examples in your life where you heard the Lord's command to "go" and you stepped into unknown territory?

3. What did God tell Abram he would have to leave behind? (12:1)
 - a. His country
 - b. His relatives
 - c. His father's house

4. What would give Abram the confidence to leave everything he knew to go into unknown territory? (v. 2-3)
(The Lord's promise to be with him and the Lord's plan of blessing.)

5. Has there ever been any "unknown territory" that God has called you to go to that you avoided? If so, why?

6. Outline the promises and blessings the Lord stated to Abram in (vs. 1-3)
 - a. God would show him the land.
 - b. God would make him a great nation.
 - c. God would bless him.
 - d. God would make his name great.
 - e. God would bless those who bless him.
 - f. God would curse those who curse him.
 - g. God would bless all families through him.

7. How did Abram respond to God when God promised his descendants the land? (v. 7)
(He built an altar and worshipped God.)

8. How often do you pause in your busy schedule to worship God for the many blessings He has given you?

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Student's Copy)

1. What was the Lord's first word to Abram in (12:1)?
2. What are examples in your life where you heard the Lord's command to "go" and you stepped into unknown territory?

3. What did God tell Abram he would have to leave behind? (12:1)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

4. What would give Abram the confidence to leave everything he knew to go into unknown territory? (v. 2-3)

5. Has there ever been any "unknown territory" that God has called you to go to that you avoided? If so, why?

6. Outline the promises and blessings the Lord stated to Abram in (vs. 1-3)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
 - g. _____

7. How did Abram respond to God when God promised his descendants the land? (v. 7)

8. How often do you pause in your busy schedule to worship God for the many blessings He has given you?

COMMIT TO HIS PLAN

C

Christ-likeness (*Matthew 26:39*)

Christ carried out the will of God even though it was difficult.

Abram left his security behind (1a).

What ministry do I need to commit to regardless of the difficulty?

O

Obedience (*1 Samuel 15:22-23*)

Why is obedience better than sacrifice?

Abram obeyed even into the unknown (1b).

How do I need to obey Christ in my commitments to Him?

M

Maturity (*1 Corinthians 3:1-3*)

It is time to grow up as a Christian.

Abram was mature in his chronological age (75) and his spiritual age.

How am I still like a spiritual babe? How can I mature in these areas?

M

Ministry Involvement (*1 Corinthians 12:11-14*)

How am I using my spiritual gift(s)?

What do I need to change to utilize them more effectively?

I

Intestinal Fortitude (*2 Timothy 4:7*)

It takes guts to stay the course.

Abram disregarded his opposition and he persevered.

What obstacles can hinder me from keeping my commitment?

T

Tender Hearted (*Ephesians 4:32*)

Christians must be determined, but at the same time kind to others.

Abram took time to worship and bring glory to God.

How can I carry out the tasks at hand and maintain a positive witness bringing glory to God?

THE Word For The Week

TRUST: Who Makes Us Prosper GENESIS 14:1-24

Monday – Read Genesis 14:1-7

- What does it mean to prosper? To have abundant life? Begin by journaling your thoughts on these two words.
- The listing and naming can be a bit overwhelming and confusing. Grab a page in your journal and begin a list of the two groups of kings, and the timeline of the relationship between the countries.
- We begin to see a coalition of armies in the two groups, one a group of four, the other a group of 5.
- Why is it significant that we see the two groups in number?
- Pray that God would bring wisdom and understanding to the inclusion of such details in Scripture.

Tuesday – Read Genesis 14:8-12

- Which group of kings is this coalition? How many in number are they?
- What would be the point of the description of the area containing asphalt, or tar pits?
- In verse 12 we have more important detail, the description of Lot. Who was Lot according to verse 12? What do you know about Sodom thus far in from Ezekiel 16:49-50?
- Pray that God would expose any allegiance in your life to pattern of this world, any creeping in of the lusts of life, and ask Him to grant repentance in any areas.

Wednesday – Read Genesis 14:13-17

- What type of environment or setting is described in verse 13 about Abram's current relationship with those whose territories he was in?
- Revisit point 5 of Monday's devotional. See also Judges 7.
- What was Abram motivated by?
- Pray that God would call to mind in your life any of your allegiances or parts of your heart that need to be rescued from the enemy.

Thursday – Read Genesis 14:17-24

- What do you think the king of Sodom would stand for according to Ezekiel 16:49-50? How do you think this form of "prosperity" is similar to that of the United States in 2005?
- How does verse 18 contrast what one could assume of the king of Sodom? What about the actions of Melchizedek in verse 19 and 20?
- What was Abram's response at the end of verse 20?
- Honestly answer whether or not you are you more generous with your time, energy, gifts, talents, and knowledge to the pursuit of prosperity... or to the pursuit of glorifying?

Friday – Read Genesis 14:1-24

- Revisit and particular verse of interest or of impact.
- What was the offering of Melchizedek in verse 18?
- What was the offering of Jesus at Matthew 26:26-29
- What was Abram's offering to Melchizedek?
- The king of Sodom offered earthly wealth, Melchizedek offered to join in worship and give thanks to God...how would you describe the offer of Melchizedek?
- Melchizedek and Abram worshiped God for the victory, how does this action as well as Abram's immediate reaction of offering effect how you respond after being brought through a difficult or even prosperous time?

Ancient/Future - A Journey through Genesis
"Promise: What's the Plan"
Genesis 12:1-9

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to Israel back THEN)
ABRAM'S RESPONSE TO THE LORD'S COMMANDS
(to journey from the security of home
to an unknown land and to be a blessing)
AND PROMISES

(to show/give him a land, to make of him a great people, to bless him,
to make his name great, to bless the families of the earth through him)

**WAS TO JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF CANAAN AND
TO WORSHIP/PROCLAIM THE LORD'S NAME IN THE LAND.**

NOTE: Moses narrowed his subject significantly in these nine verses.

Where did Israel come from? From Abram. Where were they going? To the land promised to Abram and his descendents, Canaan. How would they get there? By following Abram's pattern of obedience. God spoke to [commanded] Abram, adding His promise of land, descendents, and blessing. Abram demonstrated his faith in God by obeying His command. The Lord then appeared to Abram, confirming His promise. And Abram publicly worshipped [preached] the name of the Lord. If Israel was to enjoy God's blessing they too would have to obey and worship the Lord of promise.

- I. The Lord's commands ("journey" & "bless") accompanied by His promises ("land," "descendents," & "blessing") to Abram guaranteed His plan to bless the families of the earth through Abram's sacrificial obedience, (1-3).
 - A. The content of the Lord's first command ["And the Lord said," cp. chapter 1] to Abram was that he journey from his own land, from his own birthplace, and from his father's house to a land that He [YHWH] would show him, (1).

Note: As the Lord had spoken "form and fullness" into being in chapter 1, so He spoke a new beginning to and through Abram. A new plan emerged to bless the creation – God would bless through Abram and his descendents. But this new plan required obedient sacrifice on Abram's part. He must leave the "security" of what he had known to journey to a place he did not know.
 - B. The purpose for which the Lord promised to make Abram into a great people, to bless him, and to make his name great was so that he would be a blessing, (2a).

Note: Five times in verses 1-3 the Lord promised, "I will." Five times in verses 1-3 the Lord promised to "bless" Abram and make him, to others, a "blessing." This was the plan: the Lord would bless all the families of the earth through Abram [through his descendent(s), especially, we now know, through Jesus].
 - C. The content of the Lord's second command to Abram was that he must be (become) a blessing, (2b).
 - D. The content of the Lord's promise to Abram [as he became a blessing] was that He would bless those who blessed Abram, curse [judge] those who cursed [treated lightly, despised] Abram, and bless all the families of the earth through him [his descendent], (3).
- II. The result of Abram's obedience to the Lord's commands/promises (1-3) was that he came into the land of Canaan and journeyed through it to Shechem, (4-6).

- A. Abram's response to the Lord's commands/promises was that he journeyed from Haran, when he was seventy-five years old, as the Lord had commanded him, Lot journeying with him, (4).
Note: Not only was Abram's obedience an act of sacrifice in that he was leaving the "security" of home, he also was making the "unknown" journey at 75, "dragging" along relatives for whom he was responsible.
- B. The result of Abram journeying toward the land of Canaan, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and proselytes they had accumulated in Haran, was that he and those with him came to the land of Canaan, (5).
- C. Abram's activity once he arrived in the land where the Canaanites lived was to journey into the land as far as Shechem, to the oak of Moreh, (6).
Note: Moses' audience would take note of the geography mentioned in verses 4-6. Abram's obedient journey of faith took him into the Promised Land, the same land Israel was about to enter. It was a land of pagans and of pagan worship. Abram would "shine" in a spiritually dark land.
- III. The Lord's appearance/promise to Abram confirmed His plan to give the land of Canaan to Abram's descendents, (7a).
- IV. Abram's response to the Lord's confirmation/promise was to build an altar to the Lord Who had appeared to him at Shechem, to continue journeying south through the land, and to publicly worship/proclaim the name of the Lord, (7b-9).
 - A. Abram's response to the Lord's promise was to build an altar to the Lord Who had appeared to him there, (7b).
 - B. Abram's journey [through the land promised to him and his descendents] took him from Shechem to the mountain east of Bethel and west of Ai, where he pitched his tent and build an altar to the Lord, proclaiming His name, and on toward the Negev [north to south], (8-9).
Note: The Israelites, to whom Moses wrote, were about to begin a journey through the same land, but moving from south to north (the opposite of Abram's journey), ending in Shechem, where they would make a covenant with the Lord (Joshua 24) and accept their calling to be a shining light before the lost.

(Theological . . . What it means to believers **ALWAYS**)
**FAITH IN THE WORD [COMMANDS/PROMISES] OF THE LORD
 OBEYS AND WORSHIPS HIM.**

- I. The Lord's command to obey Him (by faith) demands sacrifice, (1, 4-6).
 - A. The Lord's command demands leaving "security" behind, (1a).
 - B. The Lord's command demands going to the "unknown," (1b).
 - C. The Lord's command disregards age, (4).
 - D. The Lord's command disregards encumberments, (5).
 - E. The Lord's command disregards opposition, (6).
- II. The Lord's command to obey Him (by faith) promises blessing, (2-3, 7a).
- III. Faith in the Lord's Word [promises] provokes obedience, (4-6, 8a, 9).
- IV. Faith in the Lord's Word [promises] evokes worship, (7b, 8b).

(Pedagogical . . . What it means to us NOW)
PROCLAIM HIS NAME.

- I. God has a plan to bless His people.
 - A. God had His original (1:28) and revised (9:1) plan to bless His people.
 - B. God refreshed His plan to and through Abram, (2-3, 7a).
 - C. God's refreshed plan included Land, Descendents, and Blessing.
 1. The promises were ratified in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 15,
 2. The land promise was developed in the Palestinian Covenant of Deuteronomy 28-30,
 3. The descendent/seed promise was developed in the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, and
 4. The blessing promise was developed in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31.
 - D. God's plan of blessing is fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ, (Luke 22:20, Hebrews 12:22-24).
- II. God's plan provokes sacrificial obedience from His people.
 - A. God's plan demands leaving "security" behind, (1a).
 - B. God's plan demands going to the "unknown," (1b).
 - C. God's plan disregards age, (4).
 - D. God's plan disregards encumberments, (5).
 - E. God's plan disregards opposition, (6).
 - F. God's plan demands perseverance, (8a, 9).
- III. God's plan evokes public worship/proclamation from His people.
 - A. God's presence and promise inspires the worship of His people, (7b).
 - B. God's provision and protection inspires the worship of His people, (8b).
- IV. PROCLAIM HIS NAME (Reputation/Attributes/Actions/Promises).
 - A. PROCLAIM HIS NAME in what you do: obey what you know.
 - B. PROCLAIM HIS NAME in what you say: worship Who you know.