**Walk Through the Bible**

**Lesson Number Fifteen**

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**Abram Promised Once Again – God Makes a Covenant with Abram – Abram and Sarai’s names changed to Abraham and Sarah**

**Genesis 15:1-6**

Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.” 2But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. 3You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.” 4Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” 5Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” **6And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.**

**Nothing pleases God more than when we trust Him and believe Him!**

**Hebrews 11:6 (KJV)**
6  But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

When we read about our “Heroes of Faith” in the Bible, I think it is easy for us to think that they had it easier than we do sometimes.

God told Abram to not be afraid. I can imagine he WAS afraid. He lived in a land full of wicked giants. The land was not the greatest upon which to raise livestock and crops.

I have told you all of a man I knew back in Texas who had lost his farm and his home and everything he had. He and I were talking one day and he told me how he always thought as you got older things would get easier and it just isn’t always the truth. We still have anxiety and worry if we do not trust in the Lord. This world, by its very nature, brings with it, trouble.

In Genesis 1:1, the King James Version says that God said to Abram, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.”

*When I went to Bible college, I had saved up money for tuition and books. We moved to Tulsa on April 28, 1994. I had heard a Tulsa radio station some time before and they were talking about how the economy was great and that they could not find enough workers for jobs.*

*When we got to Tulsa, I had planned on doing photography to make my living. They had a big drag race planned and bicycle races, things like that. I had planned on making those events, taking photos and then going back the next day to sell the photos. I would also photograph weddings and other events.*

*It rained for something like twenty-six weekends in a row just after we moved there! It completely washed out many of the events so I had to look for a job. I had finally spent all of the money I had saved for school and we were completely broke!*

*I looked everywhere you can imagine without success and finally went to the Broken Arrow City Hall to apply to haul garbage. Broken Arrow is the little suburb we lived in and where the Bible College is located.*

*They were hiring jailers and they were giving a test in about two hours so I sat down and began filling out about a half inch stack of paper. I took the test and did very well on it and I also found out they were wanting to start their own photo lab. I had a lot of experience in that area. The police department wanted to hire me but I had to go through an extensive background investigation. After three months, I had passed everything and I went to work making $970 a month.*

*By Oklahoma state statutes, jailers must go through two weeks of training each year. It just so happened that the second week of jail certification training overlapped my first of two weeks of orientation at school.*

*About a week and a half before school started, my aunt and uncle in Oklahoma called and said they felt like the Lord wanted them to pay my way through school! That was a real miracle!*

*I spoke to the dean at school and asked him if I could miss the first week of school and told him how much trouble I had had trying to find a job. He reminded me that I had come there to go to school, not to work at a police department. He would not let me miss the first week of school. He told me to stand on Psalm 5:12.*

**Psalm 5:12 (KJV)**
12  For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

*I went to my lieutenant at the police department and asked him if there was any way they could move the jail training ahead one week. He was doing some paperwork and, without looking up at me said, “I won’t work with a Rhema student.”*

*I said okay and I walked into the Chief of Police’s office and explained to him what was going on and I apologized, that after all that background check, that I would have to quit working there. He told me not to worry, that he would take care of it.*

*Sure enough, they moved the school ahead one week and everything worked out. At the end of my employment there about three years later, that lieutenant came running down the hall to catch me before I left. He said, “I just want you to know that you have been a blessing to this department and from now on, we are going to look at hiring Rhema students for jobs in the jail before anyone else.”*

*God surely did surround me with favor!*

God surrounded Abram with favor everywhere he went to. God will also surround you with favor wherever you go!

**Genesis 15:7-21 (NLT)**

7Then the Lord told him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.” 8But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?” 9The Lord told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. 11Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away. 12As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. **13Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. 14But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. 15(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) 16After four generations your descendants will return here to this land,** for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

17After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. 18So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— 19the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

Abram fell into a deep sleep yet, I believe he saw all that God did. It would almost be like a hypnotic sleep.

God told Abram that his people would be held captive for 400 years but after that, he would deliver them and they would be very wealthy.

Remember how the Hebrew children left Egypt with all of Egypt’s gold, silver and precious gems!

**The Birth of the Arab Race**

**Genesis Chapter 16 (NLT)**

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. 2So Sarai said to Abram, “The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal.

In fact, God did not prevent Sarai from having children. God’s blessings are for us to have children. Sarai was kind of a stinker.

What man is going to turn down an opportunity like this? Abraham sinned by sleeping with Hagar, not from the sexual aspect of it or by the polygamous aspect of it. It was by him not waiting on God’s promise to bring him a son, the Son of Promise! Even though polygamy is NOT God’s very best, it was acceptable in the Old Testament.

3So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

4So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. 5Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she’s pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who’s wrong—you or me!”

In fact, it was Sarai who treated Hagar with contempt, not the other way around as she was complaining. Sarai started it all and then she blamed Abram and Hagar.

6Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.”

Abram played the part of a coward again. Instead of dealing with Sarai and calming her down, he told her to deal with Hagar however she wanted.

Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

7The **angel of the Lord** found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur.

In the Old Testament, the Angel of the Lord is ALWAYS Jesus!

8The angel said to her, “Hagar, Sarai’s servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress, Sarai,” she replied.

9The angel of the Lord said to her, **“Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.”** 10Then he added, “I will give you more descendants than you can count.”

God not only raises questions, but offers solutions. He always asks people to do the best thing, though it may be the hardest to do. Hagar did submit, but was cast out of Abraham's home when Ishmael was about nineteen ([Gen. 21:1-21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ge+21%3A1-21)). This is referred to in the allegory of [Gal. 4:21-31](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+4%3A21-31) which proves that the law of Moses has been abolished, that the old covenant has been cast out, and that the new covenant has now taken the place of the old.
Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments of the Authorized or King James Version Text.

11And the angel also said, “You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress. 12This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives.”

4,000 years later, we see this is absolutely true among the Arab people.

All of the trouble we see with the Arabs and Israelies is a direct result of Abraham’s sin of not waiting on God to bring the Son of Promise. There has always been enmity between Ismael’s descendants and Isaac’s descendants.

13Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, “You are the God who sees me.” She also said, “Have I truly seen the One who sees me?” 14So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means “well of the Living One who sees me”). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

The Hebrew name of God, the God who sees me is “El-Roi.”

15So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. 16Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

**Genesis Chapter 17 (NLT)**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. 2I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

This was Abram’s twenty-fourth year in Canaan and it was God’s fifth time to appear to Abram.

Thirteen years had gone by since Abram heard from God.

Sometimes we think if we don’t hear from God every day that we have missed the mark.

3At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, 4“This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! 5What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. 6I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

7“I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

We, along with the Jews are spiritual Israel! This promise was not just to the Jews but to us too. Abraham is the spiritual father of our faith!

**The Mark of the Covenant**

9Then God said to Abraham, **“Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.** 10This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you **must be circumcised.** 11You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. 13All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. 14Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”

Why do you think God chose circumcision as the sign of the covenant? There is no body part as precious to a man! Also, every day a man must urinate and every time he does, he sees that mark in his flesh and he is reminded of God’s covenant.

**Sarai Is Named Sarah**

15Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. 16And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

17Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” 18So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

I believe Abraham loved Ishmael but God makes it very plain that he is NOT the son of promise. Ishmael was conceived by natural means but Isaac will be conceived of supernatural means!

Abram meant “high father or exalted father” but Abraham meant “father of a multitude.”

19But God replied, “**No**—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. 20As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **21But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac,** who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” 22When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

23On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. 24Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, 25and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. 26Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, 27along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

Can you imagine what these people thought? Especially after seeing the pain the first servant went through while being circumcised? They probably thought Abraham had lost his mind!

I knew a man who was circumcised when he was nineteen and he said it was one of the worst things he had ever gone through!

Circumcision is no longer required. God circumcises our hearts as we trust in Jesus and are born again. We no longer need a mark in our flesh because God makes a mark in our spirit!