



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- ☐ These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- ☐ Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- ☐ Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- ☐ Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- ☐ Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- ☐ If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on Oct 22, 2023

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

THE BEGINNING OF FAITH – Genesis 15:1-19



I. Introduction

Welcome to the 6th message our sermon series New Beginnings where we are taking a look back at the book of Genesis to find lessons that can help us to see the new thing that God is doing in our lives. Last week we talked about *The Beginning of Sexuality, Marriage and Friendship*. Most of the feedback I have received has been positive and gracious, even from those who see things differently. We had a small but meaningful listening session with LGBTQ+ people from our congregation last Tuesday, and will be holding a similar session for the family members of LGBTQ+ folks this Tuesday. Thanks for being a thoughtful, gracious, Biblically-grounded congregation that's committed to meeting people where they are, as they are, and loving them in Jesus' name.

Today we are going to talk about *The Beginning of Faith* from the story of Abraham, and how it all started with a personal relationship with God.

Questions: How are we supposed to be in relationship with a spiritual being we can't physically see, hear or touch? And where do we get the idea that God even wants to be in a relationship with us?

Bottom Line: From the beginning, God has been calling people into personal, conversational relationship with Him, based on faith alone.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:

Genesis 15:1-19

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,

your very great reward."

² But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

⁸ But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

⁹ So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be

buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

Hebrews 11:1

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Romans 4:13

¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

Romans 4:18-20

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”^[a] ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. God can speak to us directly as he had with Abraham and Moses. But more likely than not, he speaks to us in a variety of different ways:
 - a. through Scripture,
 - b. through creation(nature),
 - c. through people like spiritual leaders and mentors, friends, and family,
 - d. or in Christian fellowship like small group gatherings, worship services.
 - Share with the group one or two of the most common ways God speaks to you. Or feel free to share a time where God spoke to you in a way that was out of the ordinary.
2. Relationships always begin with a **call**. Someone reaches out to someone else and invites them into something new. Thus, God’s call on Abram, and Abram’s affirmative response is the start of a new relationship.
 - Take a moment to remember the time God first called you into a relationship with Him or towards a deeper level of intimacy. How was your response? What were your thoughts and feelings?
 - After taking time to remember, thank God for His call on your life.

3. A personal relationship with God begins with a **call**, but at some point requires a **commitment** – a decision to enter into that relationship. To follow God into something new means that you will need to leave behind beliefs, habits, relationships or priorities, in exchange for something unknown and uncertain.
 - If you have heard God's call, but are hesitant to make that commitment, what are the factors impacting your decision? What are beliefs/habits/relationships/priorities that you are holding onto that God is inviting you to surrender to follow Him?
 - If you have heard God's call and have made a commitment, but are in a season of falling short, what can you do and change to recommit yourself to your First Love?
4. Abraham is afraid that he will remain childless, and that God will not deliver on his promise. Through honest conversations, Abraham's relationship with God grew.
 - Are there areas in your life where you are experiencing fear and doubt? Afraid that God is not going to come through; doubt that things are not going to turn out as God has promised? How has your conversations with God been? What can you learn and take away from Abraham's dialogue with God?
 - For those who feel comfortable to share, how can the group step in and provide encouragement and support during these times of fear and doubt?
 - As you wrap up, as a group take time to pray for one another and invite the Holy Spirit and ask Him for help and the strength to respond to the call to Him with courage, persistent commitment, and genuine conversations.

Take Home Message:

A personal relationship with God begins with a CALL, that leads to a COMMITMENT. Once that relationship gets started, it grows through CONVERSATION. God is not looking for your good deeds, or your religious activity, or your Bible knowledge. All God is asking is that you would answer His call, talk to Him about whatever is happening in your life and world, and trust Him with every aspect of your life.

Let's Pray

III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

Prayers for Preparation of the heart

- ☐ Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- ☐ Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

Prayers for the Purposes of God

- ☐ Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

Prayers for the People of Grace

- ☐ Pray that Grace Chapel will seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

Prayers for the Person God's calling

- ☐ Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- ☐ Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

Prayers for Discernment

- ☐ Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- ☐ Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- ☐ Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

IV. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- ☐ The **with-God** life of our personal habits and routines;
- ☐ The **with-others** life of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- ☐ The **for-the-world** life that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- ☐ Christianity is not so much a religion as it is a personal relationship with God.
- ☐ God hasn't promised us land, or children, or fame, or wealth, or even health. But He has promised to be with us, and to be for us. He's promised peace, and strength, and hope. He's promised to forgive us and make us new. And He's promised to take whatever happens to us in this world, and work it together for something good – good for us, and good for the world.