God's Makes a Covenant with Abram - Gen. 15
Gospel Truth | "God's Grace to us is revealed in the calling of Abram"

God took initiative with Abram—After rescuing Lot, Abram was visited by a king named Melchizedek. The Bible calls Melchizedek both the king and the priest of Salem, which was an ancient name for Jerusalem. Melchizedek praised God and brought out bread and wine for a dinner.

In Melchizedek, we see a dramatic foreshadowing (a picture) of Jesus, who was also a king and priest in Jerusalem. One day, Jesus would himself bring out bread and wine and provide a supper we would all remember—the Last Supper.

After the visit with Melchizedek, God again spoke to Abram. So in this passage we see God continuing to take initiative with sinful man as he unfolds the plan of salvation. God was continually faithful to keep watch over Abram.

God made a covenant with Abram—God promised to give Abram a son and told him his descendants would be as numerous as the stars—more than he could count! He also promised that his descendants would possess the entire land of Canaan. Abram believed God, and God counted Abram's faith as righteousness (without guilt or sin).

To show how important this promise was, God made a covenant with Abram, just as he had earlier made a covenant with Noah. In those days, the tradition for making a covenant was to sacrifice animals and have both people in the covenant walk between the separated halves of the animals (see Jeremiah 34:18). In effect, the parties in the covenant were promising to keep the terms of the covenant or suffer the same fate as the animals. In God's covenant with Abram, God alone went between the animal parts. This showed that God was taking all the responsibility of fulfilling the promise of the covenant. God's promise to Abram was based on grace alone.

Abram's (Abraham's) faith was credited to him as righteousness—In his letter to the Romans, Paul helps us understand the faith that was counted to Abram as righteousness. (Paul uses the name Abraham because later God changes Abram's name.) Paul says, "No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised" (Romans 4:20–21).

Faith that is counted as righteousness is a gift of God, not a work of man. In Ephesians 2:8 we read, "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

WHERE IS JESUS? ———————————————————————

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read John 15:15–17.

This passage in John's Gospel tells us that we were chosen by God, just as Abram was. God took initiative in calling Abram, and then in making a covenant with him. In the same way, God took initiative in calling us and making a covenant with us in Jesus.

God's covenant with Abram was about the future. It pointed forward to the new covenant of salvation in Jesus. Our covenant with Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram. We are part of the many nations God would bless through Jesus, the offspring of Abram.

Other Family Worship Helps:

The Truth and Grace Catechism Book (TAG Book) provides some great catechism questions to help your children learn a definition of what a *covenant* is. Depending on your children's ages they may not understand the word but by memorizing the definition you are giving them a reference point that you will soon find yourself referring back to. Between us parents, most adults probably lack a simple definition of some of these theologically rich words.

37. **What is a Covenant?** An agreement between two or more persons.
(1 Samuel 18:3; Matthew 26:14,15)

38. **What is the covenant of grace?** The agreement God made with His elect people to save them from their sins.
(Genesis 17:1-8; Romans 11:27; Hebrews 10:16,17)

39. **What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace?** To keep the whole law for His people and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.
(Romans 8:3,4; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 9:14,15)