

Reflection

1. Christianity is all about having faith in God. How would you explain the difference between having faith in God and having faith in Christian virtues and teachings, the church, eternal life or the idea of God?
2. In what ways is having faith different than simply believing or acknowledging? What do you find hardest about putting your faith TOTALLY in God? What do you do to nurture and grow your faith in God? In what ways has your faith grown in the past year and what helped to bring this about?
3. What is a promise of God—or even an expectation you have of God—over which you feel some amount of disappointment for God not already bringing it to fruition for you? In what ways, if any, have you given up on one of God’s promises, possibly even settling for your own “Eliezer of Damascus” solution?
4. What is one of God’s promises that you clearly have to wait for him to fulfill? In what tangible ways do you/we experience barrenness until that promise is fulfilled? What difference does it make, if any, to know that this promise—assuming it’s biblical—is part of God’s covenant with you?

Action –

- a. Step outside on a clear night this week and look at the stars. Take some time to consider that the God who made the stars has formed a covenant with you (Hebrews 8:8-12). Reflect on the quality of your faith in God, especially in light of his grace and majesty.
- b. List the promises you are waiting for God to fulfill in your life. If you don’t know the biblical references, consider googling them online. Talk with God about each of these promises and about how they fit within the covenant he has established with you.

Pray – If studying in a group, pray for one another and for each other’s spiritual growth throughout the coming week.

Faith People - Introduction

There is no denying the centrality of faith for God's people. It is by faith that we are saved, justified and declared righteous. By faith we become sons and daughters of God. We're also called to walk by faith, excel in faith, and be sound in faith. And yet not all faith is the same. We can be "of little faith" or have "weak faith." Our faith can also be "sincere" and something that others see in us and celebrate. In this series we'll examine faith through the stories of several Old Testament characters, learning about our own faith through their examples.

Begin with Prayer – *Father, with an expectation that you will use this study to grow me/us more into the image of your Son, I/we open our hearts and minds to your Spirit. Amen.*

Follow Up on *i belong*. [*protected*] – What thoughts, questions, actions, etc. resulted in your life this past week as an outflow of last week's sermon study?

The Sermon's Main Point – *Faith People: Covenant Faith*

Faith is the response God looks for in us. It is our willingness to TRUST GOD even when we're disappointed with his sovereign plan for our lives. This type of faith is solely founded in the relationship God permits us to have with him; it is covenant faith.

Begin – Choose from the following questions to begin thinking about the study's topic.

1. What is a brand name (of any product) that you feel you can trust? What's led you to this conclusion? Is there a brand that you've found you can't trust at all?
2. Would you rather have to rely on others or be the one others rely on? Why? If it depends on the situation, describe one in which you would rather have to depend on someone else.
3. What would others say describes you better: gullible, trusting, careful, guarded, suspicious, or cynical. Do you agree? What impact has this disposition had on your life?

Faith People: Covenant Faith

Genesis 15

Grasping, Sharing, Learning and Appreciating

1. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15.
2. What strikes you about the structure of Genesis 15:1-6? What does this structure reveal about Abraham, God and their relationship?
 - God's promise to Abraham (v. 1)
 - Abraham's double protest (vv. 2, 3)
 - God's double response (vv. 4, 5)
 - Abraham's acceptance (v. 6)
3. The significance of 15:6 for our understanding God's relationships with us and our relationships with God is massive. Read Romans 4. What stands out to you in Paul's explanation of Abraham, God's promise to him, and that God declared him righteous?
4. Genesis 15:7-11; 17-21 describe God's covenant with Abraham regarding the possession of a particular land—something very much connected to Abraham and Sarah having a child of their own. It takes the form of a covenant ceremony. Notice the absence of any *quid pro quo*. Examine the new covenant God effected in and through Christ's death and resurrection (Hebrews 8:8-12). What about this new covenant makes it easy and/or hard to have faith in God?
5. Genesis 15:12-15 describes a long delay in the fulfilling of God's promise to Abraham. What would be harder for you: to trust that God would provide an offspring in your extreme old age or that God would actually bring about a 400 year prophecy?