Genesis 12:1-3 is a key moment in the unfolding of the biblical story: God chooses one family out of the scattered nations from Genesis 11 so that He can rescue all nations.

The promise to Abraham consists of a number of key elements that are developed in chapters 12-22.

- Abraham and Sarah growing into a nation
  Genesis 12:1, 15:5, 17:1-8

- Inheriting the land of Canaan
  Genesis 12:7, 15:17-21

- Receiving a great name
  In contrast to the Babel-builders in 11:4

All nations will find God’s blessing through this family
Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18
God’s blessing to the nations through Abraham provides the foundational storyline for the rest of the Bible.

**God “Blessed” Humanity in the Beginning**

*Genesis 1:26-28*

**Humanity Forfeited That Blessing Through Rebellion and Sin and Brought About the Curse of Fractured Relationships and Ultimately Death.**

*Genesis 3:14-19*

**God Restored the Promise of Blessing for Humanity Through the Line of Noah and Then to Abraham**

*Genesis 9:1; 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18*

**God Repeats the Promise of Blessing to the Nations to Each Generation After Abraham**

**Paul Described the Church as Those Who Have Received the Blessing of Abraham in Messiah Jesus and Become Part of His Family**

*Ephesians 1:3, Romans 4*
The drama of Genesis 12-50 consists of the sin and folly of the family of Abraham and how they constantly put God’s promises into jeopardy.

**Key Themes in Genesis 12-50**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Theme</th>
<th>Key Themes in Chapters 12-50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abraham</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sarah</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endangers the promise of a large family by giving away his wife, twice!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tries to force God’s hand to give them a child by having Abraham sleep with Hagar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 12, 20</td>
<td>Genesis 16, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jacob</strong></td>
<td><strong>Joseph’s brothers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is a thief and a liar and gains the blessing by stealing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Try to kill him</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 25, 27</td>
<td>Genesis 37</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**The Point**

Abraham’s family is so dysfunctional that divine promises will only be fulfilled through God’s faithfulness, not theirs.
God remains committed to this family and His promises, and constantly intervenes to rescue them.

**Key Themes in Genesis 12-50**

- **A** God rescues Sarah (twice) and Rebecca from the folly of their husbands.  
  Genesis 12:17-20; 20:6-10; 26:8-10

- **B** God provides an heir for Abraham and Sarah.  
  Genesis 18, 21

- **C** God protects Jacob despite his selfishness and deception.  
  Genesis 27-35

- **D** God transforms the evil of Joseph’s brothers into something that saves the lives of people from many nations.  
  Genesis 50:20

This is the theme verse of the entire book.
The pattern of how God works in the world begins in Genesis and continues through the Bible: He works through people of low status who are weak or marginalized.

A

God does not make the firstborn sons the vehicles of His promise, but rather the unexpected children.

ABEL
ISAAC
JACOB
JOSEPH

INSTEAD OF

CAIN
ISHMAEL
ESAU
REUBEN

B

God moves towards those who are rejected.

HAGAR AND
ISHMAEL
GENESIS 21:8-20

LEAH THE
UNLOVED WIFE
GENESIS 29:31-35

JOSEPH THE
DESPISED BROTHER
GENESIS 37:50
## Discussion Questions

1. **What character traits of God are displayed in His decision to “bless” all nations through Abraham after the disaster of Babel?**
   
   Genesis 11

2. **Tally up all the ways Abraham and Sarah make bad decisions that threaten God’s desire to bless them. Why should this part of the story challenge us, and comfort us?**
   
   Genesis 12-22

3. **What are the two highlight moments of Abraham’s story? How is Abraham offered as a positive example in these chapters?**
   
   Genesis 15, 22

4. **What are the lowlight moments in Jacob’s story that show he does not deserve to inherit the promised blessing? What does this teach us about God’s grace in dealing with people?**
   
   Genesis 27

5. **How do Joseph’s words to his brothers summarize God’s role both in the Joseph story, and also in the entire story so far?**
   
   Genesis 50:20