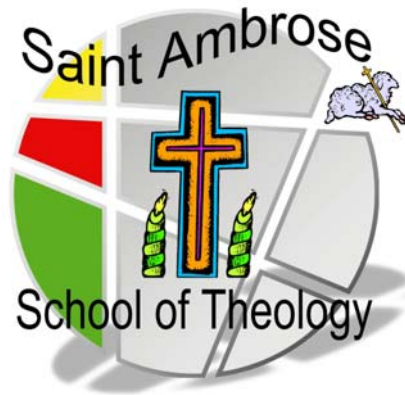


SAINT AMBROSE COLLEGE



FATHER ABRAHAM

STUDY GUIDE
GEC 501

The Life of Abraham: Structure and Content
Lesson 1 from the series *Father Abraham*
Study Guide

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Preparation

- Read Genesis 11:10–25:18

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:28)
- II. Literary Design (3:07)
 - A. Genesis (4:48)
 - B. Abraham (8:58)
- III. Major Themes (20:51)
 - A. Key Passage (22:23)
 - B. Unfolding (31:11)
 - 1. Divine Grace (31:50)
 - 2. Abraham's Loyalty (34:49)
 - 3. Blessings to Abraham (38:59)
 - 4. Blessings through Abraham (42:33)
- IV. Summary (45:09)

Notes

I. Introduction

II. Literary Design

Biblical authors intentionally designed their stories to be relevant to the lives of the people who received them.

A. Genesis

Genesis divides into three large sections.

1. Primeval History (1:1–11:9)

God's revealed truth about the origins of the world.

2. Early Patriarchal History (11:10–37:1)

Stories about the first fathers of the nation of Israel.

- **Life of Abraham**

- **Life of Jacob**

3. Later Patriarchal History (37:2–50:26)

Large, unified storyline about Joseph

B. Abraham (11:10-25:18)**1. Basic Units**

Moses wrote about Abraham's life in 17 basic segments or episodes.

- Abraham's Favored Lineage
- Abraham's Failing Father
- Abraham's Migration to Canaan
- Abraham's Deliverance from Egypt
- Abraham's Conflict with Lot
- Abraham's Rescue of Lot
- Abraham's Covenant Promises
- Abraham's Failure with Hagar
- Abraham's Covenant Requirements
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Abraham's Intercession for Abimelech
- Abraham's sons Isaac and Ishmael
- Abraham's Treaty with Abimelech
- Abraham's Test
- Abraham's Burial Property
- A Wife for Isaac
- Abraham's Death and Heir

These are relatively independent episodes. Each was designed to report events in Abraham's life and to teach specific lessons to Moses' original audience.

2. Arrangement

The episodes of Abraham's life cluster around specific themes. These clusters form five symmetrical or balancing steps.

- First: Abraham's background and early experiences with God.
 - Second: Abraham's earlier contacts with other peoples.
 - Third: Abraham's Covenant relationship with God.
 - Fourth: Abraham's later contacts with other people.
- Fifth: Progeny and Death

III. Major Themes

A. Key Passage

God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3:

The Lord had said to Abram,

“Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation

and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,

and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,

and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

1. Introduction (12:1a)

The Lord had said to Abram

- Abraham received his call in Ur
- Before his father Tarah died

2. Part One (12:1b-2c)

- Imperative:
 - *Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you*

- Three independent verbal expressions:
 - *I will make you into a great nation*

 - *and I will bless you*

 - *I will make your name great*

3. Part Two (12:2d-3)

Attention shifts away from Abraham receiving blessings to Abraham being a blessing.

- Imperative:
 - *and you will be a blessing*

- Three independent verbal expressions:
 - *I will bless those who bless you*

 - *and whoever curses you I will curse*

 - *and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*

B. Unfolding**1. Divine Grace**

God's relationship with Abraham was based on God's grace.

God entered into Abraham's life long before Abraham had done anything in service to God.

Abraham's saving righteousness was gift of mercy.

2. Abraham's Loyalty

God had shown mercy to Abraham, but Abraham was also expected to show deep-seated, loyal service to God.

God required loyalty from the patriarch many times.

- Genesis 22

3. Blessings to Abraham

God offered the patriarch three blessings:

- A great nation (descendants)
- Blessing (prosperity)
- Great name (fame)

The gifts of descendants, prosperity and fame were foreshadows of greater gifts that God would give to Abraham's faithful descendants.

4. Blessings through Abraham

God called Abraham to be a conduit of divine blessings to all the families of the earth.

God called Abraham to himself so that:

- Abraham would lead the nations of the world into God's blessings.

God called Israel to Himself in Moses' day so that:

- They would lead the nations of the world into God's blessings.

God has called the church to himself today so that:

- We may lead the nations of the world into the blessings of God.

IV. Summary

3. Why did Moses craft his literary portrait of Israel's first patriarch in this way?

4. Describe the structure of Genesis 12:1-3. Why is this structure significant?

Application Questions

1. As Moses wrote about Abraham he drew attention to God's grace. In what ways does your life's story demonstrate God's grace?
2. Abraham was required to show loyalty through obedience to God in many ways. What place does loyalty have in your understanding of God's relationships with his people?
3. In what ways are you able to identify with Abraham? Which episode in Moses' account seems closest to your own experience as a follower of Christ? How does Abraham's story offer encouragement to you?
4. Why do you think Moses desired that the Israelites understand that their blessings had a purpose?
5. In what ways have you and your church community been a blessing to others?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

The Life of Abraham: Original Meaning

Lesson 2 from the series *Father Abraham*

Study Guide

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Preparation

- Read Genesis 11:10–25:18

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:29)
- II. Connections (5:25)
 - A. Definition (7:10)
 - B. Types (9:23)
 - 1. Backgrounds (1:26)
 - 2. Models (14:15)
 - 3. Foreshadows (18:19)
 - C. Summation (24:59)
- III. Implications (28:12)
 - A. Basic Impact (29:36)
 - B. Major Themes (31:51)
 - 1. Divine Grace (32:52)
 - 2. Abraham's Loyalty (34:37)
 - 3. Blessings to Abraham (36:38)
 - 4. Blessings through Abraham (38:41)
 - C. Five Steps (41:09)
 - 1. Background and Early Experiences (42:38)
 - 2. Early Contacts with Others (45:41)
 - 3. Covenant with God (49:25)
 - 4. Later Contacts with Others (53:11)
 - 5. Progeny and Death (58:20)
- IV. Summary (1:4:34)

Notes

I. Introduction

It is important to read the stories of Abraham's life in light of when they were written and to whom they were written.

We will explore the original impact these stories were intended to have on the nation of Israel as they followed Moses toward the Promised Land.

II. Connections

Original meaning — Moses connected his stories about Abraham with the experiences of the Israelites.

A. Definition

“That World” — the world of Abraham

“Their World” — the world of Moses and the Israelites who followed him

Moses drew attention to connections between Abraham’s life and the lives of his original audience.

B. Types

1. Backgrounds

Israel’s experiences were historically rooted in the events of Abraham’s life.

2. Models

The similarities between Abraham’s life and the Israelites’ life made it possible for Israel to see examples to follow and to reject.

Telling stories for the sake of providing models or examples is a common way to connect stories to their listeners.

Moses exhorted the Israelites to boldness against the threat of the Canaanites who occupied Canaan.

Moses encouraged his readers to imitate Abraham's boldness by going into the land even though Canaanites still occupied it.

3. Foreshadowing

Moses showed how events in the patriarch's life foreshadowed events in Moses' day.

Foreshadowing occurs when “that world” of Abraham looks almost exactly like “their world” of Israel.

When biblical writers saw that events in the past seemed to be repeated in the lives of their audiences, they often made this connection clear.

- Example: Genesis 15:1-21

- Example: Genesis 12:10-20

C. Summation

Each major step of Abraham’s life connected to the lives of the original audience.

- Abraham’s background and early experiences — Similar to the background and early experience of the Israelites in Moses’ day.

- Abraham's early interactions with others — Prepared Moses' original audience for encounters with foreign nations and rulers.
- God's covenant with Abraham — Israel had entered into covenant with God as well.
- Abraham's later interactions with other peoples — The Israelites would be living among other peoples.
- Abraham's progeny and death — The Israelites ancestry and land claims were based on these details of Abraham's life.

III. Implications

A. Basic Impact

Moses wrote about Abraham to turn their hearts away from Egypt and toward possessing the Promised Land.

B. Major Themes

Genesis 12:1-3 presents at least four themes.

1. Divine Grace

The motif of divine grace was designed to remind the Israelites in Moses' day that God had shown great mercy to them as well.

Moses God's mercy to Abraham to remind his original audience of the mercies God had show to them.

2. Abraham's Loyalty

God held Abraham responsible to obey his commands.

Moses emphasized Abraham's loyalty because God also required Israel's loyalty.

The status of each person in each generation depended on how they responded to the commands of God.

3. Blessings to Abraham

Moses focused on Abraham's blessings because these promises were also for Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel whom Moses led.

4. Blessings through Abraham

God's blessings would come through the patriarch to the entire world.

The blessings of Abraham — God would give Abraham success through a process of blessing Abraham's friends and cursing his enemies.

The nation as a kingdom of priests:

- The nation would be blessed with the privilege of being a holy people serving God.
- The children of Israel would serve God's purposes throughout the world.

C. Five Steps

1. Background and Early Experiences

Moses taught his original Israelite audience about their own family background and their call from God.

- **Favored Lineage (11:10-26)**

Abraham was a climatic character in the family of Shem, God's special chosen people.

- **Father's Failure (11:27-32)**

Abraham had to avoid repeating his father's failures. The Israelites had to avoid repeating the failures of their fathers and mothers:

- Idolaters of the first generation of the exodus
- Failed to reach Canaan

- **Abraham's Migration (12:1-9)**

The Israelites in Moses' day were to follow in the footsteps of Abraham, migrating to the land of Canaan.

2. **Early Contacts with Others**

The patriarch interacted with other groups of people in a variety of ways. The original Israelite readers would have to do the same.

- **Deliverance from Egypt (12:10-20)**

Abraham learned that Egypt was not his home.

The experience of Moses' original Israelite readers was similar to Abraham's story.

Egypt was not to be the home of the Israelites.

- **Conflict with Lot (13:1-18)**

Abraham's kind treatment of Lot showed the Israelites how to treat the Moabites in their day.

- **Rescue of Lot (14:1-24)**

Abraham defeated powerful, tyrannical kings who had come from afar, and showed kindness to Lot by rescuing him.

By rescuing the Moabites and Ammonites, Israel followed the model that Abraham had set for them.

3. Covenant with God

God's covenant with the patriarch revealed the character of Israel's covenant relationship with God.

- **Covenant Promises (15:1-2)**

God entered into covenant with Abraham.

The Israelites were Abraham's promised progeny. They were returning to the land that God had promised to their patriarch.

- **Failure with Hagar (16:1-16)**

Moses' original audience repeatedly turned from God's promises and desired the comforts of Egypt.

Just as Abraham's plan had been rejected, their alternatives to God's plan would also be rejected.

- **Covenant Requirement (17:1-27)**

God confronted the patriarch over his failure to follow God's plan.

Only as the Israelites were faithful to their covenant God could they rightly hope for his great blessings.

4. Later Contacts with Others

Abraham's interactions taught Israel how to interact with:

- Canaanites
- Moabites and Ammonites
- Philistines and Ishmaelites

- **Sodom and Gomorrah (18:1-19:39)**

These events spoke directly to the situation facing Moses' original audience.

- God's threat against the Canaanites
- Concern for the righteous among the Canaanites
- The destruction of the evil Canaanite cities
- The Israelites relationship with Lot's descendants: the Moabites and Ammonites

- **Intercession for Abimelech (20:1-18)**

Abraham interceded for an inhabitant of the land, namely for Abimelech the Philistine.

The Israelites in Moses' day were to have the same attitudes toward the Philistines living in their day.

- **Isaac and Ishmael (21:1-21)**

Moses helped the Israelites understand the nature of their relationship with the Ishmaelites of their day.

- **Treaty with Abimelech (21:22-34)**

The Philistine Abimelech acknowledged God's favor toward Abraham. Abraham agreed to live in peace with Abimelech and his descendants.

The well called Beersheba still remained in Moses' day, reminding Israel:

- Of the treaty made there
- To pursue peace and mutual honor with the Philistines

5. Progeny and Death

Abraham's legacy extended his covenant relationship with God to future generations.

- **Abraham's Test (22:1-24)**

God called Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham complied. The result was a bright future for Isaac.

This passage reminded the Israelites that God was testing the nation of Israel to see the depth of their loyalty to him.

- **Burial Property (23:1-20)**

Abraham acquired a family burial site in Hebron when his wife Sarah died.

This story demonstrated that the proper place for his descendants was the land of the Canaanites.

- **Wife for Isaac (24:1-67)**

In order to ensure that Isaac would avoid Canaanite corruption, Abraham insisted that Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman.

Abraham ensured a great future of blessings from God for Isaac and his descendants.

Isaac's bright future of blessing would be the Israelites bright future as well, if they resisted the corruption of the Canaanites.

- **Death and Heir (25:1-18)**

Several brief accounts list:

- Abraham's sons by wives other than Sarah
- The patriarch's death when Isaac received Abraham's final blessing as legal heir
- A contrasting section that briefly lists Ishmael's descendants

IV. Summary

5. How does the lesson summarize the impact of Abraham's story on its original audience?

6. What four main themes did Moses express when writing about Abraham? How did these relate to his original audience?

7. Briefly summarize the five main steps of Abraham's life, and some of their main implications for the original audience.

Application Questions

1. The motif of divine grace reminded the Israelites that they were recipients of God's mercy. How have you benefited from God's divine grace?
2. Although God had shown mercy to the Israelites, the status of each person in each generation depended on how they responded to the commands of God. What is the significance or meaning of this teaching for followers of Christ today?
3. The events in Abraham's life were told to impart a vision for God's plan to use Israel to spread his kingdom to the entire world. What does it look like for the kingdom to spread to the entire world in our day? How should our plans be shaped by the experiences of Abraham and other biblical people of faith?
4. How do the stories of Abraham's interactions with other people provide a model for followers of Christ in the modern world?
5. Like Abraham's failure with Hagar, at times we justify our own plans instead of following God's plan. In what situations are you tempted to do this?
6. How is Abraham's legacy the legacy of Christians today?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

The Life of Abraham: Modern Application
Lesson 3 from the series *Father Abraham*
Study Guide

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Preparation

- Read Genesis 11:10–25:18
- Read Galatians 3

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:28)
- II. Abraham and Jesus (4:42)
 - A. Seed of Abraham (5:54)
 - 1. Singularity (6:44)
 - 2. Christ as Seed (13:41)
 - B. Major Themes (18:45)
 - 1. Divine Grace (19:23)
 - 2. Abraham's Loyalty (21:16)
 - 3. Blessings to Abraham (23:05)
 - 4. Blessings through Abraham (24:45)
- III. Israel and the Church (28:34)
 - A. Seed of Abraham (30:06)
 - 1. Numerical breadth (30:44)
 - 2. Ethnic identity (32:28)
 - 3. Spiritual character (36:39)
 - 4. Historical situation (42:12)
 - B. Major Themes (47:43)
 - 1. Divine Grace (48:38)
 - 2. Abraham's Loyalty (50:16)
 - 3. Blessings to Abraham (52:06)
 - 4. Blessings through Abraham (53:10)
- IV. Summary (54:37)

Notes

I. Introduction

II. Abraham and Jesus

We have been joined to Abraham's special seed, Christ.

A. Seed of Abraham

Abraham is the father of all believers throughout history.

1. Singularity

The promise was to Abraham and his "seed" in the singular.

The singular form “seed” referred to more than one person many times in Genesis. Paul used the word “seed” in a plural sense in Galatians 3:29.

Before Isaac’s birth, Genesis usually speaks of Abraham’s “seed” as a collective, meaning “descendants” in the plural.

In Genesis 22:16-18 the word “seed” has a focus on Isaac as the special singular descendant who would inherit Abraham’s promises.

The singularity of “seed” in Genesis 22:16-18 indicates that the promises were passed to Isaac, Abraham’s special son and heir.

2. Christ as Seed

In Galatians 3:16, the one “seed” of Abraham is Christ.

Christ is the only one through whom anyone else can participate in Abraham’s inheritance.

Christ receives and distributes Abraham’s inheritance in three main stages:

- The inauguration of his kingdom
- The continuation of his kingdom
- The consummation of his kingdom.

Typology exists between Isaac and Christ:

- Isaac was the chief heir of Abraham in his generation.
- Christ is Abraham’s greatest son and the chief heir in the New Testament age.

A. Major Themes**1. Divine Grace**

The coming of Christ as the seed of Abraham was a great objective act of God's mercy to the world.

2. Abraham's Loyalty

Christ was loyal to the father in all three stages of his kingdom.

Abraham's loyalty can be properly applied to the modern world only as we connect it to Christ, the seed of Abraham.

3. Blessings to Abraham

Christ who inherits Abraham's promises and enjoys God's blessings in even greater measure.

4. Blessings through Abraham

Through a process of blessing and cursing, all peoples on the earth would be blessed through Abraham.

Abraham and his descendants would inherit the entire earth by spreading God's blessings to all the families of every nation.

Christ is the seed of Abraham and heir to Abraham's promises.

As the special seed of Abraham, Christ fulfills or completes the themes we encounter in Abraham's life.

III. Israel and the Church

A. Seed of Abraham

1. Numerical breadth

Isaac was the conduit through whom many would enjoy the status of being Abraham's descendants.

The Christian church is the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

We are connected to Abraham because we are joined to Christ.

2. Ethnic identity

The people who followed Moses were a mixture of Jews, and Gentiles who had been adopted into Israel.

Later generations:

- Gentiles like Rahab and Ruth were engrafted into Israel.
- The genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9 include Gentiles names among God’s people.

The Christian church today is ethnically diverse.

We must be ready to apply Abraham’s stories to Jews and Gentiles that that are Abraham’s seed because they are in the church.

3. Spiritual character

There was spiritual diversity within the visible nation of Israel. There were both unbelievers and true believers.

Unbelievers within Israel showed their character by infidelity. True believers demonstrated their character by fidelity.

Unbelievers within Israel only received temporary blessings. But, in eternity they would receive God's final, eternal judgment.

Believers not only enjoyed many temporary blessings, but would also receive eternal blessings.

Diversity exists in the visible church:

- Unbelievers
- Believers.

4. **Historical situation**

Moses wrote to Israelites who:

- Had left slavery in Egypt
- But had not yet entered the Promised Land

The church:

- Has been delivered from the dominion of sin (inauguration of the kingdom)
- But is still headed toward the glory of the new creation (consummation of the kingdom)

Remain faithful to Christ:

- Because of what he has done in the inauguration of the kingdom
- As his kingdom grows in our day
- Longing for the day we enter the new heavens and new earth

Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church both:

- The seed of Abraham
- Mixed ethnic identity
- Spiritually diverse
- On a journey toward the goal of the glorious kingdom of God

B. Major Themes**1. Divine Grace**

God has shown much mercy to us. We must learn how to seek and depend on his mercy.

2. Abraham's Loyalty

True believers today are expected to respond to God's grace with faithful service to God.

Christians today have the responsibility to perform good works.

3. Blessings to Abraham

Modern blessings encouragement us that ultimate blessings will be ours when Christ returns.

4. Blessings through Abraham

We can have assurance of God's protection.

We can be a blessing to all nations by extending God's kingdom to the ends of the earth.

IV. Summary

3. In what four ways are Israel and the church alike as the seed of Abraham?

4. How can believers today apply the four major themes that connect Abraham and Jesus?

Application Questions

1. Why is it important for believers that Christ fulfills the major themes in Abraham's life?
2. What are some practical modern implications of the ethnic diversity of Abraham's seed in Moses' day?
3. Why is it important to recognize that the church contains both believers and unbelievers? How does this affect the way you should view and minister in the church?
4. What basic church doctrines might be influenced by our understanding of the spiritual diversity of the church?
5. Why does God expect loyalty from you? How can you exhibit loyalty to God in your life?
6. In what ways do you enjoy the foretastes of blessings that God has given to you as his child?
7. How can we teach, proclaim and exhibit the gospel in ways that bless others? What types of things might prevent Christians from proclaiming the gospel with this result?
8. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?