

Genesis—Series Overview

Embarrassing Ancestors and Our Glorious Hope

The book of Genesis is all about God making an extravagantly gorgeous Creation to declare His glory and the horrifying result of our ancestors' rebellion against His kingly rule. It was written to remind us of our good God's promise to undo all the terror that our treason has wrought. It shows us our ancestors' faltering walk of faith and His faithful care for them, all the while paving the way for the coming King who would deliver us from ourselves and all who oppose our good God. The New Heavens and Earth will perfectly declare His praise.

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Please ask the Holy Spirit to guide you:

Where are you (we) in the promise to Abram? Place yourself in the narrative. How does this promise relate to you?

How do you tend to doubt God? Abram distrusts God right out of the gate. He is afraid for his life, so he takes matters into his own hands. What particular ways do you tend to do this too?

Look to Christ! Turn to Him instead of yourself. Ask Him to strengthen you (us) to believe His promises and act on that faith.

Ezra-Nehemiah—Series Overview

A Community Restored for Worship

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah was written to encourage God's people returning after exile to believe the covenant promises and restore the temple in Jerusalem. God's people were being restored in the place of promise as a worshipping community. The restoration of purpose was far greater than their real estate. The place always has to do with what God promised would happen there.

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional
First Congregational Church of Woodstock

Pastor Doug Warren
February 24th, 2019

Morning Service:

Genesis 12: 1 – 20

God Calls and Tests Abram

1. God Calls Abram to a Land of Blessing.
2. God's Promise Seems to Be in Conflict with Reality.
3. Christ Upholds Us in Our Faltering Walk of Faith.

God promises Abram the world, but then there seems to be a bunch of fine print. Famine. Life-threatening travel. Even God's blessings (a beautiful wife) seem to come at a steep price. So Abram falters. He lies. He fails to protect his bride. Some father of the nation! But our story is not about our great ancestors. It's about our great Savior. He delivered our forebears and we can trust Him to deliver us.

Evening Service:

Nehemiah 13: 1 – 31

The Church – Semper Reformanda

1. Four Areas of On-going Reform.
2. Four Descending Cries of Remembrance.
3. Longing for a Complete Deliverance.

Spiritual entropy is always a danger. Without on-going reform and reformation hearts grow stagnant and lose their passion for Christ. We need the Spirit's work in us to keep us from growing spiritually cold.

Taking Gathered Worship Home

God shows how ten generations from Adam to Noah and then another ten generations from Noah to Abram demonstrate both the growing wickedness of humanity and the enduring plan of God to save His people. With Abram God gives more clarity to His covenant. In His unfolding plan to restore what we lost in our rebellion, He will use a *specific people* and a *particular land* to accomplish His promise.

Please use the devotional material below each day this week to meet with Jesus. Ask Christ to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.

Sunday AM

READ **Genesis 12:1-20**. DISCUSS: How did God say that He would bless Abram? How is this similar and/or different from how we normally understand the gospel? What was God going to do to his name? PRAY, “Lord, thank You for Your grace. You bless us so abundantly and we continue to distrust You any way. Teach us how to trust You more than what we can see. Help us, Holy Spirit, we pray.”

Sunday PM

READ today’s passage: **Nehemiah 13:1-31**. What four areas of reform does Nehemiah bring? Why is purity important? REJOICE in God’s faithfulness. PRAISE Him for His deliverance.

Monday

READ **Genesis 12:1-9; Acts 7:1-8**. DISCUSS: To what did God call Abram? What did He call Abram away from? How did that necessitate faith? PRAY for God’s majesty to be made known. REPENT of ways you (we) take for granted what God has given us. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead us in biblical gratitude.

Tuesday

READ **Genesis 12:1-3; 11:1-4**. DISCUSS: Who decides where we go? Who decides whose name is remembered? How do these two passages deal with these issues? MEDITATE on God’s grace in blessing Abram. PRAY, “Lord God, You alone are Sovereign over all things. You are the One worthy to appoint where we live, how we

live, and with whom we live. Forgive us our rebellion against You. Amen.”

Wednesday

READ **Genesis 12:1-9; John 8:31-59**. DISCUSS: How does the promise given to Abram point to Jesus? How did the Pharisees of Jesus’ day struggle to trust God? REJOICE for the ways God has established us as His people. PRAY, “Lord, You are merciful beyond all imagining! You have made promises to us that we don’t deserve. You have kept them even when we disbelieve You and continue to rebel against You. Jesus, You alone have fulfilled all that You promised. Thank You!”

Thursday

READ **Genesis 12:10-20; Galatians 3:6-14**. DISCUSS: Why was Abram afraid? Was it a reasonable fear? How did his actions because of that fear demonstrate a faltering faith? Did God reject him because of his doubt? REJOICE over the security we have in Christ. SING praises to the Lord. Use a favorite hymn or praise chorus to sing your praises to our King. PRAY, “Lord, Jesus, I struggle as much as Abram did to believe You and trust in Your promises. Please teach me to rely on You more and not on my own abilities. Strengthen my faith in You. Amen.”

Friday

READ **Genesis 12:1-20**. DISCUSS: What have you been learning this week? How is the Holy Spirit convicting you of ways that you haven’t been trusting Christ? REJOICE for Christ has set us free from our bondage to death. PRAY for your neighbors who are deceived and unable to even see their own sin for what it really is. Pray for their repentance. Reach out in friendship.

Saturday

PREPARE today for the gathered worship service tomorrow. READ **Genesis 13-15**. DISCUSS: What questions do you have? PLAN AHEAD: Do what you can today to free you up tomorrow to concentrate on worshipping Christ with His people. INVITE someone you know to join you for the worship service tomorrow. Ask Christ to draw them to Himself.