



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

GENESIS

Week 2

*“Come, let us build
ourselves a city,
with a tower that reaches
to the heavens....”*

—Genesis 11:4



Artwork by Ken Tunnell

Of Bricks, Barriers and Blessings

DAY 8

Genesis 11:1–12:20

Have you been involved in projects or enterprises that you later realized were nothing more than monuments to human pride and vanity?

1. Why was this early example of institutionalized religion as successful as it was? Why and how did God bring this project to a halt?
2. What is the point of Shem's genealogy (11:10-26; compare 10:21-31)?
3. What "career move" did Abram make and why? From/to where? To do what? When? With whom (Ac 7:2-8)?
4. What did God promise 75-year-old Abram? Are the seven promises to Abram alive, in Christ, in his new covenant (see Gal 3:16)?
5. Along the way (12:4-13), what clues indicate that Abram responded with obedience of faith? With a heart of gratitude? With a lack of trust?
6. Why did Abram ask Sarai to pass herself off as his sister (12:13, 19)?

1. Are you aware of institutional attempts to construct edifices which promote human performance and efforts as the way to reach heaven? How does God put an end to such projects—or has he yet?

2. When, if ever, does the end (God's promise of future blessing) justify the means (self-protective lying)?

Babel (11:9) can mean "gateway to a god" or "confusion" and is the Hebrew word for Babylon and the origin of our English word babel, meaning "confused noises."

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 9

Enjoy

Now, Pay Later

Genesis 13:1-14:24

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever agreed to part company with a close friend or family member? Under what circumstances or over what issues ?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What caused this large family to part company?
(a) greed, (b) herdsmen, (c) lawyers, (d) kings, (e) landgrubbers.
2. What solution did Abram offer? Was it wise, deferential, indifferent or careless?
3. What consequences (promises, compromises, trouble, war, redemption) resulted from these choices?
4. What key hostages, spoils and casualties do you see here?
5. Abram could have stayed on the sideline. Why did Abram rescue Lot?
6. Why did Abram pay tribute to Melchizedek, but not receive tribute from the king of Sodom (14:18-24)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. In retrospect, should Abram have made the land offer he did? Would you have chosen any differently had you been Lot? Or Abram?
2. Have you ever had to rescue yourself or a family member from a messy situation? Who rescued or remedied the situation? Did you celebrate when it was over?
3. How do you pay tribute to Melchizedek today?

WINDOW
on the Word

Melchizedek (14:18) is greater than Abram, who pays tribute to him. Three theories about this mystery king: (a) He was a respected king-priest of Salem or Jerusalem who typified Christ (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:1-10); (b) Melchizedek may have been a standing title, like pharaoh, for all kings of that region; (c) This was a pre-Incarnation appearance of Christ (Christophany)

himself in temporary bodily form.

Breeding

DAY 10

Problems

Genesis 15:1–16:16

Has a childhood dream or lifelong hope come true for you? Do you have a dream that is yet unfulfilled?

1. Whom did Abram blame for his unfulfilled dream? (a) God, (b) Sarai, (c) Hagar, (d) Eliezar, (e) Mother Nature, (f) Father Time.
2. Abram blamed others and kept making excuses, yet was credited with righteousness (15:6). Why?
3. What good and bad news comes to Abram in a second dream (15:12-16)?
4. What is Sarai's main problem? Who does she blame? What does she do about it?
5. Ishmael was born to Hagar. What problem, common to blended families, was now theirs?

1. Consider an unfulfilled dream of yours. Are you tired of waiting or are you patient? Are you believing or blaming God? Are you relying on yourself or are you waiting in prayer?
2. With whom in this story do you sympathize and why?

*The Lord is Abram's **shield** (15:1), meaning "protector" or "defender" (Dt 33:29; 2Sa 22:3; Ps 7:10; 84:9). **The four hundred years** (15:13), a round number, represent the 430 years Israel was in Egypt (Ex 12:40). The **sin of the Amorites** (15:16) was extensive, including child sacrifice, idolatry, religious prostitution and divination.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

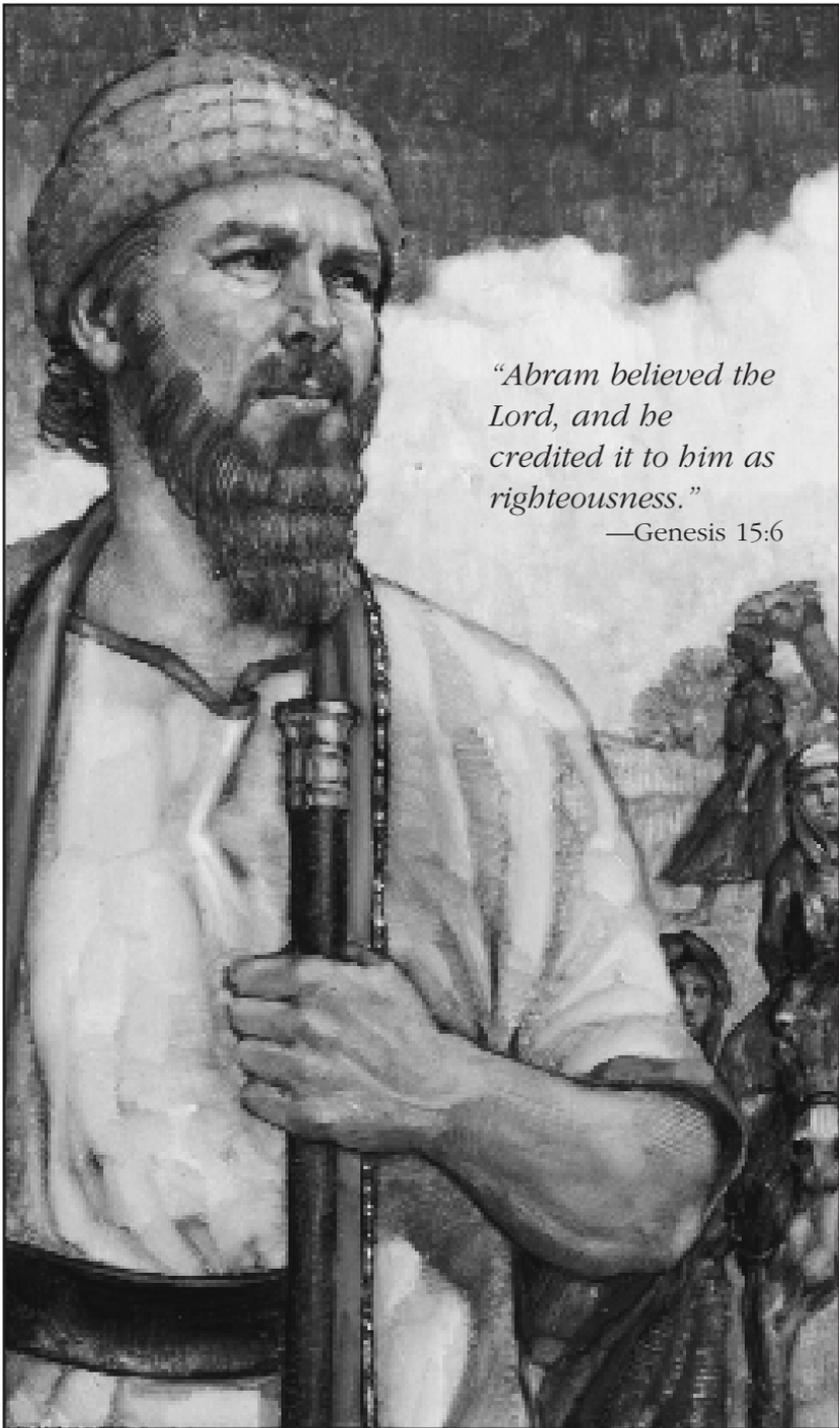
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“Abram believed the
Lord, and he
credited it to him as
righteousness.”*

—Genesis 15:6

No Laughing Matter!

DAY 11

Genesis 17:1–18:15

Have you gone through any significant name changes in your lifetime?

1. Thirteen years later (16:16-17), what are Abram and Sarai doing about the promises of 12:2-3?
2. How did God reconfirm his promise? (a) re-enacted the covenant, (b) invoked an oath with witnesses, (c) changed their names, (d) told a joke, (e) sent three heavenly visitors, (f) set the due date.
3. What did their new names signify?
4. Where did Ishmael figure in Abraham's plan (17:18, 23-26)? In God's plan (17:20-21; see 25:16; Ro 9:6-13)?
5. Why circumcision (17:11-14, 23-27)?
6. What made Abraham bow down and prepare such a feast for these men (18:1-8)?
7. Why did Abraham and Sarah laugh (17:17; 18:12)? What was wrong with their laughter?
8. The point of these two stories is no laughing matter, or is it?

1. Have you ever laughed off God and his promises found in the New Testament? Why?
2. If you believe nothing is too hard for the Lord, why are you holding out? Why not trust him with your seemingly impossible situation?

*Abraham showed **hospitality** to three men—two of whom were actually angels (19:1, compare Heb 13:2); the third may have been the Lord himself (18:1, 13, 17, 20, 26, 33). Near Eastern hospitality demanded prompt attention to guests, subservient language and actions, foot-washing, a lavish meal, standing ready to serve—all of which were regarded as a privilege, not a duty.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Men Behaving Badly

Genesis 18:16–19:38

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

Who in your family is most patient? Most stubborn? Most likely to need rescuing?

- 1.** Why would God tell anyone of a plan of destruction (18:17-19; 19:29)?
- 2.** How did Abraham try to save Sodom and Gomorrah? Why bargain from 50 down to 10 righteous people (see C.S. Lewis quote below)?
- 3.** What was so awful about Sodom and Gomorrah (18:20-21; 19:4-9, 13; compare Eze 16:49-50)? If this chapter were made into a movie, what rating would it receive and why?
- 4.** Why offer two daughters instead of the two guests?
- 5.** What fatal mistake did Lot's in-laws make and why? What fears or sins finally overcame Lot's family?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** What's the point of the Sodom and Gomorrah story? (a) the wages of sin is death (b) God saves the righteous (c) flee sin and never look back (d) don't joke about warnings of judgment, (e) acts of homosexuality, drunkenness and incest are sin.
- 2.** What sin in your life is crying out for justice, intervention or mercy?
- 3.** What does this Sodom and Gomorrah story tell you about God? (a) he's patient, (b) he's kind, (c) he'll change his mind, (d) he's fair, (e) he answers prayer, (f) he means what he says.

Can we believe that God ever really modifies His action in response to the suggestions of men? For infinite wisdom does not need telling what is best and infinite goodness needs no urging to do it. But neither does God need any of those things that are done by finite agents, whether living or inanimate. He could, if He chose, repair our bodies miraculously without food; or give us food without the aid of farmers, bakers and butchers or knowledge without the aid of learned men; or convert heathen without missionaries. Instead, He allows soils and weather and animals and the

Half-Sisters, Half-Truths and Half-Brothers

DAY 13

Genesis 20:1–21:34

Have you shaded the truth to protect yourself? How do you feel about it today? Is there ever a time to keep the truth (or part of the truth) hidden (See 1Sa 16:1-3)?

OPENING
up to the Word

1. Why did Abraham tell Sarah to lie? (a) her good looks, (b) his insecurity, (c) unbelief, (d) fear, (e) slow learner (forgot, see 12:10-20).
2. Who in this story fears God more? (a) Sarah; (b) Abraham; (c) Abimelech.
3. What did God do for Sarah and why? For Abraham and why? For Abimelech and why?
4. What promise and problem(s) did the birth of Isaac introduce into this blended family?
5. How did God comfort Abraham? Hagar? Ishmael?
6. What did Abraham have to do to juggle his family duties?
7. What made Abimelech and Abraham want a treaty (see ch. 21:22-32)?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Are you more like Abraham or Abimelech in your reaction to problems? Give an example.
2. How does God reward or rebuke you?
3. Where are you needing comfort right now? Who can help?
4. When trust is the issue, as it was for Abimelech, how do you resolve it?

LIVING
out the Word

muscles, minds and wills of men to cooperate in the execution of His will....

It is not really stranger, nor less strange, that my prayers should affect the course of events than that my other actions should do so. They have not advised or changed God's mind, that is, His overall purpose. But that purpose will be realized in different ways according to the actions, including the prayers, of His creatures.

—C.S. Lewis

From "The Efficacy of Prayer" from "The World's Last Night and Other Essays" by C.S. Lewis, copyright © 1958 C.S. Lewis renewed 1986 by Arthur Owen Barfield reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company.

Passing the Test

Genesis 22:1–23:20

OPENING
up to the Word

What tests have you passed? (a) physical fitness (b) college entrance (c) driver's license (d) certifications (e) marital fidelity (f) the faith and trust given to you as a parent. Pass any with flying colors? Any by God's grace?

DIGGING
into the Word

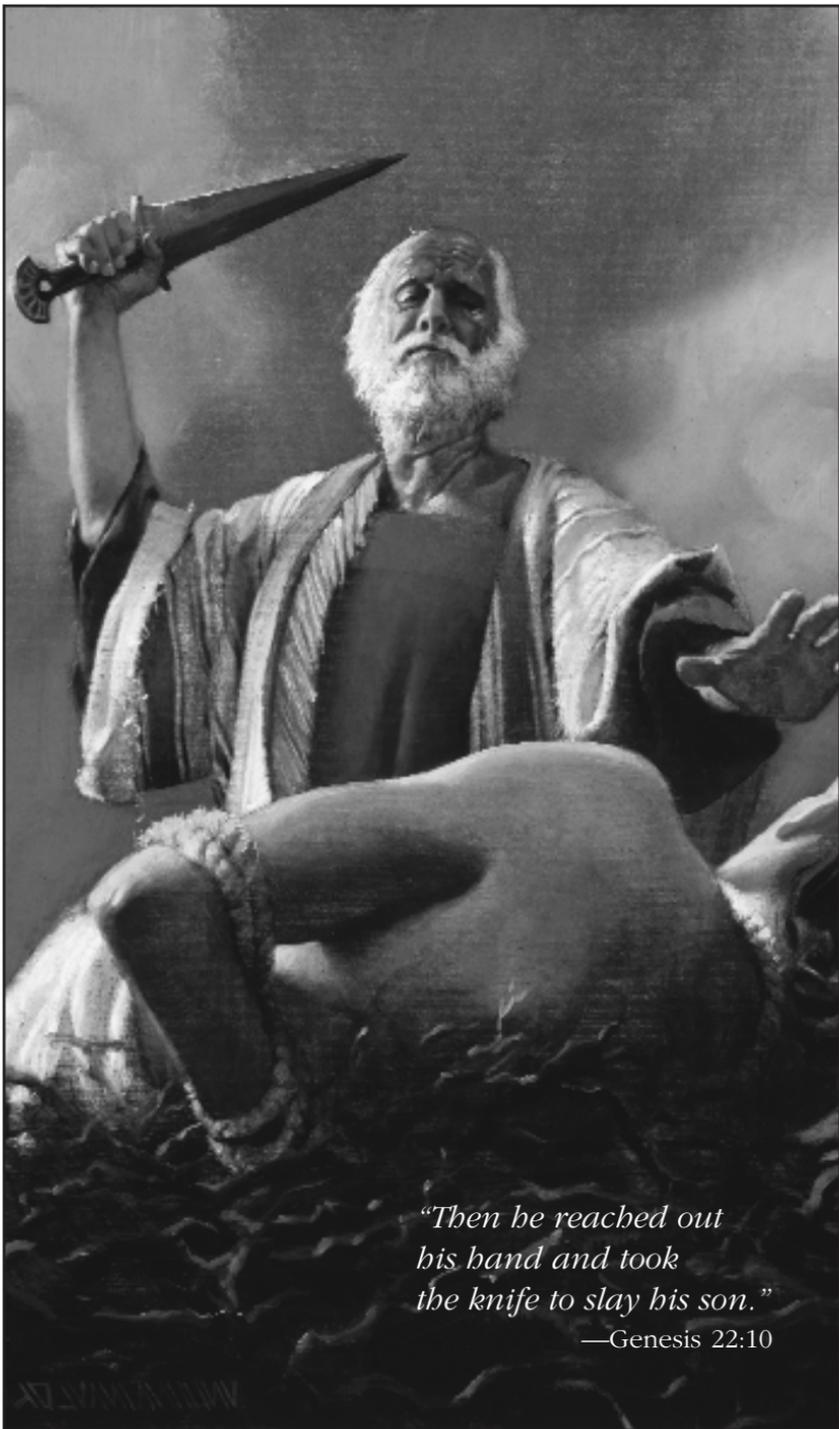
1. As Abraham journeyed with his son—the promised heir—to the mountain, what thoughts might have filled his mind?
2. Abraham laid Isaac on the altar but was restrained from killing him. Then he was blessed by God for passing this test. What kind of test was this? What did this show about Abraham? Why didn't he object?
3. What did this test show about Isaac? Why wasn't he afraid?
4. What does this story show about God? How far would God go? How is Jesus like Isaac? How is he like the ram substitute? Is this story more about Abraham and Isaac or about God the father and God the Son?
5. When Sarah died, how did Abraham face that death (23:1-16)? How did God speak through the Hittites to comfort Abraham?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How will this story help you trust God with your kids? With your spouse? Your possessions? Your job? Your life?
2. Where are your relatives buried? How do you honor them?
3. How has God kept his promise to you and your loved ones, from generation to generation?

WINDOW
on the Word

Human sacrifice was a pagan practice, forbidden to Israel (Lev 20:1-5), but the sacrifice called for here was a matter of the heart. In Christ, God did not spare his own Son; God himself was willing to do what he asked Abraham to do (see Jn 3:16).



*“Then he reached out
his hand and took
the knife to slay his son.”*

—Genesis 22:10