

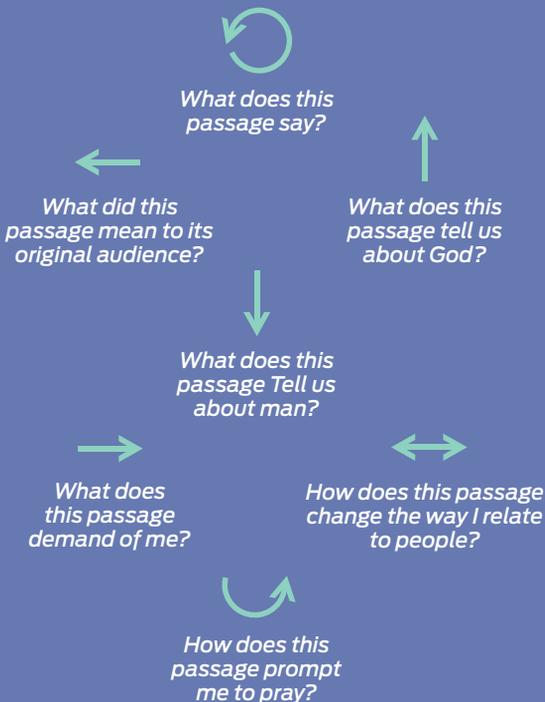
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Genesis 18:1-33

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Abraham interceded on behalf of the city when he learned that the Lord was going to destroy the cities because of the seriousness of their sin. Abraham's bold intercession teaches us two things about him. He understood God's character as a good and righteous judge. Abraham did not argue with God's right to judge the cities, but He did ask for God to be merciful on their behalf. Abraham also cared deeply for Lot and the people of those cities. Abraham did not just appeal for Lot to be spared—although he could have. He appealed for all the people in those cities to be spared. More importantly, Abraham knew God cared about people more than he did.

Both of these observations were revisited when God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Once again, Abraham trusted God's character—His faithfulness and power—and His love for him and his son as he navigated that challenging test.

Who can you pray on behalf of this week?

Genesis 19:1-38

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah can feel like an odd interlude in the middle of Abraham's narrative. In the previous chapter, the three visitors told Abraham and Sarah that they would indeed have a son within the year. Then, seemingly out of the blue, we are introduced to God's plan concerning the two evil cities.

God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah entirely, yet he spared one man—Lot—and his family. Lot reminds us of another one who was spared of God's judgment, Noah. And like with Noah, the message of Lot's salvation from destruction is one of grace. God saved Lot by grace. God saved Noah by grace. God was working in and through Abraham by grace. And God does the same for us—God saves us and uses us by grace alone.

How has God been gracious to you this past week?

Genesis 20:1-18

For the second time in his life (Gen. 12:12-20), Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister, although he tried to justify his deception this time (v. 12). Once again, he was motivated by fear as he traveled in a foreign land; he was afraid someone else would kill him because they wanted to take Sarah as wife. Fear, not faith, controlled the patriarch in this story. God promised to bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who treated him with contempt (Gen. 12:3). But Abraham either forgot or disbelieved God's promise in the moment.

But there is another troubling aspect to Abraham's deception. Just before this, God's messengers told Abraham and Sarah that they would have the son they had been waiting on (Gen. 18:13-14). But here, Abraham allowed King Abimelech to take Sarah, presumably to be his wife. Abraham's faithlessness in this moment dishonored his wife and God and jeopardized the promise.

Yet, God intervened and protected and preserved Sarah and the promise. Abraham's act of faithlessness almost caused much more harm than he could ever have imagined.

How are you struggling to trust God right now?

Genesis 21:1-34

God has a way of taking our moments of doubt and our failings and turning them around. When the three men visited with Abraham, Sarah overheard that she would have a son within the year (Gen. 18:10). The couple had waited twenty-five years for this promise. Instead of celebrating and worshiping God, Sarah laughed to herself (Gen. 18:12). When she was confronted for laughing, she denied it out of fear (Gen. 18:15). But within the year, Sarah would find out that nothing is impossible for the Lord (Gen. 18:14).

By Genesis 21, the Lord had fulfilled His promise to Sarah; she became pregnant and had a son at the appointed time (vv. 1-2). The couple named their son Isaac, which means *laughter*. Sarah declared that God had made her laugh and everyone who heard would laugh with her (v. 6). God truly turned Sarah's skeptical laughter into joyful laughter. Surely every time Sarah called her son to dinner or introduced him to others, she was reminded of how God turned her doubts upside down.

How have you experienced God's kindness and grace when you were doubtful or disobedient?

Genesis 22

We are familiar with the idea of a substitute. Substitute teachers take the place of our regular teachers when they have to miss a day. Subs come into the game to play in our place. Artificial sweeteners are substitutes for sugar in our tea. Substitutes are important when a teacher is sick or when a starting point guard can't get the job done; substitutes perform tasks for us when we are unable.

The theme of substitution is at the heart of Christianity, and the theme of the substitute lamb runs throughout the Bible. Abraham said God would provide a lamb. As we will see in future sessions, at the Passover a lamb's blood was shed as a substitute for the life of a firstborn son in Israel (firstborn sons just like Isaac). That sacrifice caused the death angel to pass over them. Also, on the Day of Atonement, animals were given in place of the Israelites as substitute sacrifices. All of these stories point forward to the moment when the Lord Jesus Himself would die as the sacrifice for our sins (1 Cor. 5:7). God provided His only Son as the substitute for the world.

How does this account strengthen your faith in Jesus?