

LIVING THE WORD—Week 4 (Sun., Feb. 15 - Sat., Feb. 21)

The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God's Relentless Love

The Promise—God Makes His Promise to the Patriarchs

Genesis 12:1-7; 28:10-15; Deuteronomy 7:7-9; 30:19-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:6

Key Verse: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring." (Genesis 28:14b)

God's plan to save the world really gets underway with the story of Abraham. God chooses Abraham to be the father of the people through whom he will work out his plan. And then God makes a three-part promise: Abraham's descendants will become a great nation, they will be given the land of Canaan as their inheritance from God, and God will bless all the nations of the world through them.

God's choosing and God's promise are his mighty acts, which he does of his own free will and because of his own merciful love. God chooses Abraham's son Isaac as the child of promise, and repeats the promise to him. God chooses Isaac's son Jacob, and makes the promise again to Jacob in the well-known vision of the ladder. God changes Jacob's name to Israel, which becomes the name of the chosen people.

The story of God and his people is, to a great extent, the story of the fulfillment of that promise. Exodus and Deuteronomy tell how Israel became a nation. The stories of Joshua, the judges, Saul, and David tell how they conquer and settle the Promised Land. And the New Testament tells how all nations were blessed through Jesus, the promised offspring of Abraham.

The idea of the chosen people and the Promised Land will become key themes in Scripture. In the New Testament, these ideas help shape the teaching that the church is God's chosen people (Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Peter 2:9-10), that in Christ Gentiles now share in the inheritance of God's holy people (Ephesians 1:18; 2:11-3:6; Colossians 1:11), and that the Holy Spirit and heaven are our promised inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-23; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

The act of making and keeping his promise demonstrates another vital aspect of God's character—he abounds in faithfulness. God does not say one thing and do another. When he enters into covenants, whether with Noah, Abraham, Israel at Mt. Sinai, or with us at the cross, he will keep his word.

Next Week: The Exodus—Part 1 (Exodus 12-15; Deuteronomy 26:1-11)

Memory Verse (for Weeks 1-4): Exodus 34:6

On the Mountain ("*Love God*")—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Read Ephesians 1:15-23 and reflect on what it says about what we have received in Christ.
2. Meditate on the phrase "the riches of his glorious inheritance among God's holy people." Ask God to enlighten you to know this more fully.
3. Then write down a list of the "riches" we have as part of that inheritance.
4. Give thanks for each of those blessings. Pray that your life will be a reflection of what you have received from God.

In the Gathering (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Was the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob something they would experience in their lifetimes? If not, what difference do you think God’s promise made to them in their own lives? (Consider Hebrews 11:8-22.)
2. Read Deuteronomy 7:7-9 and 9:4-7. What do these verses say about why Israel is being given the Promised Land? Would God say something similar to us about the blessings he has promised us?
3. Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20? In what way does Israel’s place in the Promised Land depend on the word and act of God? In what way does the Israelites’ enjoyment of God’s blessings depend on their own choices?
4. How is the Holy Spirit a down payment or deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14)? What does that mean to you in your walk with God?
5. Do you have anything to share from your time with God or with your family last week?
6. Praise and thank God for his faithfulness. Pray that we would choose the life God offers and live it more faithfully by the power of his Spirit in us. Pray for the coming of his promise of heaven.

Around the Table (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. Talk with your children about something precious to you that you inherited from parents or grandparents. Talk about what you’d most want to pass on to them.
2. With younger children, talk about an inheritance in heaven being like having their own rooms waiting for them there.
3. Talk about people of other nations in our city and schools. How could we be a blessing to them?
4. Thank God for his promises and pray that he will help us be a blessing to others.

Into the World (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. Pray that, as children of Abraham, God would bless all people through us.
2. As you go about your week, be aware of the presence of people from other nations and religions in our city. Think about what impact Christians here may be having on them.
3. Consider something your home church could do to be a blessing to others.
4. Look for an opportunity to be a blessing to someone this week who may not know God.