



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Eyes of Faith When the Vision's Bleak April 28, 2019

(Genesis 15:1-6)

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield,
your very great reward.”

² But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

For the Kids/Family: What is a promise that God has made to you that can help you always feel safe and secure, even if things seem scary or uncertain?

1. **Icebreaker:** Share with the group a time in your life when things were really bleak or uncertain, but God got you through it.

2. In the chapter just preceding our sermon text (Genesis 14), Abram and 318 trained men of his household rout a collaborative army comprised of soldiers and kings from four cities, who had captured Abram’s nephew Lot and all of his possessions. Understanding that context, why are God’s initial words to Abram such a comforting thought?

Abram was probably nervous about those kings trying to bring some revenge on him, or some recompense for this defeat. He had a small army, so he’d certainly be ripe for being attacked, and now they had a reason to attack. With that in mind, for God to promise to be his shield/protection would have been extremely comforting! No matter what might be threatening, he could trust God to keep him safe.

3. How would you respond to a person who says there isn’t enough evidence or visual proof for the existence of God to actually believe in him? (**Hint:** See if you can use Hebrews 11 to help formulate your answer.)

Our faith isn’t founded on visible evidences or proof. Our faith is founded on the promises of God! So even if there isn’t vast scientific evidence or proof of God’s existence, we could still believe in him, because that’s what faith is. (Hebrews 11:1— Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.) That said, God tells us that there is even plenty of compelling evidence of God’s existence—i.e. “nature” (See Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:20) Also, the fact that there are some things that are universally perceived as being bad or wrong (murder, rape, etc.) points to a law that has been put into the hearts of all people from the beginning (The conscience—see Romans 2:14-15). That said, even with proof and evidence, we would still believe in God, because he has brought us to faith through his powerful Word and promises.

4. **Discuss:** Is it ever OK to question how God will keep his promises to us?

Yes. A lot of the Psalms revolve around asking God to protect and lead his people, and sometimes they even question how he will go about doing that. However, in the end, the trust that

God WILL do what he's promised doesn't waver, even if how he will do it is the question.

Is it ever OK to doubt that God is going to keep his promises to us? Doubts and lack of trust or faith that God WILL keep his promises are sinful. If God has promised to do it, we can trust completely that he WILL do it, even if we don't always understand how he will carry that out. Doubting that God will keep his promises equates to a lack of faith and trust. To question how God will carry out his promise doesn't always involve a lack of faith, just a lack of understanding.

5. **Discuss:** Why was God's visual reminder of the stars in the sky such a wonderful reminder for Abram? What are some visuals that you have in your house/office/etc. that you could look at to be reminded of God's promises? Or if you don't have any, what might be some good ideas to have in those places?
Every evening, that reminder was available for Abram to see! Whenever the doubts crept in, all he had to do was peek his head outside of his tent at night, and he'd be reminded.
--We have a ton of visuals in the church that are intended to remind people of God's promises—the Easter Christ candle is one of them, along with stained glass windows, carvings on the communion rails, etc.
--In my office, I write out passages on note cards and have them stuck in strategic places as daily reminders of God's promises. Artwork can also be great for visual reminders of God's promises.
--Visuals are valuable, as many people are visual learners, and all of us have been built with senses that allow us to perceive God's promises. Make use of the!
6. **Agree/Disagree:** Because Abram believed in God's promise, God rewarded him for his faith by crediting Jesus' righteousness to him.
Disagree. The righteousness Abram received through faith in Jesus was not a reward, but a gift of grace and mercy. In the same way, even the faith that receives the righteousness of

Christ is a gracious gift from God. Otherwise, if we view it that way, our faith is something we've done, and the righteousness of Christ we receive through faith ceases to be a gift, and becomes wages instead! All of it are gifts of God's grace and mercy.

7. From the top of your head, give some examples from Abram's life of times when he showed great trust, and times when he showed a sinful lack of trust in God. With those in mind, why is Jesus the "greater" Abram in the ways he showed trust in God?

Great trust:

- Leaving his homeland (Genesis 12:1-9)
- Letting Lot take the good land, trusting that God would still provide (Genesis 13)
- Rescuing Lot after he'd been captured (Genesis 14)
- Receiving the promises from God in faith (Genesis 15)
- Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17)
- Pleading with God to spare Sodom (Genesis 18)
- Tested by God to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22)

Lack of trust:

- Lies about Sarai in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20)
- Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16)
- Lies about Sarah to Abimelech (Genesis 20)
- While we see the great faith that Abraham so often displays, and applaud him for that faith (Note his inclusion in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11), we also see him often lacking a complete and perfect trust in God's ability to protect and provide for him. Because of that, we needed Jesus to be the greater Abraham who always perfectly and completely trusted in his Father's will to provide for and take care of him!