

Altared

Scripture and Background Information for September 17-23.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

Abraham is known as one of the fathers of our faith, but his faith was not perfect. At moments, he believed in God wholeheartedly and was willing to be incredibly obedient to God while, in others, he let fear and selfishness drive his actions. In this series, we will study the life of Abraham, all the successes and failures, to see how we may relate to his relationship with God. Ultimately, we hope to learn how each of us can direct the devotion of our lives to God, so that we allow Him to determine the destination of our journeys.

Background for Genesis 12:9-13:4:

Abram's story gets off to a great start. God promises to give him land, descendants and that he will be blessed and a blessing to others. After this, Abram obeys God's call to leave his home to go to a place that God will show to him even though he doesn't know where it is. Then, when he arrives in the place that the Lord picked out for him and his family, he sets up altars to worship God. Seemingly, Abram was well on his way to experiencing God's promises firsthand.

But this triumphant beginning doesn't last. Soon after getting to the land, Abram puts each of the promises at risk because of his actions. First, Abram leaves the land that God has promised and goes south to the Negev. There, he and his family experience a harsh famine and he makes a calculated decision (one that also seemed to lack the faith Abram exhibited earlier in the chapter) to go further away from the promised land into Egypt. Next, he puts the promise of descendants at risk by lying about his wife to the Egyptians. Thinking that Sarai was his sister Pharaoh took her to be his wife. This also ultimately hurts Abram's ability to be a blessing to others like God had promised because, through his lie, God brought judgement on Pharaoh which gets Abram and his family kicked out of Egypt. After all this, Abram finds himself back in the promised land, worshipping God at the altar he had built earlier, with all the promises God had made still intact despite Abram's sin because of God's faithfulness and graciousness.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. How is God's grace and faithfulness at work in this story?
2. In this story, Abram makes sinful decisions based off fear, disappointment, self-centeredness, and greed. Which of these typically lead you to make similar decisions in your life?
3. At the end of this story, Abram calls upon the name of the Lord. How can we call upon the name of the Lord after experiencing hard circumstances or dealing with sin in our lives?

*Check back in with your groups about the rhythm of silence and solitude. Ask how their times in silence and solitude have been and what God has been showing them in those moments.