

Small Group Guide: Genesis 15

Overview

This session explores Genesis 15, where God meets Abraham in a moment of doubt and fear, reaffirms his promises, and establishes a covenant that reveals the heart of how God relates to his people. Through Abraham's experience, we discover what it means to trust God when his promises seem delayed, to look up when anxiety pulls us down, and to rest in a covenant that God himself guarantees.

Opening Question

Think of a moment when you made a significant decision and then immediately wondered, "What did I just do?" What was that experience like, and how did you eventually find peace with your choice?

Key Takeaways

- 1. God meets us in our fear with his presence.** After Abraham took a bold stand — refusing worldly reward and making powerful enemies — fear set in. God's response was not a lecture but a promise: "I am your shield. I am your very great reward." God offers himself as the answer to our anxiety.
- 2. Faith lives in tension with unanswered questions.** Abraham believed God, yet he still asked hard questions about timing and fulfillment. Honest questions directed toward God are not the opposite of faith — they can be an expression of it.
- 3. Salvation has always been by faith alone.** Genesis 15:6 establishes a principle that runs through the entire Bible: God counts faith as righteousness. Abraham was justified not by his works but by trusting in God's promise. This is the same foundation on which every believer stands today.
- 4. God's covenant is unconditional.** In the covenant ceremony, God alone passed between the animal halves. Abraham did not walk through. The entire weight of the promise rested on God. This pictures the gospel — God in Christ bears the penalty for our failure so that his promises to us cannot be broken by our weakness.
- 5. God's timing is purposeful, not passive.** The 400 years of affliction in Egypt were not a delay in God's plan — they were part of it. God used that time to build a nation. What looks like waiting from our perspective is often active work from his.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Fear and the Presence of God

1. Abraham had just done something courageous, and then fear set in afterward. Have you ever experienced a similar pattern — acting boldly in faith and then being hit by doubt or anxiety once the moment passed? What did that feel like?
2. God's response to Abraham's fear was to say, in essence, "I am enough." How does focusing on who God is rather than on what we are afraid of change the way we handle anxiety? What makes that shift difficult in practice?
3. The sermon described a night pastor Dale stepped outside into the ocean air, seeing the stars above the clouds and the waves, and being reminded of God's unchanging nature above life's storms. What are some practical ways your group members have learned to "look up" when anxiety pulls them downward?

Section 2: Faith and Honest Questions

4. This was the first time Abraham speaks directly to God in conversation, and he did so by asking a hard question: "What will you give me?" What does it tell us about our relationship with God that he welcomes this kind of honest dialogue rather than demanding silent acceptance?
5. Abraham did not fully understand why God was delaying the fulfillment of his promises. Are there promises in Scripture — or personal convictions God has placed on your heart — that you are still waiting to see fulfilled? How do you hold onto faith in that waiting season?
6. God brought Abraham outside and told him to look at the stars. He gave him a heavenly perspective to anchor his earthly struggle. Where do you tend to go for perspective when life feels overwhelming? How does Scripture and community help recalibrate your focus?

Section 3: Righteousness by Faith

7. Genesis 15:6 says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. In your own words, what does it mean that faith is "counted" as righteousness? Why is this good news rather than just a theological concept?
8. The sermon pointed out that Abraham looked FORWARD in faith to a promised offspring — ultimately fulfilled in Christ — while we look BACK on the cross. How does understanding that salvation has always been by faith, across both testaments, deepen your appreciation for the gospel?

9. Romans 4 makes the case that Abraham's justification came before his circumcision and before the law — meaning no religious ritual or rule-keeping produced it. How does this challenge any tendency we have to think our standing before God depends on our performance?

Section 4: The Unconditional Covenant

10. In the covenant ceremony, God alone walked between the animal halves, taking on himself the full weight of the agreement. What does it mean to you personally that God's faithfulness to his promises does not depend on your faithfulness to keep your end of a bargain?
11. The sermon made the point that "sometimes we are faithless, but he remains faithful." Can you think of a season in your life when God was faithful to you even when your own faith was weak or inconsistent? How did that shape your trust in him?
12. God told Abraham he would die before seeing all the promises fulfilled, yet described it as going to his fathers "in peace." What does this reveal about how God views death for the believer? How does the certainty of resurrection and eternal life with Christ change the way you think about unfulfilled promises in your own lifetime?

Practical Applications

This week, choose one of the following to put into practice:

- **Redirect your anxiety upward.** When a worry surfaces this week, pause and deliberately shift your focus. Open Scripture. Pray. Remind yourself of a specific promise God has made. Write it down somewhere visible.
- **Bring your honest questions to God.** If there is a promise you are waiting on or a question you have been hesitant to voice, take time in prayer this week to speak it directly to God, just as Abraham did. Honest prayer is not a lack of faith — it is faith in action.
- **Reflect on the covenant.** Spend time meditating on the truth that your standing before God rests entirely on what Christ has done, not on what you have done. Consider journaling about what it means to rest in a salvation that God himself guarantees.
- **Share the perspective.** If someone in your life is currently overwhelmed by anxiety or discouragement, come alongside them this week with a word of encouragement rooted in a specific promise from Scripture. Point their eyes upward.

Closing Reflection

God did not wait for Abraham to get his doubts resolved before showing up. He came to Abraham in the darkness, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the fear. He did not demand that Abraham have it all together first. He simply said, "I am here. I am your shield. I am your reward." That is the God we serve. He meets us where we are, anchors us in who He is, and carries the full weight of every promise He has made.

Close your time together in prayer, thanking God for his unconditional faithfulness, and asking him to give each group member the grace to believe him — even in the dark, even in the waiting, even when the promises have not yet been fully realized.