

Father Abraham

Lesson 1

The Life of Abraham:
Structure and Content

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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ABOUT THIRDMILL

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Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

In order to accomplish our distribution goals, Thirdmill has forged strategic partnerships with churches, seminaries, Bible schools, missionaries, Christian broadcasters and satellite television providers, and other organizations. These relationships have already resulted in the distribution of countless video lessons to indigenous leaders, pastors, and seminary students. Our websites also serve as avenues of distribution and provide additional materials to supplement our lessons, including materials on how to start your own learning community.

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CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE	3
PREPARATION.....	4
NOTES.....	5
I. INTRODUCTION (0:28).....	5
II. LITERARY DESIGN (3:07)	5
A. Genesis (4:48).....	5
B. Abraham (8:58).....	6
1. Basic Units (9:10).....	6
2. Arrangement (14:04)	7
III. MAJOR THEMES (20:51)	8
A. Key Passage (22:23).....	8
1. Introduction (24:42).....	9
2. Part One (26:00)	9
3. Part Two (27:42).....	10
B. Unfolding (31:11).....	10
1. Divine Grace (31:50).....	10
2. Abraham’s Loyalty (34:49)	11
3. Blessings to Abraham (38:59)	12
4. Blessings through Abraham (42:33).....	12
IV. CONCLUSION (45:09).....	13
REVIEW QUESTIONS	14
APPLICATION QUESTIONS.....	17
GLOSSARY	18

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read Genesis 11:10–25:18

Notes

I. Introduction (0:28)

II. Literary Design (3:07)

Biblical authors intentionally designed their stories to be relevant to the lives of the people who received them.

A. Genesis (4:48)

Genesis divides into three large sections.

- **Primeval History, 1:1–11:9**

God's revealed truth about the origins of the world.

- **Later Patriarchal History, 37:2–50:26**

Large, unified storyline about Joseph

- **Early Patriarchal History, 11:10–37:1**

Stories about the first fathers of the nation of Israel.

- Life of Abraham

- Life of Jacob

B. Abraham (8:58)

1. Basic Units (9:10)

Moses wrote about Abraham's life in 17 basic segments or episodes.

- Abraham's Favored Lineage
- Abraham's Failing Father
- Abraham's Migration to Canaan
- Abraham's Deliverance from Egypt
- Abraham's Conflict with Lot
- Abraham's Rescue of Lot
- Abraham's Covenant Promises

- Abraham's Failure with Hagar
- Abraham's Covenant Requirements
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Abraham's Intercession for Abimelech
- Abraham's sons Isaac and Ishmael
- Abraham's Treaty with Abimelech
- Abraham's Test
- Abraham's Burial Property
- A Wife for Isaac
- Abraham's Death and Heir

These are relatively independent episodes. Each was designed to report events in Abraham's life and to teach specific lessons to Moses' original audience.

2. Arrangement (14:04)

The episodes of Abraham's life cluster around specific themes. These clusters form five symmetrical or balancing steps.

- First: Abraham's background and early experiences with God.

- Second: Abraham's earlier contacts with other peoples.
- Third: Abraham's Covenant relationship with God.
- Fourth: Abraham's later contacts with other people.
- Fifth: Progeny and Death

III. Major Themes (20:51)

A. Key Passage (22:23)

God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3:

*The Lord had said to Abram,
"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land
I will show you.
I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

1. Introduction (24:42)

The Lord had said to Abram

- Abraham received his call in Ur.
- Before his father Tarah died.

2. Part One (26:00)

- Imperative:
 - *Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you*

- Three independent verbal expressions:
 - *I will make you into a great nation*

 - *and I will bless you*

 - *I will make your name great*

3. Part Two (27:42)

Attention shifts away from Abraham receiving blessings to Abraham being a blessing.

- Imperative:
 - *and you will be a blessing*

- Three independent verbal expressions:
 - *I will bless those who bless you*

 - *and whoever curses you I will curse*

 - *and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*

B. Unfolding (31:11)

1. Divine Grace (31:50)

God's relationship with Abraham was based on God's grace.

God entered into Abraham's life long before Abraham had done anything in service to God.

Abraham's saving righteousness was gift of mercy.

2. Abraham's Loyalty (34:49)

God had shown mercy to Abraham, but Abraham was also expected to show deep-seated, loyal service to God.

God required loyalty from the patriarch many times.

- Genesis 22

3. Blessings to Abraham (38:59)

God offered the patriarch three blessings:

- A great nation (descendants)
- Blessing (prosperity)
- Great name (fame)

The gifts of descendants, prosperity and fame were foreshadows of greater gifts that God would give to Abraham's faithful descendants.

4. Blessings through Abraham (42:33)

God called Abraham to be a conduit of divine blessings to all the families of the earth.

God called Abraham to himself so that:

- Abraham would lead the nations of the world into God's blessings.

God called Israel to Himself in Moses' day so that:

- They would lead the nations of the world into God's blessings.

God has called the church to himself today so that:

- We may lead the nations of the world into the blessings of God.

IV. Conclusion (45:09)

3. Why did Moses craft his literary portrait of Israel's first patriarch in this way?

4. Describe the structure of Genesis 12:1-3. Why is this structure significant?

5. What four main themes of Abraham's life are introduced in Genesis 12:1-3?

6. What are some similarities between the Israelites who lived in Moses' day and modern Christians?

Application Questions

1. As Moses wrote about Abraham he drew attention to God's grace. In what ways does your life's story demonstrate God's grace?
2. Abraham was required to show loyalty through obedience to God in many ways. What place does loyalty have in your understanding of God's relationships with his people?
3. In what ways are you able to identify with Abraham? Which episode in Moses' account seems closest to your own experience as a follower of Christ? How does Abraham's story offer encouragement to you?
4. Why do you think Moses desired that the Israelites understand that their blessings had a purpose?
5. In what ways have you and your church community been a blessing to others?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?

Glossary

Abimelech – King of Gerar in the Negev region who took Sarah to be with him, thinking that she was Abraham's sister

Abram – Abraham's original name

Canaan, land of – Region given to Abraham and his descendants as an inheritance in his covenant with God; encompasses present-day Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Jordan, the adjoining coastal lands and parts of Egypt and Syria

covenant – A binding legal agreement made either between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

foreshadowing – Literary device in which certain events hint at or point to future events that will occur later in the story

Hagar – Sarah's handmaid who slept with Abraham and gave birth to Ishmael

Isaac – Son of Abraham and Sarah; heir of God's covenant promises

Ishmael – Son of Abraham and Hagar

Lot – Abraham's nephew

Negev – Desert area in the southern region of Canaan (alternately spelled Negeb)

Sarah – Abraham's wife, originally called Sarai, who gave birth to Isaac at an old age

Sodom – A sinful city that God destroyed with burning sulfur

Terah – Abraham's father

toledot/toledoth – Hebrew word (transliteration) meaning "generations"