

OFFICERS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
NEIGHBORHOOD BIBLE STUDIES
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

God's Progressive Revelation #1 Genesis 1:1-5

(To the discussion leader: This and future discussion guides may be used in script form. The discussion leader can use the questions just as they are written. Do not use the possible answers as approved solutions. Information not for discussion will be enclosed by parentheses. If you would like to discuss contents of this guide, please call 684-2158.)

(Use a beginning time to get acquainted at this first meeting. Example: "So that we can get to know each other better, let's each one introduce ourselves by the familiar name we prefer and share what each one of us hopes to gain from this group. My name is... and I hope to learn more about God's will for my life during the course of our discussions this year.")

(Opening prayer suggestion: Use step #1 of the developmental prayer sequence for this opening prayer time. If you start out using something other than the developmental prayer, you will have problems implementing it later.)

The nature of a topical bible study requires us to frequently switch from scripture to scripture. Please turn to the table of contents at the front of your bibles so that you can familiarize yourself with it and refer to it as needed. Since we are using several different translations, you may notice that the translation you are using is quite different from the one read out loud. My table of contents is divided into Old Testament and New Testament sections with pages numbered consecutively from front to back. Is yours different? I will refer to readings for our study by book, chapter and verse. As an example, let's turn to the first book of the bible, Genesis.

Someone please read Genesis 1, verses 1 thru 5 for us.

-According to this scripture, who is present at this occasion? God and the Holy Spirit.

-How extensive was this creation? The universe (the heavens and the earth).

-How would you describe the qualities of the mind of God that created the whole universe?
Creatively unlimited, etc., etc....

Now let's turn to the book of John, the fourth book of the New Testament. This book is sometimes referred to as the Gospel of John. Someone please read chapter 1, verses 1 thru 5 for us.

Who does this scripture add to our list of who was present at the creation? the Word.

The earliest versions of the New Testament were written in Greek. The Greek word from which "Word" was translated was "Logos." What does the word logos mean in contemporary usage? A symbol that represents something else. The logo of CGSC is the lamp of learning. *Webster's New World Dictionary* includes Logos as a noun and states... in Christian theology, the Word: Jesus as the second person of the Trinity; John 1.

So now we have identified three persons at the creation, the Trinity: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. According to this scripture, what facts do we learn about Jesus? 1. All things were made through him, 2. In him was life, 3. That life was the light of men, etc.

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Keep this scripture available and turn to Isaiah 43:7. According to this scripture, why did God create us? To bring Him glory.

Now turn back to John 1:4. What do you suppose is the meaning of the "life" in Christ? His life was the perfect model that God gave us as an example. He was God in flesh (v), God in flesh. The "life" that was in him was life complete, in all of its fullness and possibilities. His life had the most meaning of any life ever created.

-How did the life of Christ fulfill the purpose of life as stated in Isa. 43:7? As the image of God present in the world, Jesus' life gave us the fullest possible understanding of God.

-How was his life: "the light of men?" His life was the perfect example. He demonstrated the way life should be lived.

-To examine v. 5 how would you explain the statement, "The only way to understand the life of Jesus is to live in 'the light'?" To live according to God's direction and will.

-What does "light" and "darkness" represent? Light represents truth, God, righteousness. Darkness represents that which is not of God... Anti Christ, Satan, evil, etc. The nature of being ungodly is to be in darkness.

-Describe the aspects of a life lived in darkness. There is a perceived unfulfillment...the void in all of us that only God's Spirit can fill. The life of spiritual darkness is filled with materialism... ownership and possession of things are primary to living the good life: humanistic... self is of primary importance, being self actualized (fully achieving one's human potential. Living life for my own benefit).

Does anyone have anything they would like to add before we close?

(Close with step 1 of Developmental Closing Prayer)

(Please convey your feelings and evaluation of this guide to Tom Schmidt along with any recommendations for change for future use.)

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God's Progressive Revelation #2

Genesis 2:15-17

Someone read Gen 2:15-17.

This is a direction of God to Adam... a commandment. If God commands something, is it optional? No. Why? God is sovereign. No one else is sovereign. If God commands something, it is required.

If we consider one of God's commands as an option for our lives, how does God categorize our action? sin.

How do we please God? By being obedient to Him. Someone read Gen 2:18-25.

Why was woman created? (2:20 and 24). Woman completes God's creation of a human. What was God's intention for the relationship between man and woman? (2:24) "They shall be one..." an entity. Why weren't they ashamed (2:25)? The relationship was perfect at this point.

Someone read Gen 3:1-5. How do you suppose Eve learned about the forbidden fruit? Adam probably told her. Did she have the direction of God straight (compare 2:15-17 with 3:2-3)? "Touching" was not included in the original statement of God. Was the portion about "not touching" a wise addition? How might Paul's guidance in Thess 5:22 have applied to Eve's situation? How is it appropriate that Satan uses the form of a serpent in this story? What was the serpent's opening question to Eve? (Gen 3:1) How did he lie in this question? God restricted the eating of the fruit of only one tree. Does this give you any insight into how Satan might approach you? What were the serpent's points in vv 5&6? 1. You will not die if you eat, 2. Your eyes will be opened... you will know good and evil and be like Gods. How do you suppose Eve interpreted what the serpent said? Her life would be better, she would be more powerful and smarter, she would be more like God.. whom she must have admired.

Someone read 3:6-15.

Someone read vv 16-24.

What do you suppose the relationship was like between God and Adam and Eve before their sin? They walked and talked in harmony with God. Apparently, we can only try to imagine the idyllic lifestyle of Adam and Eve. There were no hang-ups about nakedness or sex. Food and clothing were no problems. The scenery must have been fantastic.

What was the magnitude of their sin? They simply disobeyed God. So what's the big deal? It is apparent that, to God, our disobedience of His requirements is the worst thing we can do in life. Again, He is creator and He sets the rules.

What, do you suppose, is the difference between our definition of what makes up the good life and God's definition of what should make up the good life?

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How many ways could Adam and Eve have sinned? Only one. Do you see their disobedience so seriously as God apparently saw it? Why do you suppose you see it differently? How important is how he sees things? God's directions are absolutes. Modern man doesn't want to accept moral absolutes.

Do you think the mere eating of the forbidden fruit should have had such consequences? What were the consequences?

What does this story say about God's feeling about every sin? He abhors sin.

In light of what we know about sin in the world today, can you name worse sins than the one committed by Adam and Eve?

Is it possible that God has a different perspective about magnitudes of sin? What does this story say about God's feeling about every sin?

Isn't all sin a matter of choice?

Aren't the thoughts after the first thought of every sin a matter of choice? Thought is the seed of sin. Jesus emphasized that sexual thoughts were acts of adultery and murderous thoughts were the same as committing murder in one's heart. See Romans 12:2. In light of what we know about sin in the world today, can you name worse sins than Adam and Eve committed? Sin is separation from God. Read Romans 3:23 and 6:23.

Do you suppose they are the same from God's perspective?

Let's look back at vv 4 and 5. Did they die? It depends on your perspective. They didn't die physically... but they did die spiritually.

What does "spiritual" mean? It has to do with the closeness of the relationship between a person and God.. .with how the person thinks and acts.. with their quality of commitment to God as sovereign Lord of their lives. It is a matter of choice and commitment... faith and belief... the way one lives life. The key word is faith.

What happened after Adam and Eve's sin to their relationship with God? They were banished from the garden (v 24). He never again revealed himself to people the way He did to Adam and Eve. So did they die? Yes, from God's perspective, thereafter they lived their lives without the close relationship with God... He withdrew His spirit from them. If you think of a person as being composed of mind, body and Spirit... they lost the Spirit of God which is referred to in Acts 1:8.

According to this scripture, how was evil introduced into the world? By Satan using the body of a serpent. Apparently Eve was not surprised that the serpent could talk... Perhaps Adam and Eve even had a different relationship with the creatures of the world that we now know.

What was the nature of the serpents personality? 1. He was subtle, smooth and convincing... logical, 2. He misquoted God (lied).

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Are you surprised that he knew about God's direction to Adam and Eve? Satan does not have the qualities of God. He is not all knowing, all powerful, always present.

What was Eve's first error? 1. She involved herself with one who would change God's Word and 2. She thought on what she knew was against God's direction.. .nurtured the sin in her mind.

Since she had no previous experience with sin, shouldn't God have been more lenient? Another case of a problem with absolutes. Of what did the serpent convince Eve (v6)?

Shouldn't Satan be the one to be blamed, it was his fault wasn't it?

How does Eve's response in v 6 relate to our responses to the sin in our lives today?

What happens once you get past the point of thinking about it?

It usually is an experience that we repeat because we like it.

Is it possibly true that the stolen watermelon is the sweetest? What are the factors involved in this statement?

What is the bottom line.. the price of sin? Separation from God. Do you suppose God looks at all sin as he did the forbidden fruit? Does God's nature change? God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

What does this story do to the concept of "big" and "little" sins? There was only one possibility for Adam and Eve. God demonstrated in this story His hatred of all sin.

How did Adam and Eve's quality of life change after their sin?

How were Adam and Eve "like Gods" after eating the fruit? (v22) Before they knew only good. Now they could compare the good with their knowledge of evil. Do you consider what they did "evil?" Apparently God defined what they did as evil. All sin is evil in God's eyes.

What was the implication of the serpent's argument in v5? They would be like God and therefore their power and quality of life would improve.

Did their lives improve in any way?

Would you consider their greater knowledge an improvement?

Does our society consider "knowledge", whether good or evil, as improvement? How about the study of forbidden knowledge... fortune telling, witchcraft, necromancy etc.?

Where do horoscopes and ouija boards fit here?

Are you subject to the trap of the statements: "You never will really appreciate goodness until you sin a little" Boys will be boys." "It is expected that you will sow a few wild oats." "How do you know what you are missing unless you commit a little adultery?" "Sex before marriage is not really so bad...perhaps you

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will avoid getting the wrong partner." "Everyone has bad thoughts.. .nobody expects you to be responsible for your thoughts, do they?" Jesus did. Apply Romans 12:2.. Specialize in one thought problem at a time... Pick a verse which relates directly to the problem and a verse opposite that which relates to the positive spiritual trait. Whenever you think the sin thought, quote both verses and claim the second.

What importance does God place on being "spiritually minded?"

Being spiritual is living from God's point of view. If we have another view it testifies to our distance from God's will. God clearly indicates how he feels about spiritual lukewarmness in Rev. 3:14-16. Many of us live our lives as if it is more important to be approved by our superiors or those over us in authority than it is to please God. How does God feel? Are His feelings all that important? When will the difference be important? Will we be able to do anything about it then?

How do you feel about this discussion?

How serious is God about sin in our lives?

Is it just as serious for us as it was for Adam and Eve?

What things can a believer do to become the spiritual kind of person God clearly desires us to be?

What is the difference between understanding the Bible and applying it to our lives?

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God's Progressive Revelation #3
The Noahic Covenant

Let's review Gen 1:28, 29 and 2:15-17. This is the Edenic Covenant or God's first contractual agreement with humankind. What are the essential elements of a contract? There must be mutuality...both parties must give and receive.

What was Adam charged to do in this covenant? 1. Populate the earth (1:28), 2. Subdue the earth (Gen 1:28), 3. Exercise dominion over the animal creation (Gen 1:28), 4. Care for the garden of Eden and enjoy its fruit (Gen 1:29; 2:15); and 5. Refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, under penalty of death (Gen 2:16, 17).

How was the Edenic covenant terminated? By Adam's disobedience, when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At this point death (both physical and spiritual entered into the world). God's response to their disobedience was a new covenant with humankind who would now live under a curse of sin because of Adam and Eve's sin.

Now let's look at Gen 3:14-21, the Adamic Covenant. What are the consequences for:

1. The serpent (Satan's tool in this story)? a. Apparently the serpent was upright, now it would go on its belly, b. It was the most desirable animal of creation, now it would be lithesome.
2. The indwelling energizer (Satan)? He will enjoy limited success... "you shall bruise his heel.", b. He will ultimately loose... "He shall bruise your head" (15).
3. For women (Eve): a. A multiplication of conception, necessitated by the introduction of physical death into the world (16), b. Pain in childbirth (16), c. Woman made subject to her husband (16).
4. For men (Adam): a. The ground shall bring forth weeds (17,18), b. Physical changes: man will perspire when he works. He will have to work all his life (19), c. In sinning man dies spiritually, and ultimately will die physically... his flesh will decay and return to dust (19).

To better understand this discussion you should take the opportunity sometime this week to read Gen 4:7-10.

The people of the world grew so disobedient (sinful) that God finally sent a great flood to destroy all humankind except Noah's family. Archaeologists all over the world have found confirming evidence of this great flood.

Someone read Gen 7:11-24.

How would you summarize God's reaction to man's sin from the results of this story? God hates sin.

1 What do you think about God's reaction to man's sin? Harsh, but God is sovereign.

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How do you interpret the phrase "God is sovereign: from what you have studied so far in scripture in these two lessons?

Do you suppose God still feels this way about sin? God has not changed, but his provisions for our dealing with sin has been added to Christians.

Now let's look at the Noahic Covenant: Gen 9:1-19.

Because of the great sin in the world (man's disobedience to the revealed law of God), God sent the great flood and destroyed all but those in the Ark: Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives (8 people populated the world). What are the provisions of this covenant?

1. They were to continue to populate the world.
2. Animals were still subject to man.
3. Man could eat of the flesh of animals but he must not eat their blood (the beginning of the kosher practice of bleeding animals whose flesh would be used for food).
4. Life is sacred. If man or beast shed a person's blood, that life must be paid for by the life of the one shedding the blood.
5. The covenant is confirmed to every living creature (9,10).
6. God promised never to destroy the whole population of the earth by flood again (11). We now know that the next time it will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:10).
7. As long as we see the rainbow we should remember the Noahic covenant is still in existence.

Blood and life are sometimes used to mean the same thing in scripture. What do you see about blood or life in this scripture? 1. Man must not eat blood (3,4), 2. If a life is taken, the responsible life must be taken in payment.

God begins to set the stage for humankind's learning of the cost of sin. The stage begins to be set in the earliest of scripture for Christ's blood to be shed for the sin of man. We will study some scriptural reasons for the innocent/sinless life of Christ to be given for the sins of humankind... an eternal sacrifice available to each person as a payment for each one's sins. We look forward to celebrate the birth of the "lamb of God that has taken away the sin of the world" for all who have Him as Lord. (John 3:16)

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God's Progressive Revelation #4
THE TOWER OF BABEL

We have previously studied:

1. The Edenic Covenant (The Garden of Eden)
2. The Noahic Covenant (Noah)

Now we move to God's reaction to another situation... Someone read Gen. 11:1-9.

How would you title this portion of scripture? "The Tower of Babel", Divine Action Against Human Pride", etc...

What are the facts of vv1 and 2?

vi: Everyone spoke the same language.

v2: They journeyed westward to Shinar (Babylon) (The plain is the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.)

What are the facts of vv 3-9?

v3: They manufactured bricks and mortar.

v4: . . .etc. to v 9.

What was their sin (v4)? What words do we use for people who are always trying to make themselves bigger than they are? Pride, ego, etc...

What was the meaning of their intent? They thought that by their own creative effort of building they could rise to the greatest heights and dominate their world.

Isn't that the ambition of everyone worth his salt? Not in God's eyes. "God's ways are not man's ways."

What other peoples in history did similar things? 1. The Pharaohs in the building of the pyramids and gigantic statues of themselves, 2. Greece sought to achieve its eminence with building blocks of knowledge (an earthly heaven), 3. Military empires through the ages have attempted to build on earth a structure that would match the authority of God (Example: the Third Reich, the USSR of today, etc).

How might the various nations of today be conspiring to accomplish this? Control of immense material resources, economic power, scientific creativity, military power, etc...

How do individuals conspire to do this? By wealth, possessions, power, personal success... anything that takes such a place in our lives that it comes before our commitment to God as sovereign Lord of our lives. v5 indicates that God inspected and evaluated their building. What did He see in it? The desire of their heart that would replace His sovereignty in their lives.

Who is the "us" of v7? God speaking to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. What did God do to thwart their efforts? He gave them various languages and scattered them over the earth.

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What was the message of God in this story? The accomplishments of people that flow out of their independence from His (pride) displeases Him.

What do these accomplishments do to us? They develop pride and ungodly ambition within us, leading to pride and ego. What does pride and ego do to us? They separate us from God. Our model is Jesus who came to be the servant of all. What is the spiritual opposite trait to pride of the godly person? Humility.. .total reliance on God (who gets the credit and glory for our accomplishments).

How does all of this fit with the first statement of the Westminster catechism that says... "The chief end of man is to glorify God?"

What is God's apparent intent for how we should live our lives? He desire that we should accept Him as Lord.. .He will guide us. He will accomplish His will through us as we become better channels of His blessings.. daily more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

What can we do to accomplish this? Relinquish our ego and pride.. rely totally on Him so that our actions are the result of our reliance on Him. Our accomplishments are the result of His Lordship in our lives. When we do that, we will be enabled to love (agapeo') the Lord with our whole being and love (agapeo') our neighbors as ourselves.

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BIBLE STUDY DISCUSSION GUIDE
TOPICAL STUDY #5

ABRAM, THE OBEDIENT

We will continue to study God's revelation of Himself to humankind. Thus far we have discussed the Edenic Covenant, the Noahic Covenant and the Tower of Babel. Now let's proceed to God's relationship with Abraham.

Someone read Gen 11:29-32.

What was Abram and Sarai's problem (v. 30)? *Childless.*

Was Abram or Sarai responsible for their childlessness? *The scripture says Sarai was barren; i.e., had borne no children.. In the period of the scripture, childlessness was always blamed on the wife.*

What is a possible explanation for Terah's long life? *Less disease and pollution of that day enabled long life.*

Someone read 12:1-4.

How would you title this scripture? *"God Makes a Covenant with Abram," etc.,*

What were the elements of God's promise to Abram? v 1: *Leave and go to a land I will show you, v 2... etc. through v 3.*

Who was Abram's most famous descendant? *Jesus.*

We will discuss how God brings all of His. promises of vv 1-3 to pass during the next several weeks.

What are the possible ways God "spoke" to Abram (v 4)? *1. In an audible voice, 2. Through his mind in prayer 3. Through a prophet (a spokesperson for God), etc...*

What was Abram's response? (v 4): He obeyed God and departed.

Did he know his destination? *No (v1). God had said He would show it to him.* What is so unusual about Abram's action? *He was obedient to God.*

Is it reasonable that God would expect such obedience with no more direction than He gave Abram? *God is sovereign. We are His creation. He has every right to expect whatever He wishes from us. Obedience is a measure of one's faith and righteousness.*

Someone read 12:5-7

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How do you feel about God's promise to give Abram a land that belongs to another people (Canaanites)? *God has created all things. He may do whatever He pleases with His creation. Everything ultimately belongs to God, we mere caretakers of what we have. Apparently, those who occupied were not faithful believers or God would not have done this.*

What was Abram's response to God's promise? *He built an altar.*

What is the purpose of an altar? *A place to worship God and a memorial.*

An act of worship is a proper response any time God blesses us. The building of a memorial altar is especially appropriate at this time.

Someone read vv 8 and 9

Again, Abram builds an altar and calls on the name of the Lord. Abram was living his life truly "walking in Christ" and "letting all his requests be made known unto God." He was apparently seeking direction from God at each turn of his journey. Would God prefer that we live our lives so dependent on Him? *Yes. That is Paul's intent in his admonition to "walk in Christ" (Eph 5:8), and pray unceasingly" (1 Thess 5:17).*

How does your life compare with Abram's in terms of obedience to God?

David Watson once said, "Most of us could spend the rest of our lives just acting on the scripture we know without learning more verses." Does this statement apply to you?

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Bible Study Discussion Guide,
Topical Study #6

Egypt's Power and Wealth vs. God's sovereignty

In last week's lesson we learned about God's selecting Abram, His guiding Abram and His covenant with Abram.

Someone read Genesis 12:10-20.

How would you title this portion of scripture? "God Proves He Is Sovereign," etc...

What are the facts of w 10-13?

What are the possible consequences of Abram taking his family across a nation boundary into a foreign land?

Why do you suppose Egypt could so successfully deal with famine? Egypt's economy had been developing for 2000 years. They had developed into a rich and powerful nation that had maximally developed the tremendous water supply of the rich valley of the Nile.

How do you feel about Abram's actions of w 10-13?

What can his actions be attributed to? Lack of faith, etc.

Is this an example of situational ethics?

What other choices did Abram have?

What are the possible consequences of Abram's lie on his relationship with... 1. Sarai, 2. His family (children, etc.), 3. God, 4. Others outside the family.

How important is honor and integrity to the believer?

Why should Abram tell the truth in this situation? God had directed him to move, God would protect him.

If we "walk with Christ as Lord," " can we depend on Him to guide and protect us?

Let's look at w 14-16.

Was Abram's prediction of their actions true?

How do you feel about Abram's profit (v16) in this situation?

What do you suppose are the psychological consequences of this time on...1. Abram?, 2. Sarai?, 3. Abram's family?

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Why do you suppose God did not correct Abram before he got into this mess?

Considering what we have learned about Adam and Eve, Noah and Abram, what kind of statement can you make about God's permitting our "free will?"

What is different about God's action here?

Does Pharaoh exhibit faith in God by his actions of v18?

Do you find it interesting that God chooses to deal in this way with the Pharaoh's of Egypt both in Abram's and in Moses' times? Why? It probably has something to do with the fact that the Pharaohs had accumulated a significant amount of knowledge concerning seasons and predictable changes in the Nile. They exercised this knowledge in such a way as to appear to have godlike control over nature. God demonstrated His power and authority to Pharaoh.

What do you suppose Pharaoh let Abram and his family go with all the possessions and stock they had accrued while in Egypt at Pharaoh's expense? He did not want to further antagonize Abram's God. He did not need the paltry possessions of Abram.

What did Egypt represent vs. what Abram represented to the future of the world in this story? 1. Egypt represented material pride and power and possessions. They had constructed the magnificent cities (Memphis and Tebes) and the fantastic temples of Karnak. The pyramids were several centuries old at the time of this story. Their wealth was unsurpassed as a nation. It would all crumble and fade. 2. Abram represented a spiritual faith. A new revelation of the one God that continues to live long after Egypt has ceased to count... Abram's actions with God have eternal significance even to the fact that we are spiritual descendants of Abraham (by faith).

What is the lesson of values here? Values tied to this world . . .power possessions are temporal. Spiritual values have eternal significance.

Why did Abram ultimately win? It was God's will for Abram to win.

Was God fair to Abram? Fact: God is sovereign. His people will always ultimately win. His will is fair by definition. God's creation gains nothing by questioning His will. He permits "free will", but disobedience of God's will always have negative consequences... if only the lack of His support and blessing.

What have we learned in this lesson that we may choose to apply to our own lives?

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Bible Study Guide
Topical Study #7

THE HARD FAITH LESSON

Last week we discussed Egypt's power and wealth versus God's sovereignty. God had chosen Abram as His man. Pharaoh had immense power and wealth but Abram had God's call...the die was cast. God's man, Abram, was destined to be the winner. "When God is for us, who can be against us?"

Abraham is known as "the father of the faithful" and "the friend of God." God appeared and communicated with Abram seven times. The first was Abram's call in Ur. Out of this special relationship with God Abram learned eight lessons of faith vital to the life of every believer.

The first lesson of faith is "obedience." Abram was outstandingly obedient when at the age of 75 he was called by God. At God's direction he left the land of his family and journeyed to the promised land, Canaan. What is the "obedience" parallel in the life of the believer today?

Willingness to turn from the natural claims of family and friends and to accept the right of God to lead and direct his/her life.

The second faith lesson Abram learned was sufficiency of faith to meet all human need. Because of a famine (Gen 12:10-19) Abram fled to Egypt. Was this action directed by God? *No.*

What was the consequence? *He resorted to a lie to defend his wife's honor and he was rebuked by Pharaoh.* Where did he fail? *By not waiting on God.* What is the spiritual faith lesson? *God is able to supply every need, even in the midst of pressure and circumstantial difficulty.*

Someone read Gen 13:1-4

What is happening here? *Abram and Lot return to the Promised Land. Abram calls on the name of the Lord at an altar he had constructed when he camped here earlier.*

What is apparently different between Christ's and Abram's place of communication with God? *For Abram, the place to call on God was at the altar. Jesus apparently prayed wherever and whenever He felt the need. Abram constructed the altar at a special time and place and for him that was the place to communicate with God.*

Someone read vv 5-8.

What was the situation

What were the peoples called who inhabited the land? *Canaanites and Perizzites.*

Someone read vv 9-13.

What were Abram's rights concerning the choice of land? *He was the older and had the God-given right of first choice.*

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What lesson of faith did Abram exercise by taking second choice? *Humility*

What was Lot's response? *He selected what appeared to be the largest and best land.*

Should Christians be expected to give up their rights in order to practice humility?

Someone read vv 14-18

Do the instructions of the Lord in vv 14 and 15 include the land Lot chose to possess? *Yes.*

What does this say about God's acknowledgment of rights? What does this story say about God's acknowledgment of the rights of the Canaanites and Perizzites who occupied the land?

Can it possibly be true that God makes such decisions in the world of today? What are some possible examples?

What are the elements of the covenant of God with Abram in vv 15-17

In reference to v 15, do you suppose God really means "forever"?

Who do you think the real descendants of Abram are:

- a. Those who have that spiritual faith that leads to an eternal relationship with God? or...
- b. Those who are his blood descendants?

Is it possible that the first is true in an analogous way and the second is literally true? i.e., the real clue to the close relationship with God is through faith and Canaan is eternity and perhaps what is going on in Israel today applies to b.

What have you learned from this lesson that you believe is important to spiritual growth and maturity?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #9
THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Someone read Gen 15:1-2.

How does the word of the Lord come in a vision?

What kind of relationship with God must Abram have had to have this kind of vision?

What part did Abram's faith play in this vision?

Are you open to having a vision from God?

How do you interpret the promise of God that He would be Abram's shield? *protection, etc...*

Someone read Eph 6: 16.

Is this shield similar to the shield promised Abram? How would you compare the two?

Is God a shield for Christians today? In what sense?

What do you suppose is the "great reward?" *Abram's ultimate resource.*

Someone read Gen 15:2 & 3.

How do you feel about Abram's request of God (v2 & 3)?

Would you make such a request for yourself?

Someone read Phil 4:6

Are there any limitations on what we should request of the Lord?

Someone read John 15:7.

What is the stipulation here? *Abide*

What does "abide" mean? *To unpack, live with, remain with, etc.*

Do you suppose Abram was this kind of person?

Does this promise apply to modern day Christians?

How much would your life need to change to be an "abiding" type of Christian?

What would you do differently to be an "abiding" Christian?

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Someone read Gen 15:4-7.

What are the elements of this promise? *1. Abram will have a son, 2. His descendants would be as unnumbered as the stars.*

What was “reckoned to Abram as righteousness?” *He “believed” the Lord. The root word for “believe” in this scriptural context means to “adhere to, rely on and trust in.”*

Do you see Abram as an example of this type of person who "believes" in God?

If one "believes" as Abram apparently believed, what are the possible consequences.. 1. for today? 2. for life ?

Are “godly” and “righteous” synonyms?

Would you consider it a compliment to be known as a “righteous” person.. . 1. by your Christian friends?, 2 . by your non-Christian friends, 3. by superiors?, and 4. by subordinates?

What measure of faith does Abram exhibit in the passage?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #10
DOUBTS OF THE BELIEVER

Someone read Gen 15:6-16

We discussed vv 6 & 7 last week. Let's summarize what takes place between Abram and the Lord in vv 8-16...

How do you react to the question of v 8?

How do you feel about God's instructions to Abram (v 9)?

What does Abram's treatment of the animals and birds connote to you? *An offering of sacrifice*

Doesn't it strike you as odd that this ancient person is so responsive in sacrifice (v 10)? What would you do if you received these identical instructions in a dream or vision today?

How do you interpret the mood and description of v 12?

What do you think Abram must have thought about God's prophetic words (vv 13-16)?

How do you feel about God's promise of punishment of Israel's future dominators (Egypt) (v 14)? . . . in a sense Egypt has been judged before they have committed the offense.

If God is truly unchanging, is it not possible that God could communicate with us in visions and dreams today?

How do you suppose the words of God affected Abram's...(1) Leadership of his people, (2) What he taught them, (3) His view of his future life, and (4) His feelings of responsibility and identity with the future of his descendants?

What does the statement of v 16 imply about...(1) God's view and treatment of the Amorites (2) God's limits of patience?

Is there a possible message in v 16 for all who would ignore God's requirements? *Never possessing spiritual (eternal) life and loss of current (physical possessions) .*

Let's concentrate on v 17. Someone read Ex 3:2... 13:21... and 19:18.

So this vision in a dream has a smoking fire pot and flaming torch which is symbolic of the God of fire...

Someone read Jer 34: 18-19

What additional insight might this give us to understand the meaning of v 17?

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Do you feel it is fair of God to promise the land of so many other peoples (vv 18-21) to Abram's descendants? If I work hard and earn something, isn't it my right to possess it and do with it as I please? If I feel this is unjust, what do I fail to understand? *God's sovereignty and the lordship of Christ.*

Is it possible that many of our spiritual problems are rooted to our lack of understanding of God's sovereignty and Christ's lordship?

How is all this related to Jesus' words in John 14:21?

What if we are not obedient to Christ? *Christ is not Lord.*

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #11
THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION

Someone read Gen 17: 1-8

What do you think of God's words in v 1?

What does "walk before me" mean? *To live your life in the knowledge of God's continual presence.*

What does "be blameless" mean? *To be obedient to God...blameless before Him (John 14:21).*

Why would Abram fall on his face (v 3)? *Out of reverence and fear of God.*

God changes Abram's name to Abraham (which means exalted father). What psychological effect do you suppose this name change had on Abram? (v 5)?

You will recall that Saul's name was changed to Paul and Cephas' name was changed to Peter (the rock). Do you suppose it would be a good practice to change a person's name when his spiritual calling is clear?

Why do you think God chose to favor Abraham's descendants as he did in vv 6 - 8 ?

What were the consequences of God's favor.. . (1) on Abraham?, (2) on the nation of Israel?, (3) on Christians today?, (4) on the nation of Israel today'?

Someone read vv 9-14

What did God do here? *He established a rite of circumcision as a sacrament of believers...as an external act that the person was a party to the covenant.*

DO you suppose this sacrament conveyed something vital to the man within?

Do you think age of participation in the rite of circumcision had any thing to do with the spiritual effect on the participant?

The catechism of the Book of Common Prayer defines a sacrament; it is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. " Circumcision was in that true sense a sacrament to all believing Jews. Through it a man's life was linked with a great fellowship whose dignity was its high consciousness that it must fulfill the purposes of God.

What is the Christian sacrament equivalent to circumcision? *Baptism.*

How can a rite like that of circumcision or baptism be a vast power for good? *It brings the individual into the magnetic field of influences and suggestions more significant than his lonely self.*

How does a rite lose its inspiration? *When it becomes only a tradition from which the meaning has evaporated. It may become only a traditional form which has lost its meaning or its supposed meaning may become so hard and self-assured that it paralyzes all growth and expansion of the spirit.*

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What happens when a Christian assumes that because he/she is baptized that ipso facto he/she is saved?

How do the words of John the Baptist in Matt 3:9 apply here?

What can we do to preserve or renew the meaning of a sacrament (such as baptism)?

How do you interpret v 14? *The Israelites have been declared by God to be His people. If a male born to this people is not circumcised he is cut-off from his people.*

What does cut-off mean? *Not accepted. Not a member.*

In the context of this statement, am I a member of the covenant community through a matter of birth, faith, or circumcision?

What is the "real" Christian?

How would the "real" Christian identify with this story'?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #12
GOD PROMISES A SON

Genesis 17:15-27

Someone read Gen 17:15-22

Let's discuss this scripture by portions. First we will look at vv 15-16. What are the facts presented here?

“Sarah” means princess. Notice how that fits with God's purpose for Sarah's lineage.

What are the possibilities that God may use to bring v 16 to fruition? *God states that He will bring these things about. It will be done as action of His will.*

What is the meaning in today's world of vv 15 & 16? *The Israelites are descended from Sarah, so was King David and Jesus.*

How do you evaluate Abraham's response in v 17?

What was Abraham's problem here? *Lack of faith. God is omnipotent - all powerful He can accomplish whatever He wishes.*

Jesus said to the apostles, “You shall do greater things than I have done.” Do you suppose the reason we do not see more great miracles of God is due to our lack of faith?

How can you explain Abraham's outstanding obedience of the past and his lack of faith here?

What can we do to develop the kind of faith that will respond to God's expectations and miracles with belief?

Now let's look at vv 18-21.

Why did Abraham want God to focus on Ishmael (his son by Sarah's maidservant)? *Continuing lack of faith. He may have felt he was disappointing God by Sarah's lack of ability to bear a child.*

What is the difference between God's promise to Ishmael and His plans for Sarah's child?

Was this prejudice? *God is sovereign. Right by definition*

Who are the descendants of Ishmael? *The Arab peoples (the people of Islam). The Moslems believe Ishmael was Abraham's covenant son. Christians and Jews accept this scripture as truth.*

If you take the Moslem view, how do you look at...(1) the promised land? (2) at Jews?

How does v 21 apply? *God's covenant clearly applied to Isaac.*

Someone read w 23-27

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How do you explain Abraham's obedience here? *He could apparently respond to physical obedience very well.*

How is this obedience involved with his faith?

Review vv 10-14. Was Abraham completely obedient?

Is there a possible difference between Abraham's obedience here and the others who were circumcised? *Abraham was circumcised out of obedience to God's direction to him. The others were circumcised out of obedience to God's direction to Abraham.*

Who has the personal relationship with God here? *Abraham.*

How would you compare this with the different reasons for a person's being baptized? Example: a person being baptized as a matter of routine versus conviction of faith. Might this possibly also apply to communion and/or church membership?

Could there be possible negative consequences to accepting Christ as Lord, being baptized, taking communion or joining the church if these actions are taken as a result of psychological pressure?

What could Abraham have done to make the rite of circumcision meaningful to those involved?

What can we do to make the important responses of faith meaningful in . . . 1. our own lives?, 2. in the lives of those we love?

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TOPICAL, DISCUSSION GUIDE # 13
A VISIT BY GOD AND ANGELS

Someone read Gen 18:1-8

What are the facts here? *Abraham is hospitable to strangers His greeting was probably typical of his normal response to traveling strangers.*

Someone read...1. Rom 12: 13, 2. 1 Tim 3:2 & 5:10, 3. 13:2 and 4. 1 Pet 4:9

How do you evaluate Abraham's actions in light of these scriptures?

Do you see these admonitions to hospitality applying to you...

1. As concerns Christians whom you know?
2. Concerning complete strangers (as apparently was the case in this story?)

Someone read Gen 18: 9-15

What are the facts here'?

How does God appear here?

Do Abraham and Sarah recognize the Lord as one of the men? *Not apparently.*

What do you think is their first clue about whom they are speaking to? (vv 13 & 14).

How do you feel about the statement of v 14?

Do you believe God did and still does miracles?

Abraham and Sarah had previously spoken about God's promise of a son'? What probably was the content of those conversations?

What lessons could we possibly learn from this section of scripture for our lives!

Someone read Gen 18:16-19

What is the sequence of facts of this story'?

Why do you think we are given a view of God's thoughts in vv 18 & 19?

What is the contingency of God's doing what he promised'? (v 19)

How might this apply to our lives?

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Do you see any relationship with Rom 12: 1?

Someone read Gen 18:20-33

What are the facts in order of their presentation here?

Why do you suppose Abraham is so concerned about Sodom and Gomorrah? *His relative Lot lived there. Abraham has consistently cared for Lot.*

What is the point of Abraham's defense? Will God destroy the righteous with the wicked?

How do you evaluate Abraham's estimate of himself in v 17?

Should we also have a similar view of ourselves compared with the sovereign God?

What is there in this story for us to learn and apply to our lives?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #15
CHOOSING BETWEEN SONS

Someone read Gen 1:1-8

How would you short title this story?

What are the facts of this story?

How was the promise of the Lord to Sarah fulfilled at this point (v 1)? See Gen 17:16.

What is the important point of this story? *The promise of God is sure.*

What does God's grace (unmerited favor) have to do with this event?

What does this mean to us?

Does the length of Sarah's wait have a message for us? Abraham was about 100 and Sarah about 90 when Isaac was born. *We must learn to wait on God's answer and have confidence there will be an answer. The "appointed time" of v 2 (Gen 17:21) applies to this principle as well.*

Why do you think God chose to do things in his own unusual way?

He means for us to understand that he is clearly the one responsible and the one to be glorified. See Gen 17:17-19, 18:12 and 21:6 and discover why they named their son Isaac (v32) (meaning: one who laughs).

Of what significance is circumcision as a sign of the covenant with God? Discuss differences between circumcision and baptism as practiced by the contemporary believer.

What is the meaning of Sarah's words in v6? *Happiness. Her life is complete from her viewpoint. Only a woman who wants children and has never had them could really understand Sarah's feelings.*

It is interesting to note that at about 90 Sarah apparently nursed the child (vv 7 & 8). It was the Hebrew custom to wean the child at about the age of three and celebrate the occasion with a family feast. How do you feel about: 1. celebrating such an occasion with a feast?. 2. the importance children must have had to the early Hebrew?, 3. How does our relationship with our children compare with what we know of the Hebrews from this passage?

Someone read vv 9 & 10

What are the problems revealed here? *1. Sarah's concern that her son, the one of God's promise, would be the heir. 2. Hagar's son (about 17) acted out his jealousy and/or resentful feelings by mocking (derisive insult), 3. Sarah would not have a slave's son sharing equal rights with her son. A part of Jewish Civil custom (in the mishpatim, a kind of bill of rights) decreed that a Hebrew servant was to obtain freedom*

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without paying compensation, after six years of service - Deut 15:12). There was another custom of releasing fellow Hebrews from debts and service related to the sabbatical year (every 7th year).

What are the possible root causes of the conflict? 1. Hagar's son Ismael, as the eldest son of Abraham had certain rights. 2. *Hagar may have encouraged her son to assert himself.*

Someone read vv 11-14

What are the facts here?

How does God's direction (v 12) fit with his promise about Sarah's descendants?

How do you feel about God's direction?

How do you feel about Abraham's response (v 14)?

Do you understand why expulsion of Ishmael is necessary for Isaac to develop as the son of promise? *God's divine blessing pointed to Isaac. Continuance of Ishmael in Abraham's household would be a source of continually increasing embarrassment.*

How important is it for Abraham to be obedient to God in this matter? *The subordination of all his desires, even of paternal affections, are the object of his high calling and religious training. His steadfastness in this trial to his natural feelings formed a new stage of advancement in the "faith which overcomes the world."*

Understanding that the Arab peoples have descended from Ishmael, how does this story fit with the relationships between Israel of today and the surrounding Arab peoples? *Interesting that the Koran states that Ishmael was the son of promise, not Isaac.*

Why did God bless Ishmael (v 13)? *Because he was Abraham's descendent.*

Someone read vv 15-21

What is happening with Hagar in vv 15 & 16?

Whose need was God really meeting in vv 17-19?

What does the statement (v 20), "God was with the lad" mean to you?

What do you suppose Ishmael's development of living in the wilderness and becoming an archer had to do with his destiny?

What effect do you suppose his Egyptian wife had on the destiny of Ishmael (v21)?

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What have we learned out of this lesson that is important to us today?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE 16
ABRAHAM IS TESTED

Someone read Genesis 22:1-9

How would you short title this scripture? *"God Commands Abraham to Sacrifice Isaac"*.

What are the facts of this story?

How do you suppose Abraham felt about this special son of promise given to him b~' God in his old age?

Why would God test Abraham by giving him the order of v 2? *He wanted Abraham's whole heart; to be Lord of Abraham's life.*

How do you think you would stand up under such a test?

Did God have the right to make such a harsh command of Abraham? *Yes, God is sovereign.* Do the words of Jesus in Matt 10:34-39 fit with this story?

What do you suppose was going on with Abraham (v 3) in terms of..(1) thought?, (2) prayer?, (3) his relationship with God (prayer, etc.)?. and (4) his relationship with Isaac?

What could have been God's purposes for directing Abraham to accomplish this task so far from home? (v4)

Why do you suppose Abraham directed the servants to stay (v 5)?
He knew this was to be a very personal thing between himself and God.

Someone read vv 6-12

How do you feel about Abraham's reply to Isaac (v8)?

Describe what the thoughts of Abraham and Isaac must have been in vv 9 & 10.

Regarding vv 11 & 12, what do we now find is God's reason for doing this?

Someone read vv 13-19

What message does this scripture have for... (1) Abraham about his future relationship with God. (2) Isaac?

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How is God's provision of the ram like the sacrifice of Jesus for us? How does it help to name a special place as Abraham did (v 16)?

Should we do this?

What kind of commitment did God require of Abraham (v 16)?

Does he require that kind of commitment from us? See Rev 3:15.

Do you suppose our relationship with God will have any military impact (v 17)?

What is the criterion for God's blessing (v 18)? *Obedience*

How important is obedience to our relationship with God today?

See John 14:6,12,15, 21, 23.

What lessons are in this scripture that we should apply to our lives concerning... (1) our relationship with loved ones?. (2) obedience to God?

How do I know what things I should do to be obedient? *1. Accept Christ's invitation (Rev 3:20), 2. Read God's Word (the Bible) and systematically apply it to our lives (Rom 12:2), (3) Make a total commitment to Christ (Rom 12:1), (4) Walk in prayer (5) Walk with God (Gal 5:16,25,' Eph 5:8; Col 2:6).*

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE # 19
PROVIDENTIAL DELIVERANCE OF GOD

Exodus 2

First, let's review what God foretold about the plight and fate of the Jews in Egypt. Someone read Gen 15:12-16.

Based on God's words, let's look for God's providential acts to bring about the fulfillment of His promises.

Now, let's go forward in time and to Egypt. Someone read Ex 2:1-10. Let's look at how God may have influenced this story.

V 1: In Israel's history Levi was the priestly tribe. Of what importance is it that Moses came from the tribe of Levi? The Levites maintained the historical records of Israel and taught the faith. Moses would later write the first five books of the Bible. He would be well taught in the faith and traditions of God's chosen people, etc...

Consider the statement "God delivers us not so much out of life's hardships as through them." How does your experience relate to that statement? What points of this story are true in this respect? 1. *The Jews are in bondage*, 2. *Pharaoh has ordered a Jewish male babies killed*, 3. *Moses' mother and father manage to hide the child for as long as they dare risk (3 months)*, 4. *At great risk they are led to expose the child to Pharaoh's daughter*, etc...

What key part did the "compassion of a woman for a baby" play in this story? What is God's possible part in this portion of the story? Remember later when God hardens Pharaoh's heart. Cannot God also soften a heart?

Someone read Heb 11:23. What part did faith play in this story?

How crucial is the part of the story about Moses being returned to his mother's care? *For family upbringing, enculturation and teaching about the Hebrew faith in God.*

What similarities are there between this story of the princess who disobeys her father and the magi who ignore Herod's command to return and tell him of the birth of the Messiah?

What advantages accrue to Moses by virtue of Pharaoh's daughter adopting him (V 10)? *Education, wealth, power...*

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Moses spent 40 years in the house of Pharaoh. What do you suppose he learned by living at the seat of the Egyptian government that he would later use as the leader of the Jews? *How to organize and manage people, administration of law, and the crafts, arts, skills and techniques of a highly civilized people.*

If there had been a prophecy about the fact that Moses was to be the leader, how do you suppose he would have felt about it taking 40 years of experience in Pharaoh's family?

Someone read vv11-22

Let's concentrate on vv 11-15. What traits do you see in Moses in V 11? *Readiness to sacrifice himself for his people, passionate sense of justice, capacity for flaming anger, prudent recklessness, courageous audacity...*

v12: Moses struck back: "life for life." An outrageous combination of recklessness and prudence. do you see this type of audacity as characteristic of the response of the leadership of Israel today? Did the sin of murder put him out of the purposes of God? *No. there is a reminder here that if God used only perfect or spotless vessels there would be none to use. Grace can forgive, cleanse, and renew a murderer for the service of God. Moralistic, legalistic Christians always stumble over the depths of the grace of God.*

Someone read Stephen's comments in Acts 7:23-25.

Someone read Heb 11:24-26.

What do you think of these scriptures'?

How would you title the last portion of the chapter as a story (V" 16-22)? *"Moses in Exile." etc...*

What does his exile serve to do in terms of his identity' with Israel? *Clearly he is separated from his Egyptian family and the Hebrews.*

The Midianites were a semi-nomadic Arabic people who probably lived East of the Jordan River near the Gulf of Aquabah.

The religious laws of both the Jews and Arabs dictated the practice of hospitality (v 20). What was happening in vv 16 and 17?

What trait of Moses is revealed in v 17? *Passionate sense of justice.*

An interesting fact is that Moses' first born son named in v 22, never rises to power. Why might this be true? Read comments of Aaron and Miriam in Hab 3:7 and Num 12:1. The children of Zipporah would have been of mixed blood (Hebrew and Arabic).

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Moses lived 40 years in the desert. What do you suppose he learned here that would be invaluable to his later leadership of the Jews? *How to survive as a nomad in the rough ways of a semi-arid country (desert survival).*

Moses would have been 80 years of age when he began to deal with Pharaoh about his people.

How do you feel about God's choice of time for him to begin his leadership role with his people?

What do you think 40 years of wilderness experience would do for you?

Someone read Ex 2:23-25

Note the verbs used: "God heard... God remembered... God saw and God knew"

How or why did God act'? 1. *God responded to their suffering, 2'. He fulfilled his covenant promise to Abraham in His time.*

What kind of relationship with God do you suppose one is able to develop for 40 years in the wilderness?

There are two aspects to the Christian's relationship with God:

1. A personal relationship and
2. A covenantal relationship through Christ.

What are the factors of a personal relationship? *It hangs on the quality of the relationship. A breakdown in the quality of 'the relationship may end it.*

What are the factors of a covenantal relationship? *The relationship is based on God's grace and the specified terms (Christ as Savior and Lord). This is the strongest possible relationship.*

Christians are bound to God both personally and covenantally. This insures us of God's grace. God's grace sustains the covenant, not man's spiritual strength or goodness. Christian stability is grounded in the stability of the covenant we have in Christ. God hears our prayers not only on the ground of master, suffering and groaning, but also on the grounds of the New Covenant in Christ.

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #20
MOSES IS CALLED

Exodus 3

The setting is Mt. Sinai or Mt. Horeb generally agreed by the scholars to be near the apex of the Sinai peninsula. The Midianites were descendants of Ishmael but Jericho, father-in-law of Moses and priest of Midian, acknowledged Jehovah the God of Israel as supreme (Exod 18:11). Though Jethro was very friendly to Moses, he could never bring himself to join Israel (Nurn 10:29). Moses was a herdsman in the house of Jethro for 40 years.

What are the possible effects on a person of a significant number of years as a herdsman? *Development of a great soul takes place in solitude and quietness... out of the fast lane...meditation and contemplation are significant parts of his life...prayer is profound, real...*

What do we miss by not having a wilderness experience (solitude) in our lives?

Someone read Ex 3:1-3

What are the facts here?

What did Moses actually see? v 3: *a bush burning but not being consumed (burned).*

What does God accomplish through this unusual manifestation?

Moses looks with inquiry and wonder. God again demonstrates his unusual ways.

Someone read Ex 3:4-6

What are the facts here?

Does God manifest himself here as the God of love or justice or power? *Power!...and authority.*

Why was the ground holy (v5)? *Because God said so...because God was there.*

Is there an element of worship ("worth-ship") in Moses' response to God?

Do you see the possibility of contemporary believers removing their shoes or even recognizing holy ground?

Where is a holy place today? *Our bodies... "the temple of the Holy Spirit."* Read Jn 2:21.1 Cor 3:16, 17 and 6:19; and 2 Cor 6:16.

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How should we treat the "temple of God"?

What do you think the shoes of Moses represent in application to the New Covenant holy places (the body)? *Sin...*

What is the meaning of God's words in V 6? *He is the God of the covenant (Ex 2:24)*. In v 4 God refers to Himself in two ways: first as Yahweh and second as Elohim. The old Hebrews would not say or write the personal (sacred) name of God. Yahweh. This is the name, proper noun, or God. In writing, they abbreviated His name YHWH. In reading they would often substitute '*donay*' (my Lord).

Elohim means the one supreme deity (God) a common noun. This singular form approaches the character of a proper noun without losing its abstract and conceptual quality.

Another name for God is El Shaddai (God Almighty).

Why was Moses afraid (v 6)? *He was tremendously awed. The ancients believed if they actually saw God they would die.*

Someone read Ex 3:7-10

How would you short title this portion of scripture? *"The Lord's Plan," etc...*

List the facts in this portion of scripture.

What are the strong verbs of vv 7-10? *"Have seen... Have heard.. I know... I have come down to deliver... and to bring them up"... etc...*

Compare this passage with John 1:14.

What do you find personally comforting about vv 7 and 8?

What kind of control (authority, power) is God exercising over the various nations listed? How do you feel about Moses' marching orders (v 10)?

Someone read vv 11-22

How would you short title this section of scripture? *"God Instructs Moses, " etc... Let's list the facts here.*

What if Moses had other plans for his life? *God is sovereign.*

What does the response of Moses in v 11 indicate about him? *Modesty, faithlessness, and frustration.*

What response would you have preferred from Moses? *A response indicating the humility of faith.*

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How would you feel about God's response in v 12 if you had been Moses?

Whose work is the deliverance of Israel? God's.

Compare God's words in v 12 with Jesus' words to the apostles in Matt 18:20.

v 13: To a Semite a name meant the personality or character or nature of the inner reality of whoever was named. To ask for the name of God was to ask for the description of the nature of God.

Does v 14 answer the question? *Indeed only God is: all others have been or shall be.*

What office is God directing Moses to fill in vv 16-22? *Prophet: Spokesman for God to his people.*

How did God meet with the people (v 18)? *Through Moses, His prophet*

If we had been Israelites in Moses' time we would get communication from God through Moses.

What is true for believers under the New Covenant? *See John 14:21, 23 and Acts 1:8.*

Why would the people listen and believe (v 18)? *God can control minds.*

How will God display His power over Pharaoh? *By having Israel increase its demand whenever Pharaoh grants the previous demand.*

Only under the compulsion of God's mighty hand will the people go free.

What are the dangers within Moses of having God's promise of support as Moses does here? *1. Take credit for God's accomplishments and power, 2. Wrongly use God's power.*

Who were the players to be in the great contest to achieve deliverance of God's people? *God, Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the gods of Egypt.*

How do you feel about vv 21 and 22? *Tabernacle. Apparently the jewelry and clothing were the wages of slavery (see later law in Deut 15:13, 14). The result would be part of the humiliation of the Egyptians. Later in their history, Israel would use the precious metals to build and furnish the tabernacle.*

What elements of Exodus 3 witness to the sovereignty of God?

Is God still sovereign?

How should we react to the sovereign God?

Is it possible that the political events in the Philippines are the result of God's "seeing, hearing, and knowing?"

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What is the freedom of choice or determination of Egypt or any of the nations of the promised land listed in Ex 3?

How does this all relate to God's name... "I Am"?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #21
SIGNS FOR MOSES

Exodus 4

Someone read Ex 4:1-5

What are the facts in order of their presentation?

What was Moses' concern (v 1)? How do you feel about God's answer to Moses' concern (vv 3-5)?

Would you accept such a demonstration as proof that Moses had been with God?

Someone read vv 6-9

How would you respond to demonstrations such as these'?

What is the difference between what God used Moses to do and demonstrations of magic? *What God does is real. The changes were real changes of substance by the Creator: real miracles not just sleight of hand or illusion.*

What is the danger to an individual of God granting such power to that individual'? *That he will begin to believe he has these powers on his own right and over time gradually give God less and less credit.*

Someone read vv 10-15

How would you short title this portion of scripture?

What does Moses' protest (v 10) reveal about him?

What response should Moses as a believer have exemplified and why?

How do you feel about God's words in vv 1 & 12

Someone read Acts 4:1-17

Do you believe God would have worked a similar work through Moses if he had yielded to God?

What are the differences in the individuals responses to God in the two cases?

Do you believe God still does such things?

Turn back to Ex 4:13-17.

How do you feel about Moses' response (v 13)?

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What was the result of God's anger with Moses (v 14)? How did God's response change Moses' role (v 16)?

Someone read vv 18-23

How does God prepare Moses for what he is to face in...

V 19? Moses needed to know he was safe to return.

V 21? That God would make the king's heart hard and cause him to reject Moses' answer.

How do you feel about God's message in vv 22-23'?

What right does God have to take the life of the king's son since the king is not a believer? *God is still the sovereign, creator.*

Someone read vv 24-26

Moses was proceeding to join his people in Egypt but his sons were not circumcised. What does this story say about God's feelings about circumcision as the sign of His covenant with the people (Gen 17:9-14)? Could we say that God probably feels the same about all of His commands to His people. *Circumcision was a major part of the Abrahamic covenant and Moses had neglected to keep it. He could not return to Egypt and Israel without setting this matter right. Apparently Moses came down with a serious illness. The flint knife was considered a sacred material. The leader of Israel could not lead Israel until he had meticulously kept every detail of the Abrahamic covenant*

Someone read vv 27-31

What do you think the direction of God to Aaron in v 27 had on the lives of Moses and Aaron? *Tremendous affirmation about their mission and purpose.*

How do you feel about the response of the people (v 31)?

What have you learned from chapter 4 that you believe you should apply to your own life?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE --22
PHARAOH: A HARD TASKMASTER

Exodus 5

Let's consider the government of Egypt for a moment. There were 26 separate dynasties that extended from 3400 B.C. to 525 B.C.

The Pharaoh was the supreme monarch in whom all powers were vested. The Pharaohs were accorded god-like acclimation by the Egyptians partly because they had complete studies of the seasonal changes of the Nile ~'er that they could accurately predict the significant changes in this principle resource and effect on the economy of Egypt. If one is considered like a god and treated as a god, what might be the consequences to his personality (ego, pride, etc.)?

The construction being accomplished by the Hebrews was to demonstrate the glory of Pharaoh. Each Pharaoh tried to outperform his predecessors.

Someone read Ex 5:1, 2

If Moses expected this to be an easy task, he had not paid attention to God (Ex 3:19, 20). Why do you suppose Pharaoh responded as he did?

How would a person who considered himself a god be likely to respond any differently? *He did not know that all the earth belongs to the God of Moses (19:5).*

Have you known military personnel of high rank who seemed to consider themselves like gods'? (Discuss characteristics of these people). How many of them were driven, like Pharaoh, to outperform their predecessors to bring glory to themselves?

What should the Christian leader's motive be? *To bring glory to God.*

What brings people to the point that they consider themselves as gods and treat others as nothing?

How do we say by our actions (as Pharaoh says in v2) "Who is the Lord that I should obey?"

Someone read 5:3, 4

What does Pharaoh's response indicate about...

1. His belief in the God of the Hebrews'?
2. His concerns about the Hebrews (those who loved God)?

Why do you think he is so inconsiderate of the Hebrews and their God'?

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Do you treat others who love God, but who have a different Christian theology than yours, with contempt?

Are you prejudiced towards personnel who hold Christian convictions that are congruent with your own.?'

What personnel have you known, either in a religious or secular context, that were highly prejudiced toward people like themselves and against people different from themselves?

Does this scripture point up some possible situations that we who love the Lord should treat carefully in our lives? (See Heb 12:6).

For the believing leader, is there ever a situation that we can say is secular and is not concerned with my religion?

Someone read 5:5-9

What does Pharaoh's response reveal about...

1. What he thinks of the Hebrews?
2. His estimation of himself?
3. His judgment of Moses statements?
4. How he has decided to handle this irritant under his authority and threat to his goal of glorifying himself?

Are the Hebrews under the authority of Pharaoh? *Yes, as long as God permits it.*

What are the dangers to ourselves if we persecute God's people because of their obedience to God (even if all do not understand or believe their direction is from God)?

How do you feel about Pharaoh's solution to keeping the people from paying attention to the "false words" of Moses and Aaron?

Is there ever a situation that God isn't or shouldn't be concerned about?

How many military leaders apparently believe that they have such authority over subordinated lives that they can heap extreme hard work and long hours on them?

Is there a possible danger from God to leaders over us who so exploit our lives that we cannot meet God's demands on us? (See Deut 6:4ff).

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Is there likely to be special judgment on Christian leaders who do such things to Christians under their authority?

Someone read Ex 5:10-14

How do you evaluate what is happening here?

Is the result here similar to the military leader who gives up people, takes on more mission and requires more accomplishment to attain a reputation for achievement of most with least resources for the purposes of his own glory?

Situation: In the early 60's money and resources were in extremely short supply, as they are likely to be in the future. An air defense cadre group (Hercules) was sent to Germany to convert in existing Ajax' (conventional warhead) missile battalion to nuclear capability. These units were short manned (150). the result of the Army's bidding the mission from the Air Force who stated they would need more than 300 personnel for each firing battery. The battery commander of a unit on a temporary site (C Battery) was told to construct a nuclear warhead assembly building, and prepare for a "technical proficiency inspection" six months hence. The building was to meet all the rigid nuclear technical criteria requirements. There were no funds or other personnel to provide for the project. Everything must come from the battery's own resources. Battery personnel were working (guard and operational manning) an average 70 hour week. The brigade commander had been given the order to bring the battalions under his command to full nuclear capability as soon as possible. Most units were in permanent sites that had been well-constructed (lots of concrete, new buildings and paved roads). 'C' battery was on a temporary site: concertina wire fences, Quonset huts, dirt (mud) roads and no running water. Meals on-site were served out of mermite cans. water came in a water trailer. Morale was difficult to maintain. The common way to handle lack of performance leadership; problems was to relieve commanders and "weak" personnel.

What choices did the C Battery commander (a captain) have?

Faced with what he deemed an impossible situation, the first commander reported to the battalion commander after six weeks and stated, "I cannot accomplish the warhead building task without help. He was relieved and ultimately "RIF'ed" from the service. The captain who replaced him was also relieved for the same reason. The executive officer, a Christian 1st lieutenant, was called in to see the battalion commander's office. The commander said, 'It is the USAREUR policy that only captains will command nuclear firing batteries. I am sticking my neck out in your case because I am told that the "C" battery personnel have great respect for you and loyalty to you. C Battery must build and pass the TPI in three months. Do not misunderstand me, your career is on the line. I will relieve you just as I did the two previous commanders if you do not accomplish this mission within your own resources.'"

The lieutenant called his officer and NCO personnel together, shared his dilemma with them and led in prayer for an answer. Shortly thereafter, the Launcher Platoon Sergeant approached the lieutenant and said, "Sir, you have always been a leader who has looked out for us. We are going to look out for you. We

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will solve the problem. You busy yourself with the rest of the battery's problems and let us handle this one."

The supply sergeant traded winter clothing, sheets, blankets, etc. for various specific technical equipment. The launcher platoon sergeant assigned two five-ton trucks and a missile wrecker to "midnight requisitions" of building supplies from the supply yards of a distant road construction area. Soldiers took up collections for what couldn't be traded for or stolen. Two 5-ton truck frames were ruined from using the wrecker to snatch them up in front to perform as dump trucks. The missile wrecker was jeopardized by this illegal harsh use, etc... In less than three months the building was built, the inspection was passed and a captain was assigned as commander to the unit. The lieutenant moved back to the position of battery executive officer. There was no officer efficiency report rendered for this period as the relieved commander continued to be carried in the slot on paper. The lieutenant received no special credit and felt tremendous relief that he had not suffered career damage.

How should the lieutenant have responded to the mission.

What elements of this case are similar to the Hebrew problem of our study.?

If you had been the Christian lieutenant, would you have "fallen on your sword" as the two captains did?

How do you feel he failed as a Christian?

What did he stand to lose if he had done what you believe he should have done?

What responsibility did the battalion and brigade commanders bear.? They were both promoted. Do you think they cared about what happened to the individuals in the unit?

How do you think that lieutenant feels today, 26 years later as a committed and growing Christian? He retired after 20 years service at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Someone read Ex 5:15-21

How do you feel about Pharaoh's accusations that they are "lazy"?

Is this the kind of criticism we fear from a commander who puts unreasonable demands on us?

What effect would such a statement in an officer evaluation report have on a career?

How do you feel about the reasoning of the people in vv 20, 21?

Do some officers likewise blame their spouses and or families in a similar way?

When we have a conflict of God's demands (Deut 6:4-7) and a military commander's demands, what should we do?

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Someone read Ex 5:22, 23

How do you feel about Moses' response to God?

Is God's timing a problem for Moses?

Is God's timing often a problem for us? Give some examples in your own lives...

What is happening in vv 22 and 23? *Possibly spiritual warfare. Satan will not give up easily.*

How should Moses have handled the problem?

What have you learned from this discussion that you feel you need to get straight in your own life?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE 23
THE FALTERING SPEECH OF MOSES

Exodus 6

Someone read Ex 5: 22, 23

How do you feel about Moses' prayer? *It was how he felt, the cry of his heart...*

Someone read **Ex 6:1**

How do you feel about the answer to Moses' prayer?

What will Pharaoh do?

Why will he do it? *Because of God's mighty hand.*

What does this say about possibilities in our lives if we resist God's will'?

What would be the ultimate result of Pharaoh's actions no matter how he felt?

Is this fair to Pharaoh'?

Can you think of situations in which we might be just as resistant to God's will as Pharaoh and thereby attract His forceful will'? Read Heb 12:6.

Someone read vv 2-5

Here God refers to Himself as "the Lord," a name equivalent to Jehovah. It is by the name. "the Lord" that His powerful works of salvation are done. For Adam His name is God; for Abraham, El Shaddai (God .Almighty); for Moses, Yahweh.

Special individuals received covenant signs from God which remain as reminders of God's concern for us today. What were the covenant signs of...

1. Noah? *The rainbow.*
2. Abraham'? *Circumcision (in the flesh of His chosen people).*
3. Moses? *The Sabbath for rest and worship).*

If you were Moses, how would you feel about His words. "I am the Lord"'? *This is an expression one might expect from a king who makes a royal edict...*

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What does God's statement at the end of v 3 connote? *A special relationship with Moses... Moses will know the real meaning of "Yahweh" through God's action, power and compassion for His people.*

At this moment of increased oppression by Pharaoh and Moses concurrent feelings of failure. What specific comfort and encouragement does God give Moses? (1) *"I am the Lord", which means I am God who can take sovereign and effective action, conditions could and would be changed.* (2) *Because the Abrahamic covenant (v 4) was still in force, God would now keep its terms,* (3) *God knew the suffering of His people (V 5) and was moved by their condition.*

How do you feel about God's timing?

What is difficult about God's timing for us? How should we learn to deal with God's timing?

Someone read vv 6-9

How do you feel about God's words?

Why didn't they listen (v 9)? *Their faith was stifled by their "broken spirits and cruel bondage."* Someone read Matt 11:1-6.

Is it possible that John the Baptist's suffering was so intense that he had begun to doubt that Jesus was the Messiah?

Is it possible that the consequences of suffering can in different cases either increase or decrease faith?

What do you think are the important present and pre-conditions for a person's faith to increase under great suffering?

What do you think would be the consequences of great suffering in your life? How should you live your life differently to prepare for great suffering?

Someone read vv 10-13

Why do you think Moses was still so reluctant? See 5:20, 21. *His first attempt resulted in a more bitter situation for the Hebrews.*

What do you suppose "uncircumcised lips" (v 12) means? *Not eloquent; his ability to speak was no match for the anger and fury of Pharaoh.*

What do God's words indicate about His nature'? *He is patient.*

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His grace is greater than Moses' immobility. *His love perseveres even in fear. He keeps pushing.* What do genealogies such as vv 14-25 add to scripture? *A sense of real history connecting events to specific people in time. A history of past generations.*

What have you learned in this discussion that you feel applies to your life today?

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TOPICAL DISCUSSION GUIDE #25
GOD STRIKES AGAINST PHARAOH,
THE EGYPTIANS AND THEIR GODS

Exodus 7:14-10:29

(Have the group silently read the portion of scripture that describes nine of the ten plagues: Ex 7:14-10:29).

Someone read Ex 12:12

How do you feel about the plagues as the first great encounter of God on behalf of His chosen people with the old-world empire of Egypt and its pantheon of gods and its idolatry? *This deep struggle is a good representation of God's conflict and judgment on all gods, power, authorities, principalities and ideologies, visible or invisible, that oppose God and His truth and that enslave and oppress men.*

Let's look at each of the nine plagues as concerns insult to a possible Egyptian deity relationship:

1. The Nile was considered a river god by the Egyptians.
2. There was a frog god named Heka or Heket.
3. Seth was god of the earth. The lice polluted the earth.
4. Khepra was a sacred beetle (gadfly).
5. Cattle and horses were considered sacred.
6. Ashes were used by the temple priests to bless the people.
7. Serapis was the god of water (hail).
8. Egypt's gods were to protect her from locusts.
9. The sun god, Ra, could not overcome the darkness.

In some ways plagues similar to the first nine had occurred naturally in the history of Egypt, For example, the Nile had several times in history turned red as a result of a high water level which picked up heavy concentrations of red dirt and algae. What was the unique supernatural factor associated with each of these plagues? God reacted to Moses' word in each case to turn the plagues on and off. The conclusion must have slowly dawned...the God of the slaves was superior to all of the Egyptian gods. Also, Israel was providentially spared from the consequences of the plagues.

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What was the consistent result of Pharaoh's "hardened heart" (7:13)? *Failure to see that Yahweh was far superior to all of the Egyptian gods.*

Do you believe Pharaoh had a chance if he would have heeded God's warning? Let's discuss God's unwillingness that any should perish. Someone read:

1. 2 Pet 3:9 (discuss)
2. 1 Tim 2:4
3. 2 Cor 5:19

Let's discuss why God may choose to use natural phenomena known to both the Egyptians and the Israelites.

Why might God use strong natural elements heightened by supernatural factors in these plagues? *The nature of cultural accommodation in revelation. God was showing that he had optional control over nature and some of its negative production if He chose to exercise it.*

What do you think the odds are that these were nine remarkable coincidences?

Do you feel the effect would have been as great if God had chosen to hit the Egyptians with a strange plague known only to the Eskimos?

Do you feel Pharaoh believes the truth of Ex 8:10 as a result of the first nine plagues?

To you see any comparisons to your own "hardness of heart" and lack of generous response and total commitment to God?

How does our unrighteousness compare to Pharaoh's?

What is the message to those who resist God's claim on their life? *They are more to be pitied for their folly than scolded for their unbelief:*