

# MESSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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John Ortberg, Guest Pastor

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This week, John Ortberg joined us with a great message on faithfulness, continuing in our series on the *Fruit of the Spirit* series. In the story from the Old Testament, God told Abraham (Abrahm) to go, and to be blessed so he would be a blessing. Abraham was faithful but not perfect. He made contingency plans trying to help God's promised blessing come about on his terms, doubting God could do it on his own. But in the end, Abraham was faithful, and so was God.

God promised Abraham he would be a blessing to all nations, all people, not just his tribe, those who looked like him, spoke like him, believed like him, worshiped like him – but all people. This is a call to action for us. Our interactions with people either bless or curse them. Jesus told us not only to love others, but love our enemies and to bless those who curse us.

Faithfulness means to use the blessing you've been given to bless others. The more we've been blessed the less likely we are to take notice. It's important to take notice – to take a blessings inventory.

God doesn't promise you'll have peace or total clarity from the get go. He promises if you go he will be with you. Peace comes when you learn to be faithful to God on this side of the circumstances. We grow more in the confusion, when we seek to be faithful, and go through the messy process.

## SCRIPTURE – The Story of Abraham

### GENESIS 12:1-4

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

<sup>4</sup> So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him ...

### GENESIS 12:10-13

<sup>10</sup> At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. <sup>11</sup> As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, you are a very beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup> When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' <sup>13</sup> So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."

### GENESIS 13:5-7, 14-17

<sup>5</sup> Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. <sup>6</sup> But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. <sup>7</sup> So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot ... <sup>14</sup> After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. <sup>15</sup> I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession. <sup>16</sup> And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted! <sup>17</sup> Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you."

### GENESIS 15:1-5

"Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

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<sup>2</sup> But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. <sup>3</sup> You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”

### **GENESIS 16:1-2, 15-16**

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. <sup>2</sup> So Sarai said to Abram, “The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal ... <sup>15</sup> So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

### **GENESIS 17:1-6**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. <sup>2</sup> I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

<sup>3</sup> At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, <sup>4</sup> “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! <sup>5</sup> What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

### **GENESIS 21:1-5**

The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. <sup>3</sup> And Abraham named their son Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

### **ROMANS 4:18-21**

<sup>18</sup> Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” <sup>19</sup> And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

<sup>20</sup> Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God.

<sup>21</sup> He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.”

### **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What stood out from John’s message?
2. Read the story of Abraham through the scriptures above. What was God’s promise?
3. How did Abraham respond and what barriers to faithfulness do you see? How did God bless Abraham?

4. Take a "blessing inventory." Look at each category (and add to the list if you so desire). Answer with a simple yes or no if you have been blessed, then expand on your answers.
  - Finances
  - Education
  - Home/place to live
  - Friends
  - Spiritual gift
  - Transportation
  - Forgiveness of sin
  - Presence of Holy Spirit
5. Where is God calling you to be faithful and to go and bless others? What barriers do you see in this calling? Read Matthew 28:18-20. What is God's promise to you?
6. How can we pray for you?

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for his faithfulness and promised blessings. Ask him to convict you on your daily encounters with others, to bless and not curse and to recognize that it is always one or the other. Pray God will put it on your heart where he wants you to go and how he is asking you to use your blessings to bless others, even those who curse you. Thank him for the ultimate promise: he is always with you.