

Faith's Promises

The Life of Abraham—part 5

July 5, 2026

Genesis 15:1-6

Reviewing our series on Abraham:

- Wk 1: The Beginnings of Faith
- Wk 2: Faith's Tent and Altar
- Wk 3: Faith's Choices
- Wk 4: Faith's Fight

DAY 1: The word of the Lord

*Genesis 15:1 After this, **the word of the Lord** came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."*

² But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness,

1. The law of "first occurrence" means that when a word is first introduced in scripture, it fixes its basic meaning throughout the bible. Four important words are fixed in this passage.

2. First, "**the word of the Lord**." Second, "fear not." Third, "I am your shield." This character quality of God will be in different metaphors as a refuge, our strength, a tower of refuge, us hiding under the shadow of His wing, etc. Fourth, Abraham "believed the Lord, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness."

3. In the bible, God's words became the foundation for living life wisely, all the way from our personal lives to national life! When God spoke, the entire universe was created by His word (Gen. 1:2). Israel's life and success lay in obeying His word (Deut. 32:46–7) and all of the covenants of the Old Testament were formed by the word of God (Exod. 24:8).

4. God's word is what defines truth, the realities of the world, and God's purposes.

5. Psalm 119 is an encyclopedia of why God's words are valuable, why we are wise to heed and obey the truths of God's word.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

6. God's word is essential to my daily life and the long play of my life!

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Do not be afraid

*Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “**Do not be afraid**, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”*

1. God appears in a vision to Abraham, and the first words to him are “Do not be afraid.”
2. Fear, anxiety, and worry are all in the same family Fear is the emotional result when outcomes we are depending on are **uncertain**. Anxiety occurs when we’re not sure that what we believe we need will happen.
3. Why was Abraham afraid? Here are some possibilities:
 - a. He had just defeated a handful of powerful kings, and perhaps he feared retribution, as the size of his little army dwarfed the handful of kings he had defeated.
 - b. Maybe he was afraid because he had turned down the king of Sodom’s offer of a fortune.
 - c. Perhaps he was afraid of criticism from Sarah and his family. While the king of Sodom went back to his palace, Abraham and his family went back to their tents. Was there so little relief from the desert air, the winds blowing sand in the tent and the food?
 - d. Though God had promised an heir, Abraham was still childless. This was tremendously confusing to Abraham. God, you want me to take your promise seriously. I will. But we are not getting any younger. The years are slipping by. As of this moment, your promise seems impossible.
4. In your quiet moments of life, what worries you?
5. What outcomes are you really depending on for your security, significance, or satisfaction?
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*Genesis 15:1 ...Do not be afraid, Abram. **I am your shield, your very great reward.**”*

6. Here is God’s rationale for why Abraham does not need to be afraid! God Himself is to be trusted, not some future outcome—whether from people or events!
7. What strikes you about God being YOUR shield and YOUR very great reward?
8. How would that change how you see your worries?

DAY 3: I am your shield and very great reward

Genesis 15:2 But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

1. It's been ten years since the first promise of an heir and descendants to Abraham.
2. Not only is there not a chain of descendants; they are still childless!
3. One of the common fears of Christians is that somehow we have missed God's will. Perhaps through our own foolish decisions, or self-centeredness, God has functionally "passed us by" and that we are "left to our consequences."
4. Some mid-life crises are driven by the uncertainty that I am missing out on "life," or what God could have given me, but I messed it up.
5. Other mid-life crises are driven by the opposite uncertainty. "I genuinely have sought to follow God. I have obeyed Him (however stubbornly) but the results of my obedience and sincerity of faith have not produced the life of God I thought I would have by now. Were the sacrifices for God and His kingdom worth it?"
6. Every one of the reasons for fear, noted in yesterday's devotions and the ones above miss out on the most important item—God!

It is not the outcome that ultimately matters,
but our trust in God that is of top importance.

7. This is the essence of God's first words to Abraham in reference to his fear.
 - a. God is his shield, not hoped for outcomes. God is the protector of my life's story.
 - b. God is my great reward, not any outcome I may deem as supremely important.
8. When you think about your life, what hoped for outcomes immediately come to your mind?
9. If you had to pick between your hoped-for outcomes or having God as your shield and very great reward, which would you pick? What is top priority?

DAY 4: The word and the metaphorical image

Genesis 15:2 But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

1. How does God respond?

Genesis 15:4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."

2. God answers Abraham directly. The first heir won't be a young servant. The heir will be from his flesh and blood.

3. For those of us who hang on every word, that is significant.

4. But some of us are visual learners.

a. Words lodge in your head, but images lodge down in the heart.

b. Images can anchor us even more than words. Images function as both word and metaphor. God says, "Abraham, let's go outside."

Genesis 15:5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

5. When I lived in Colorado, our family did some camping up in the Rockies. Away from the city lights of Denver and up in the Rocky Mountains at night, except for your campfire, the only lights you see are in the panoply of the heavens. Down in Denver you might be able to see five or six stars, but up in the mountains it would impossible to count them all.

6. God's word of promise has been planted in Abraham's brain. But every night from then on, all Abraham has to do is look up to the heavens to remember the promise. He can remember the promise of words in his brain, and he can see the promise every night as he lays his head down to sleep outdoors.

7. The line of descendants is all people who have come to faith through the Messiah.

*Galatians 3:7 Understand, then, that **those who have faith are children of Abraham.** ⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

8. Every night we also can look up into the heavens, and even if we can't see all the stars one can see up in the Rockies or in the middle eastern desert four thousand years ago, the stars remind us, not only of God's promise but of God's on-going fulfillment of His promise!

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Faith that aligns our life

1. One of the most important verses in the entire Old Testament comes next!
2. After God reiterates the promises to Abraham and takes him outside his tent to see the panoply of stars across the sky, there is a profound effect on Abraham, and a profound response.

Genesis 15:6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

3. There are several kinds of “belief”:

- a. Mental assent. I believe that the Earth rotates around the Sun. I believe that Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead.

- b. What I believe to be true. I believe most people like ice cream. I believe most people like to celebrate birthdays. But those beliefs don’t affect the way I live UNTIL one of their birthdays comes up. Then, those beliefs alter a small part of my day in buying a gift.

- c. Life-shaping belief. This is a belief that now seeks to aligns how I live, what I value, how I relate, why my goals are to what God wants.

4. This is what happened to Abraham while standing out under the stars that night. God was no longer a “god” out there, Someone Abraham could call in an emergency. God became central in Abraham’s heart and life. This occurred before Abraham was circumcised. For millennia, Jews believe they became one of God’s people thru this religious deed.

5. This is not the first time Abraham was reckoned righteous before God and by God. But this instance is seized upon by the New Testament writers as the way in which people are saved by God. Abraham was not saved by his good deeds or religious practices. He did not become righteous by his sincerity, good deeds, good character or religiosity. His belief, the third kind we mentioned earlier aligned himself to God and God’s purposes. When God “saw” that, he declared Abraham a righteous man. Righteousness was given to him. His file in heaven was now stamped “RIGHTEOUS”.

Philippians 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?