

CONFIDENCE IN SEASONS OF UNCERTAINTY

Leader pages on pp. 142-145

THE POINT:

TRUST GOD WHEN YOU
DON'T HAVE ALL THE
ANSWERS.

GENESIS 15:1-6, 13-16

¹ After these events, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great. ² But Abram said, "Lord God, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir." ⁴ Now the word of the Lord came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."

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MEMORY VERSE

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

¹³ Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens for four hundred years in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed. ¹⁴ However, I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will go out with many possessions. ¹⁵ But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

KEYWORDS

Abram believed (v. 6)—This means that Abram affirmed that God is dependable.

Righteousness (v. 6)—To be righteous is to measure up to God's standard. Righteousness is credited to a person who trusts in Jesus for forgiveness and salvation.

Credited ... righteousness (v.6)—God judged or accounted that Abram measured up to the standard, conformed to the norm.

WHAT HELPS US TO TRUST GOD DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES?

The year 2020 started out pleasantly enough, but it became the unsettling year of uncertainty. It seemed our entire world came to a halt. Many businesses had to close their doors. Even churches stopped meeting in person. Millions of people had to learn how to work at home while millions more were without jobs.

As the pandemic continued to increase across the country, so did the spread of skepticism and division. The news we heard one day seemed to conflict with the news from the day before. On top of the deadly virus, we saw 2020 add politics, racial tensions, disagreements over wearing masks, and debates over reopening schools to the mix.

The year 2020 created the perfect storm of uncertainty. When things in life seem to be blurry or unstable, how do we respond? Oh, if only our faith were strong enough to overcome the uncertainty of it all! We know Abram as a man of faith, but that faith did not prevent him from experiencing his own season of uncertainty. Let's learn some lessons from Him.

Trust God When Uncertain

// Genesis 15:1-5

Since the time God first called Abram and promised land, offspring, and blessing, the patriarch had encountered a lot. Abram had endured a trip to Egypt to escape a famine, and then being kicked out by Pharaoh. He had successfully managed tensions with his nephew, Lot, and he had defeated invading kings. All these events didn't seem to be leading to the promises God had given Abram.

Uncertainty can have the power to manipulate us and tempt us to take matters into our hands, instead of trusting in the hand of God. When we become overwhelmed with worry, we can foolishly try and attempt to force the hand of God—which never works! Uncertainty can cause us to worry but worry can cause us to react irrationally without sound judgment.

WHEN YOU THINK OF TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY, WHAT COMES TO MIND IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE?



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Sadly, Abram demonstrated irrationality without sound judgment. Here was God, speaking to Abram in a vision and reminding Abram that He was his shield. God's divine protection would ensure his prosperity and blessing.

But Abram only saw the situation right in front of him. Since Abram had not yet received the heir God had promised, he may have been considering a practice that was common in Mesopotamia: an adoption to ensure that he would have an heir. Uncertainty has a way of making us forgetful. That seemed to be the case here with Abram. God lovingly corrected and reminded Abram of His promise.

Picture Abram squinting his eyes and trying to do the impossible when God told him, "Look at the sky and count the stars." Of course, even counting the stars would miss the point. God wanted Abram to realize that, in spite of how circumstances seemed at the moment, he would have so many descendants—a great nation—they couldn't all be counted. Abram couldn't count them, but God could—and even more so, He would know each one by name.

Trust God in Righteousness // Genesis 15:6

Earlier, in verses 2-3, Abram appeared quite uncertain about God's promises to him, but now we see Abram responding differently. But God did not give Abram any details concerning how He would deliver on the promises. Abram trusted the word God spoke to him. He believed. Abram chose to believe God even when the future seemed uncertain. The one thing that was certain was that Abram chose to trust and believe.

WHAT INITIALLY CAUSED YOU TO TRUST AND BELIEVE IN GOD?

With this simple act of trust, God "credited it to him as righteousness." The idea behind credited is to assign value to something. Abram's belief was valued as righteousness. Abram did not have to do anything to be credited with righteousness except believe. Abram believed God's promise that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars; in turn, God counted that belief as righteousness.

To have righteousness credited to one's account means to be made right with God, to be in a right standing with Him, and to be accepted into a relationship with Him. This was not only



DIGGING DEEPER VISIONS

Throughout the Bible, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God used visions to communicate in a special way with people. The vision of the sacrifice and the covenant Abram experienced in Genesis 15, Jacob's vision of wrestling with God in Genesis 46, and the prophetic visions of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah were all initiated by God at times when the recipients did not anticipate them. Visions occurred during waking hours rather than while sleeping—although many visions were accompanied by a sleepy state. Visions were used to convey something that would happen in the future or visions could be used to teach a spiritual truth. Some visions were used to bolster the strength of an individual during a trial or to reveal aspects of God's majesty.

Describe the way God does this same work in the lives of believers today.

a benefit to Abram, it set the entire stage for all humanity to receive the very same benefit.

From the time of Abram all the way to the present, the great deceiver has used the deadly trap of a works-based faith to infiltrate and sabotage the hearts of many souls. Human nature is mistakenly drawn to the idea that we need to step in and help fix our sin problem.

If we believe our relationship with God is based solely on our behavior, then our relationship with Him will be constantly filled with uncertainty. Have I done enough? Have I said enough? Have I repented enough? For those who think they need to work or contribute to their salvation, Paul said trusting in laws or works makes faith empty and God's promise unnecessary (Rom. 4:14).

Uncertainty in our faith has a domino effect on the way we respond to other uncertainties in life. Securing salvation on God's promise we are made right by our faith in Christ alone propels us through other unknowns. Faith provides us with a foundation that is certain and stable. Faith helps give us an eternal perspective to see the world through the eyes of God, so when everything around us seems to be crumbling, we can stand confidently.

Trust God to Work on Time //

Genesis 15:13-16

God responded to Abram with an oath using animal sacrifices that were to be cut down the middle. Ritual sacrifices to confirm an agreement were not uncommon in the ancient Near East, but this particular sacrifice was uniquely directed by God. In the middle of this oath ritual, Abram fell into a deep dark sleep. In that moment, God gave Abram an idea of what would happen with his descendants. Before Abram's offspring would occupy the promised land, they would be oppressed in slavery for

four hundred years in a foreign land. They would inhabit this land, but not before they faced great challenges.



HOW CAN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD PROVIDE CONFIDENCE IN SEASONS OF UNCERTAINTY?

While God confirmed His promise of descendants and land, it was clear the fulfillment of receiving the land would be a long time coming. This was news Abram surely was not expecting. God's timing is not always our timing. It is in these moments when we will truly be tested. In the moments of uncertainty when God's plan and timing do not match up with ours, we have a choice. We can choose to either trust or reject His promise. We will either lift up a fist in anger or lift up a hand of adoration.

As God confirmed His covenant with Abram, He underscored it with a manifestation of His presence. This surely was a comfort for Abram. Fire can be ferocious, consuming all it touches. Fire can also be comforting; it warms us, lights our way, and serves us in a variety of ways, such as cooking food. I would think seeing the fire pot and torch appear would be a fear-inducing sight, but the fear of the God also carries with it the comfort of His presence and goodness.

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As a part of a covenant ceremony like this, the ones who walked through the cut animals were responsible for upholding the agreements of the covenant. The reason for passing through the cut animals was a way of saying, "If I fail to uphold to arrangements of our covenant, may the same happen to me." Because Abram was asleep and the Lord alone passed through the animals, the Lord took it upon Himself to uphold the agreements of the covenant. The Lord was taking sole responsibility for bringing about the promises of the covenant. Abram simply had to believe and trust God.

We must strive to trust God's timing in the seasons of uncertainty. Things may not occur in the time frame we think they should, but God's timing is always perfect. And through it all, as we trust Him, we can rest in the comfort of His loving and awe-inspiring presence. We can be confident in seasons of uncertainty because we do not have to face them alone.

WHAT MAKES IT SO HARD TO WAIT FOR GOD'S TIMING?

DID YOU KNOW?

Uncertainty can be classified as a "frienemy." That's because despite the insecurity and lack of control we experience during times of uncertainty, we learn valuable lessons on how to cope in similar future events. For example, when the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 caused the death of 50 million people worldwide, we walked away with many resources that have helped us during the uncertain times of our current pandemic. First, there were many similarities between the two pandemics. Schools and places of public gathering were closed, the economy suffered, and over time people rebelled against having to remain at home. This created new waves of illnesses, both then and now. The one lesson that medical and public officials learned from the 1918 pandemic is that wearing masks and social distancing worked. They learned that these two actions along with hand sanitizing help to get the pandemic under control.²

What are some things you have learned from times of uncertainty in your life?

LIVE IT

How will you strengthen your resolve to trust God in all things?

When things in life seem to be blurry or unstable, how do we respond? God's Word reminds us over and over again of His promises and protection by which we can deflect all the arrows of worry that attack us in times of uncertainty. Until we see and understand how God is at work, we must trust His unseen hand. And remember nothing takes God by surprise.

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- **Plan for uncertainty.** Resolve how you will face your next season of uncertainty in confidence. Journal about how God has gotten you through uncertainty before. Take note of what you can do.
- **Change course.** Is there an area of life where God is asking you to adjust your hopes or plans, or even your timeline? Pray and ask Him to help you keep your eyes focused on Him.
- **Trust together.** Talk with people who have stayed confident in Christ through difficult circumstances. What can you glean from their lives?

DAILY READINGS

1. GREATER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE // GENESIS 15:5

While Abram was waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise, he dealt with discouragement—especially when he was left alone with his own thoughts. He didn't see a human way for God's promise to be fulfilled in his life. That's when God reminded him that the promise wouldn't be fulfilled in a human way but in God's way. While you can't see God's grand plan, you can rest in the fact that His plan is far greater than anything you can imagine. God says about Himself: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways" (Isa. 55:8).

Trust God even when you can't understand how things will work out.

2. YOU CAN PLEASE GOD // HEBREWS 11:6

Abram believed God when God said his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the night sky. While you might be tempted to think Abram had a different type of faith in God, you can exercise the same faith Abram had in God. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. That's true. But the inverse is also true: With faith, it is possible to please God. So what are the things that are pleasing to God? Abram understood this, and he lived it. Just believe God's Word and the things He reveals to you. Then obey all He has commanded you to do. These two things are pleasing to God..

Exercise your faith in God and in His Word.

3. GOD'S PLAN IS THE BEST PLAN // GENESIS 15:13-16

When God revealed His plan to Abram, it must have seemed so strange. God's plan included long life and peace for Abram. That's great. But God's plan also included 400 years of slavery and oppression for Abram's descendants. That didn't sound so great. But God had a plan to save His people and bring judgment upon the Amorites. In the same way,

God's plan for your life may seem strange. It may involve some ups and downs, but continue to trust Him through it all. He is doing something you can't completely understand.

Thank God that He has the best plan for your life.

4. NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE // MATTHEW 19:23-26

Trusting in God and following Him in faith requires a recognition that God can do things that are impossible for us to do and imagine. From small things to huge things, God is able. The Bible is full of examples of God doing what we would consider impossible. As a matter of fact, the word "impossible" could never be used to describe anything God does. If He can feed a multitude with five dinner rolls and two small fish, is it too much to believe that He can cause a 90-something year old woman to have a baby? Nope. God does the impossible for His glory and to fulfill His plans.

Praise God for all the ways He has worked in your life, including doing things you might have thought were impossible.

5. WORSHIP THE LORD // GENESIS 17:3

Over and over again, Abram, was moved to worship the Lord. And wouldn't you, too, with all that God was revealing to Him and doing around him? But don't miss the fact, this was Abram's natural response to God. He responded to God's working in his life by coming before Him in worship. It really is a mindset choice—during the events of your life, good and bad, you can choose this same mindset. You can choose to worship the Lord when God is doing great things in your life. Notice too what else is happening. This verse also indicates that worship opened the lines of communication for God to clearly guide Abram. This is a bonus to responding in worship to what God is doing in our lives.

Take some time, right now, to worship the Lord.



My Notes

Name

Email

Session Number

Answer 4 Questions

What did You learn?

What Is God saying to you?

What are you gonna do about it?

**Do you have any questions
about the reading?**





My Notes

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