

MULTIPLY WEEK 1

God the Multiplier: Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6, 17:1-8, 22:15-19

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 15:1-6

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 17:1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give

to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

Genesis 22:15-19

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Introduction

Throughout the Bible, when God’s hand is in something, multiplication becomes the rule. You can see it from the very first chapter of the Bible: “God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’” (Genesis 1:28). God even gave us the ability to be productive and encouraged us to use that power well. But God’s scale is so much bigger than ours that when he gets involved, the multiplication is unmistakable.

Human history got off to a rocky start, despite this blessing from God. As you can see in Genesis 3-11, the only thing we were good at multiplying was sinful behavior. It became very clear early on that humanity would need to be redeemed. So God chose to begin his plan of redemption with one family: Abraham’s family. God reiterated the same blessing to Abraham: “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may **multiply** you greatly I will make you exceedingly **fruitful**, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you” (Genesis 17:1-2, 6).

There are a few things that we learn from the promise to Abraham that can change your life. First, God wants to bless his people! He loves to give good gifts to his children (Matthew 7:11). There are spiritual aspects to this as we see Abraham’s obedience, faith, and righteousness increase throughout this story. There are also future elements to God’s provision

that Abraham did not see in his lifetime. Kings and lands were part of the promise, some of which was not fulfilled until Jesus. And there was also an immediate, material fulfillment of God's promise that radically changed Abraham's life. Knowing that your loving Father cares about your every need — present and future, spiritual and physical — can give you confidence to face anything in life with hope.

I think all of us are prone to doubt God's goodness in our lives when prayers go unanswered, which leads to the second point of Abraham's promise. Remember that when this story begins, Abraham did not follow God and was probably part of another religion. It is only after experiencing God's goodness in his life that he begins to believe in God and teach his family to do the same. The chapters we are studying here take up 20-plus years of Abraham's life. Many times, he and his wife doubted whether they would see the fruit of the promise. Their journey was meandering and sordid through the plains of the Middle East. They lived through comical hijinks and experienced downright evil (committing some of their own along the way). The promise was often in jeopardy, but God finally gave Abraham a son, at age 100, and the rest was history. Years later, Abraham finally understood something crucial about God's character: He *will* provide.

Multiplication Principle

You and I are part of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. At first, the promise was slowly fulfilled: One son became 12 tribes, which became the nation of Israel that multiplied and got their own land centuries later. The promise was that kings, nations, and the whole world would be blessed through this one man's family. The Israelite nation has lasted millennia and saw much of that fulfillment throughout its years. However, the last piece of the promise is the most important: From the Israelites came the Messiah, who has blessed all of humanity. Jesus made a way for all of humanity to be counted among God's righteous children. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave the new way for multiplication: discipling others to follow him. That is the Church's way of being fruitful and multiplying as we bless all nations with the gospel.

There is a third lesson we can learn from God's promise to Abraham. The journey that God took Abraham on came at significant cost to him. Yes,

God promised to multiply Abraham beyond his wildest dreams. But to get started, Abraham had to leave his home country and put away his family “gods.” He set out on this wild adventure, knowing very little about what would happen and who it was that he was following. Later, God asked him to perform crazy rituals to confirm his belief in God’s promise. To top it off, God asked Abraham to be willing to sacrifice his own son, which was the only way that the great promise could be fulfilled. Abraham learned enough about God on his journey that he was willing to sacrifice his son, his promise, his everything to maintain his committed relationship with God.

God stopped short of making Abraham go through with that sacrifice, but that extreme act was something that God himself was willing to do on our behalf. There we see just how much God wants to bless us. The key for us is to trust that blessing is coming, even when it might not come in the form or timing that we want. The promise is sure, and God is trustworthy. More than this, the journey he takes us on will multiply our blessings (spiritual and material) in a way that will multiply our praise for him.

Study Questions

1. Read all four Genesis passages above. What is similar about all four passages? Which similarities seem the most significant, and why?
2. What does God want us to learn about his character through Abraham’s story?
3. Why do you think God told Abraham about the promise decades before Abraham would begin to see some fulfillment?

Reflection Questions

1. What are some things in your life that have led you to doubt God's provision?
2. How would your prayer life change if you knew God was going to answer a particular prayer soon? What makes it difficult for you to wait on God's answers?
3. What has helped you grow in trust for God's provision in the past few years?

Prayer Guide

Pray James 1:5-8, 16-18.

Pray Deep:

- Acknowledge that we all lack wisdom, and ask God to give it to you, knowing that he "gives generously to all without reproach" (James 1:5).
- Ask God for more faith by which you may confront doubts in your own heart and trust in him as your provider and reward (James 1:6).

Pray Wide:

- Thank God that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," including bringing people into his family through salvation (James 1:17).
- Ask God for direction in how to be a picture of salvation and blessing to people around us with the gospel (James 1:18).

Further Reading

“How Could God Ask That?”

by Nancy Guthrie, thegospelcoalition.org

“5 Errors of the Prosperity Gospel”

by David Jones, thegospelcoalition.org

“Creation, Fall, Redemption – and Your Money”

by Tim Keller, christchurch-pca.org