



EAST OF EDEN

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis by Stan Key

Volume 2
Answer Guide



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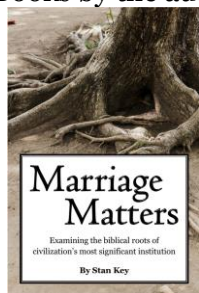
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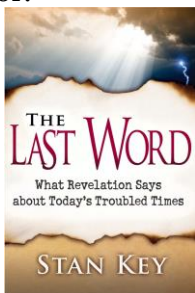
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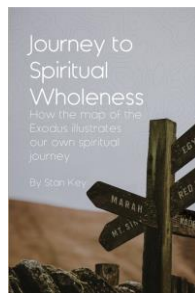
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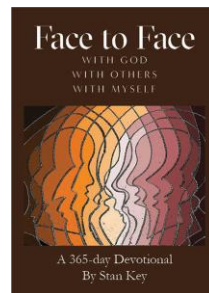
The Last Word



Jeremiah: Fire in His Bones



Journey to Spiritual Wholeness



Face to Face

Other Bible studies by the author include *David: King of Hearts*, *East of Eden: Finding Our Way Home (A Study of Genesis)*, *Faith Works: The Commands of Jesus*, *The Geography of Salvation*, *The Good Kings of Judah*, *Got Life? A Study of the Gospel of John*, *Jeremiah: Fire in the Belly*, *Reason Why*, and *Revelation: The Last Word*.



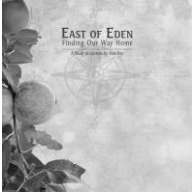
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East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home
A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

DEEP WATERS (PART ONE)

Genesis 6:5–8:19

I. The Happy Floating Zoo?

- A. Most children's books and Sunday School songs depict the story of "Noah and the Flood" as a delightful tale of smiling animals on a cruise ship. It comes across as a cute **fairy tale**. This has tragic consequences when it blinds people to the **historicity** of a real event when a holy God **judged** a sinful earth by sending a cataclysmic and horrifying flood.¹

*By treating Noah's Ark and the Flood as fairy tales rather than sobering reminders of divine judgment on a sin-filled world, these storybooks frequently **trivialize** the Lord's righteous and holy character.²*

- B. The flood is a **de-creational** event; God is *undoing* what he has made and causes the earth to revert to its pre-creation state when the earth was a formless, watery mass (Gn 1:2). The primordial deep, for the Hebrews, has always been a source of fear and terror and water seen as a sort of enemy.³
- C. What this story is really about.

The story of Noah and the Flood begins at the dawn of human history and aims to **anchor us** in understanding three foundational realities that must form the bedrock of all human life and thought:

1. The depths of human **sin**. Human persons are deeply flawed, greatly fallen from their original design. Every intention of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil all the time (Gn 6:5). However, it is **possible** to live a holy life in an unholy world. Noah walked with God (Gn 6:9).
2. The terror of divine **wrath**. Though God is longsuffering and patient, there is a tipping point when his wrath against sin and rebellion spills out in **judgment** (see Gn 6:3, 5–7).
3. The lavishness of God's **grace**. Even in the worst conditions of sin and rebellion, God reaches out to **redeem** and to save.

II. Of Secondary Interest

Yes, the main message we are to receive from the story of Noah and the Flood concerns sin, wrath, and grace. However, as with perhaps no other story in all the Scriptures, *this* story is packed with information of secondary importance that is **very interesting**. For example, the story introduces us to questions involving a number of topics.

¹ To get a small idea of the flood's horror, think of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami that hit Southeast Asia on December 26, 2004. Remember the images? Over 225,000 people in 14 different nations were killed in horrifying circumstances.

² From a plaque in the exhibit "Fairy Tale Ark" at the *Ark Encounter* in Williamstown, KY.

³ Think of the pivotal moments at the Red Sea and the Jordan River, of the story of Jonah, and of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee ("Who is this that the wind and sea obey him?" Mt 8:27). Notice that in John's description of the New Jerusalem, "the sea was no more" (Rv 21:1).

A. History

1. Though many think of ancient man as brutish and unintelligent (“cave man”), the Bible describes people before the flood as having an **advanced civilization**: musical instruments, works in bronze and iron, skills at boat building, etc. (Gn 4:17–22).
2. Over **200 legends** of an ancient flood have been discovered around the world. There is great variation in these stories, but many speak of similar themes:
 - The gods are upset and send a flood to destroy the earth.
 - A hero builds a “boat” and saves himself, his family, and some animals.
 - Birds are sent out from the boat to see if the land is dry.
 - After the flood, the survivors make a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

B. Geology

1. There was **no rain** on the earth before the flood (Gn 2:5). Apparently, there was a vast vaporous **canopy** of water around the earth (Gn 1:6–8). This could have provided a uniform tropical climate (a “greenhouse effect”) and may help to explain the long lifespans of the antediluvians. The Bible describes two sources for the waters that covered the earth: “on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened” (Gn 7:11).
2. These waters “from above” (40 days of torrential rain) and “from below” were sufficient to cover the entire planet with water. The Scriptures are clear that this was a **global flood**, not a *local* flood. The highest mountains were covered by water to a depth of over 20 feet (Gn 7:19–20).
3. The flood waters would have had power to shape **continents**. Layers of rock and sediment stretch across entire continents and many of these layers can be found on other continents as well. Such widespread **stratification** does not easily fit with the notion of a slow and gradual process but seems more consistent with a global catastrophe.
4. The **Grand Canyon**, for example, has vertical walls. This seems to indicate that they were carved quickly. The canyon also is many times wider than the river that flows through it. This means that the volume of water needed to form the canyon would have been much greater than the current flow.

C. Boat Building

1. The word “ark” is the same Hebrew term used to describe the “ark of bulrushes” in which baby Moses was placed (Ex 2:3, 5). It is *not* the word used for the “ark” of the covenant nor is it the word for “boat.” The ark was waterproofed, covered “inside and out with **pitch**” (Gn 6:14).⁴
2. The ark was designed for stability, safety, strength, and sea-worthiness. It was not designed for speed (no **sail**) or navigation (no **rudder**).

⁴ The word “pitch” is the Hebrew, *koper*. In its verb form it means “to cover,” and the word is used in the Old Testament to describe “atonement” (*Yom Kippur*). The pitch on the ark *covered* the inhabitants so that wrath did not reach them just as the blood of sacrificial lambs covered the sins of those who worshiped.

3. The ark was roughly 510 feet long, 51 feet tall and 85 feet in width,⁵ roughly the length of 1½ football fields and four stories tall. These dimensions correspond to **modern** ocean-going ships.
4. The ark's capacity was approximately 1.88 million cubic feet, large enough to contain nearly **450** semi-truck trailers.
5. When compared to the vessels described in other legends of the flood, Noah's ark stands out! The boats of other legends were either small, unsound, unstable, or unseaworthy.
 - The Wunambal Legend—A raft (40' x 20')
 - The Vanuatu Tale—A large canoe (50' x 10')
 - The Epic of Gilgamesh—A cube-shaped ark (200' x 200')
 - Akkadian—A large coracle (220' in diameter)

D. Zoology

God specified the animals were to be gathered according to their **kinds** (Gn 6:20). We should probably think of "kinds" as a broader category than "species." A kind would include many species. Thus, there would likely have been in the ark a pair of dog kind, cattle kind, alligator kind, etc. According to this classification, there are perhaps **1,400** known living and extinct kinds of animals (birds, insects, etc.). Such a classification makes it possible to envision the preservation of all animal life on the ark. After the flood, the kinds would have proliferated into a wider variety of species.

E. The Fossil Record

Popular thought claims that fossils are formed over **long periods** of time. An animal dies and is slowly buried by sediment so that the bones eventually are fossilized. A global flood assumes that the animal would have been buried **rapidly**, thus not given time to decompose. The flood would have produced accumulating layers of sediment and in these layers would be buried the bodies of millions of animals who had been killed (fossils), giving an entirely new perspective on "the fossil record."

F. The Ice Age

A global flood would have had a huge impact on **climate** all over the earth. The Ice Age may be explained as the period after the flood when the earth was readjusting to the new environment realities.

G. The origin of tribes and languages and nations.

It is interesting to note that Mount Ararat is roughly in the geographic center of three continents, thus making the repopulation of the earth more strategically possible.

III. Why It's Important to Study this Story.

A. This story helps us to understand the meaning of our **baptism**. In destroying the earth with water, God is **washing** the world of its sinfulness and **starting over!** Listen to how Peter uses the flood as a metaphor for baptism.

- "Eight persons [Noah's family inside the ark] were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from

⁵ The Bible gives the dimensions in cubits. In the ancient world, a cubit was equal to the distance between a person's elbow and the tip of their longest finger (17–20 inches).

the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 3:20–21).

- “The earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished” (2 Pt 3:5–6).

Peter is saying that in a manner analogous to Noah we are saved **from** water **by** water! The water that destroys the wicked delivers the believer. That is what baptism is all about!

- B. This story helps us to realize our need for a **deeper work** of grace. As wonderful as God’s grace is to save us from wrath, it does not fully deal with the sin problem. After the flood, Noah *still* gives evidence of sin (Gn 9:20–29) and the intention of man’s heart continues to be evil (Gn 8:21; see also Gn 11:1–9, etc.). It will take more than a **water baptism** to fix the sin problem.

1. Genesis will introduce us to a deeper work of grace that **transforms character** in the story of Jacob (victory of egocentrism, Gn 32) and Joseph (victory over being a victim, Gn 50:20).
2. As for dealing with the earth and its global corruption, it will require more than a bath with water. It will demand a cleansing by **fire!**

For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (2 Peter 3:5–7)

- C. This story gives us the **causes** of God’s first great act of judgment (when he judged the earth with water). Jesus wants us to learn from history and recognize the **signs** that will alert us to when the Day of the Lord and final judgment is about to fall on the earth.

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (Matthew 24:37–42)

1. “The days of Noah” help us understand what it will be like in the days just prior to the “coming of the Son of Man.” If we see similar conditions in our day, we should **be alert**, because the final judgment is about to come.
 - a. Preoccupation with **physical appetites** (Mt 24:38).
 - b. Disregard for the sacredness of **marriage** (Gn 4:19, 6:2; Mt 24:38).
 - c. Rapid advances in **technology** (Gn 4:22).
 - d. Advances in **entertainment** and pleasure (Gn 4:21).

- e. Widespread **violence** (Gn 6:11, 13).⁶
 - f. **Corruption** (Gn 6:12). The word describes something good that has been spoiled, blemished, polluted. In other words, when God sends the flood, he is destroying something that has already destroyed itself!⁷
 - g. Unrestrained, total depravity (Gn 6:5).
2. The New Testament adds some additional signs that will precede his return:
 - a. The **preaching of the gospel** to all nations (Mt 24:14).
 - b. The great tribulation (Mk 13:19–20).
 - c. **False prophets** working signs and wonders (Mt 24:23–24).
 - d. Signs in the heavens (Mt 24:29–30).
 - e. The coming of the **Man of Sin** and the Rebellion (2 Thes 2:1–10).
 - f. The salvation of **Israel** (Rom 11:12, 25–27).

The coming Day of Wrath will indeed be terrible for the unbeliever, but for those who belong to Christ Jesus, it will be the day of their **liberation**.

Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:28)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What happens when we tell the story of Noah and the Flood as if it were a cute fairy tale?
2. How do you feel about a God who destroys the world he has created? Is such wrath consistent with his love?
3. Of all the items of “secondary interest” mentioned (geology, zoology, boat building, etc.) which one(s) fascinates you the most? Why?
4. How does the story of the flood help you to better understand baptism?
5. God once judged the earth with water. The final judgment will be with fire. What lesson should we learn from these two judgements that server as bookends to human history?
6. Do you think we are living in the Last Days? Is the final judgment imminent?

⁶ The Hebrew word for “violence” is *hamas*. In Arabic, however, the same word is translated as “zeal.” This must have interesting connotations in the ongoing search for peace in the Middle East.

⁷ Hamilton, 278.

And Are We Yet Alive

By Charles Wesley

*And are we yet alive,
And see each other's face?
Glory and praise to Jesus give
For his redeeming grace!*

*Preserved by power divine
To full salvation here,
Again in Jesu's praise we join,
And in his sight appear.*

*What troubles have we seen,
What conflicts have we past,
Fightings without, and fears within,
Since we assembled last!*

*But out of all the Lord
Hath brought us by his love;
And still he doth his help afford,
And hides our life above.*

*Then let us make our boast
Of his redeeming power,
Which saves us to the uttermost,
Till we can sin no more:*

*Let us take up the cross,
Till we the crown obtain;
And gladly reckon all things loss,
So we may Jesus gain.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

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DEEP WATERS (PART TWO)

Genesis 6–9

I. Introduction

- A. In the last session, we looked at the **details** of the story (the dimensions of the ark, the extent of the flood, how the animals fit on the ark, etc.). Though interesting, these particulars are not what the story is all about. Tonight, we aim to discover **the message** God wants us to receive from this story.
- B. Richard Foster begins his classic book *Celebration of Discipline* with the lament: “**Superficiality** is the curse of our age. . . . The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for **deep** people.” The message I believe God wants us to receive from the story of Noah and the Flood is the reality of deep **sin**, deep **wrath**, and deep **grace**.
- C. Survey of the story (Genesis 6–9).

Precursors of the Flood (Gn 6:1–7:10)	The Great Flood (Gn 7:11–8:19)	Aftermath (Gn 8:20–9:29)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sin is great on the earth• God calls Noah to build an ark	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water covers the earth• The ark floats for about a year• The waters abate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noah’s sacrifice• God’s covenant• Noah’s sin

II. Deep Sin

- A. We have already examined the presence of human wickedness in the preflood world. This caused God both grief and anger. It is the **reason** for the flood.

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (Genesis 6:5, 11–12)

Note:

1. The **depth** of sin (every intention, only evil).
 2. The **breadth** of sin (evil all the time . . . the earth was filled . . . all flesh . . .).
 3. The word “corrupt” refers to what is ruined, polluted, depraved, etc. In other words, the earth was already ruined **before** the flood came! “God’s decision is to destroy what is virtually self-destroyed and self-destroying already.”¹
- B. The great **surprise/irony** of this story is that the flood does *not* solve the sin problem that had provoked it! Man’s sinful state remains **unchanged**.

And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21)

¹ Hamilton, 278.

Note: The Flood seems to have satisfied God's wrath, but it left the sin problem as it was before. Still, there is something new! After the flood we see a vivid depiction of God's **grace**. Though he would be justified in continuing to judge sinful man, God chooses not to exercise that option. The rainbow is an eternal reminder that God is doing everything possible not to give man what he deserves!

- C. In fact, the entire history of salvation as told in the Bible is a poignant illustration of the continuing **sin problem**: both its depth and its breadth.
1. Noah gets **drunk** (Gn 9:20–29).
 2. The tower of **Babel** (Gn 11:1–9).
 3. And scores of other biblical stories and teachings.
- D. A **superficial** understanding of sin leads to naivete when it comes to understanding the human condition. The story of Noah, at the dawn of human history, anchors us in a deep understanding that the sin problem is **worse** than you think!

The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds . . . (Isaiah 1:5–6)

1. Our *hearts* are **deceived**. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick . . .” (Jer 17:9; see also Gal 6:7–8).
 2. Our *wills* are **enslaved**. “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures . . .” (Titus 3:3; see also Jn 6:44).
 3. Our *affections/desires* are **perverted**. “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil” (Jn 3:19; see also Rom 1:24–27).
 4. Our *minds* are **darkened**. “Whoever trusts in in his own mind is a fool . . .” (Prv 28:26; see also Jer 10:14; Rom 1:28–31; Eph 4:17–18).
- E. Unless we understand the depth and breadth of sin, we will remain forever **babes** in our faith and **impotent** in gospel ministry.
- F. Meditate on these words written by converted slave ship captain John Newton (1725–1807):

*I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and ev'ry grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.*

*Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart
And let the angry pow'rs of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part.*

*'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer,
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.*

*“Lord, why is this,” I trembling cried;
“Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?”
“’Tis in this way,” the Lord replied,
“I answer prayer for grace and faith.”*

*I hoped that in some favored hour
At once He'd answer my request
And, by His love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.*

*“These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set thee free
And break thy schemes of earthly joy
That thou may'st find thy all in Me.”*

III. Deep Wrath

The story of Noah and the Flood is a sobering and eloquent revelation of God's **fixed attitude** toward sin. The Flood is no temper tantrum. Before he got angry, God was "grieved" in his heart (Gn 6:6). Wrath is God's "alien work" (Isa 28:21). His wrath is a reflection of his **love**. The story of the flood teaches us:

A. The **patience** of God.

Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pt 2:5) so we can imagine that during the 100 years it took to build the ark, the world had the chance to hear God's Word. God is "slow to anger" (Ex 34:6; Joel 2:13; etc.). He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone (Ezek 18:32). He wants **everyone** to be saved (1 Tm 2:4). When scoffers ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Peter responds:

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:8–9)

B. The **suddenness** of judgment.

In commenting on the coming Day of the Lord, Jesus referred to what it was like in Noah's day:

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (Matthew 24:36–42)

Many other references underscore the suddenness with which the Second Coming and Judgment Day will occur (Mal 3:1–3; 1 Thes 5:2–11; 2 Pt 3:10; etc.). Believers are urged to be ready, to stay alert, and to **long for** and even **hasten** his soon return (2 Tm 4:8; 2 Pt 3:11–13; Rv 22:20; etc.). This is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

C. The **finality** of God's judgment.

When the curtain falls, the play is over. When God **shut the door** of the ark, everything was final: no more chances, no appeals, no more time, etc. (Gn 7:16; see also Mt 25:10). "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that, the judgment" (Heb 9:27). God's judgment is irreversible.

D. The **horror** of God's judgment.

The flood was terrifying! The horror of being shut out of the ark and watching as the waters rose, must have been beyond description. We love to sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (by Julia Ward Howe) but we tend to forget the terror and horror of what we sing about.

*Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage
Where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning
Of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.*

*I have read the fiery gospel
Writ in burnished rows of steel,
As ye deal with my contemners,
So with you my grace shall deal.
Let the hero born of woman,
Crush the serpent with his heel
Since God is marching on.*

*He has sounded forth the trumpet
That shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men
Before His judgement seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him;
Be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.*

E. The **fairness** of God's judgment.

The punishment fits the crime. The text in Genesis emphasizes how God first "saw" what was happening (Gn 6:5, 11–12), and *then* he sent the flood. When God judges, "every mouth will be stopped" (Rom 3:19); no one will have an **excuse** or an **alibi** for his actions. No one will be able to accuse the Righteous One of acting unjustly.

IV. Deep Grace

A. Noah "**found grace**" in the eyes of the Lord (Gn 6:8). In an evil, corrupt, and violent world, he experienced the unmerited favor of God. Where sin abounded, grace abounded even more (Rom 5:20). The ark is perhaps the most beautiful illustration of grace in the entire Bible. Here we learn about what is involved in salvation:

1. The **initiative** is always with God. It is all of grace, from start to finish. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that **no one may boast**" (Eph 2:8–9).
2. Human **participation**, however, is involved. Noah believed God and then did everything that God told him to do (Gn 6:22; 7:5). "By **faith** Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark, for the saving of his household" (Heb 11:7). Interestingly, Noah never **speaks** (until briefly at the end of the story). He only believes and obeys.
3. God saved Noah **through** the waters not *from* the waters. The water that destroyed the world buoyed Noah to safety (see 1 Pt 3:20–21). Rather than delivering us from pain and suffering, God delights in working out our redemption *in* and *through* our painful circumstances.
4. The ark is a metaphor of our salvation. There is only **one door**. Inside, we are **safe** and **secure**.

B. God makes a **covenant** with Noah (and the whole world). A covenant is an agreement between two parties in which one or both parties promise under **oath** to perform or refrain from certain actions. A commitment to keep the terms of the covenant is described by the important Hebrew word *hesed*, translated in English by a variety of terms: love, lovingkindness, mercy, faithfulness, etc. But the best translation is "covenant faithfulness." In biblical terms, one doesn't "make" a covenant but "**cuts**" a covenant. Animals are cut in half and the participants walk

between them. “May what has happened to these animals happen to me if I fail to keep my oath” (see Gn 15:1–21; Jer 34:18–22).

The covenant God cuts with Noah is **unilateral**. Never again will he judge the world with water. The **rainbow** is the sign of the covenant. The word “bow,” as in English, can also refer to a weapon (bow and arrows). God is hanging up his weapon and he wants the whole world to know! His weapon is now a symbol of peace.

V. Conclusion

In Florence, Italy, the tourist can see five sculptures by Michelangelo. The works are beautiful and reflect the genius of the artist, and yet they are **unfinished**. Each figure seems almost alive, as if straining against the marble so that the work can be finished. The sculptures are together called “Prisoners.” The figures in stone obviously can’t set themselves free. The artist is the only one who can complete the work.



The story of Noah and the Flood shows us that the work of redemption is indeed amazing and beautiful. However, it also reveals that the work is not yet complete. The **image of God**, though visible in Noah and his family, is real—but incomplete. When, O when, will the work of redemption be completed?

The apostle Paul points us in the right direction when he proclaims: “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will **bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you think most Christians today are rather shallow and superficial in their understanding of sin, wrath, and grace? Why is it important to go deep?
2. Has this study changed the way you think about sin? About wrath? About grace? In what way?
3. What area in your life remains “unfinished”? What needs to happen so that God can complete the work of grace he has begun?

Peace, Be Still

By Mary Ann Baker (ca. 1874)

*Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!
The sky is o'er shadowed with blackness.
No shelter or help is nigh.
Carest thou not that we perish?
How canst thou lie asleep
When each moment so madly is threat'ning
A grave in the angry deep?*

(Chorus)

*The winds and the waves shall obey thy will:
Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:
Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:
Peace, peace, be still.*

*Master, with anguish of spirit
I bow in my grief today.
The depths of my sad heart are troubled.
Oh, waken and save, I pray!
Torrents of sin and of anguish
Sweep o'er my sinking soul,
And I perish! I perish! dear Master.
Oh, hasten and take control!*

*Master, the terror is over.
The elements sweetly rest.
Earth's sun in the calm lake is mirrored,
And heaven's within my breast.
Linger, O blessed Redeemer!
Leave me alone no more,
And with joy I shall make the blest harbor
And rest on the blissful shore.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

DADDY'S DRUNK!

Genesis 9:18–29

I. Table of the Nations (Genesis 10:1–32)

A. OK, let's try this again.

With the three sons of Noah, we have a **new beginning**. Just as Cain and Abel were a fresh start after the debacle in the Garden of Eden, so the sons of Noah represent a new beginning after the horrors of the Great Flood.

1. The whole earth was populated from Noah's three sons (see Gn 9:18–19; 10:32). This means the entire human population is one family, **one race**.¹ Paul underscored this truth in his sermon to the Athenian philosophers:

And he [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place (Acts 17:16)

2. But just as Part One of human history got off to a **bad start** with Cain and Abel (Gn 4), so Part Two began badly with the sons of Noah (Noah's sin, Ham's sin, Tower of Babel, etc.).
3. This time, however, God did not respond to human sin by sending a flood. He took a very different approach. He called **a single man** (Abraham) and, thru him, **a people** (the Hebrews) into a covenant relationship with himself so that he could bless **all the earth** through this chosen people.

B. Genesis 10 presents a summary of the early centuries of human propagation after the Great Flood. There is no comparable catalogue of nations anywhere else in ancient literature. It is a remarkably accurate document. A total of **70** names² are listed here, representing individuals, tribes, cities, and nations.

1. The descendants of *Japheth* (Gn 10:1–5). These seem to be the ancestors of **Indo-European** peoples (Europe, Persia, India). Javan is related to Ionia (Greece) and Magog is likely associated with Russia.
2. The descendants of *Ham* (Gn 10:6–20). These seem to be the ancestors of **African** peoples. Mizraim (Egypt), Cush (Ethiopia), Put (Libya?). The mighty man Nimrod (his name means “to rebel”) is mentioned as the founder of the city of **Babel**.
3. The descendants of *Shem* (Gn 10:21–37). These are the **Semitic** peoples and from this branch will come Elamites (Medes?), Assyrians, and Syrians, as well as **Abraham** and his descendants (Jews and Arabs). A man named Eber likely gave his name to the later term “Hebrew.” During the days of Peleg (“division”),

¹ There is no biblical justification for talking about different human “races” (Caucasian, Negroid, Mongoloid).

² The number 70 apparently has symbolic value in the Bible. Seventy is the number of people who went down to Egypt (Gn 46:27), the number of years in a normal life span (Ps 90:10), the number of years of captivity in Babylon, the number of members of the Sanhedrin, the number of scholars who produced the Septuagint (LXX), and the number of disciples Jesus appointed (some manuscripts say 72) to be sent out into ministry.

the earth was divided. This is probably a reference to what happened at the Tower of Babel (Gn 11:1–9).

II. Actions Have Consequences (Genesis 9:18–29).

- A. The story of Noah's drunkenness and Ham's sin is largely neglected and, when it is talked about, its real message is often overlooked. This is explained in part because of its brevity and its **disturbing content**. But most avoid this text simply because it is notoriously difficult to interpret. However, it is a very important text for several reasons:
- This is the Bible's first story about **fatherhood** (and sonship). It describes sin's tragic influence on relations between fathers and their children.³
 - It reminds us that even heroes of the faith and spiritual giants are susceptible to **moral failure**.
 - It underscores the importance of **shame**.
 - It answers the question: "How should I respond when my God-ordained authority (father, husband, pastor, boss, president, etc.) behaves like a **jerk**?"
- B. This story, situated at the dawn of human history, prepares us to understand the tragic consequences of sin, particularly in the context of **our own families**. Until we learn to deal with the consequences of sin in our families, we will never be fit to deal with the consequences of sin in the community, the nation, and the world.
- C. Our study will focus on three questions:
1. What was Noah's sin?
 2. What was Ham's sin?
 3. Why was Canaan cursed?

III. What Was Noah's Sin?

Noah's sad story of moral failure is told in two short sentences: "Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent" (Gn 9:20–21).

- A. What a contrast to the Noah we met before the flood:
- He found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gn 6:8).
 - He was righteous, blameless, and he **walked** with God (Gn 6:9).
 - He **obeyed** God in everything (Gn 6:22, etc.)
 - He was a man of faith (Heb 11:7).
 - He was a **preacher** of righteousness (2 Pt 2:5).

Moral: A good start does not guarantee a **good finish**. For 600 years he walked with God, but once the crisis of the flood was over, he became vulnerable to temptation. Past godliness does not guarantee future godliness. George Mueller: "Lord, don't let me become a **wicked old man**."

- B. His sin consisted of two elements:
1. He "became drunk." This is the first recorded instance of **substance abuse**. Noah misuses a divine blessing. He drinks to the point of passing out (loses

³ Genesis places a primary emphasis on interpersonal conflict in human relationships: between spouses (Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, etc.), between siblings (Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, etc.), and between families/tribes (Hebrews and Sodomites, Hebrews and Egyptians, etc.).

consciousness). His drunken and naked condition robs Noah of his **dignity** and his paternal authority.

2. He “lay uncovered.” Like Adam and Eve, his sinfulness expressed itself in **nakedness**. As with the sin in the Garden, nakedness brings **shame**. Like Adam and Eve, Noah’s naked shame had to be covered by someone else! He could not cover himself.

IV. What Was Ham’s Sin?

Ham’s sin is told in one succinct statement: “And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside” (Gn 9:22). Two verbs explain his wicked act: he **saw**... he **told**...

- A. Many have claimed that Ham’s sin was perverted **sexual behavior**. Thus “seeing his father’s nakedness” becomes a euphemism for immoral behavior⁴. For example:

- Castration
- Sodomy
- Incest—the rape of his mother (and subsequent birth of Canaan)⁵

As interesting as these suggestions might be, the text simply does not support such interpretations.

- B. The best interpretation of Ham’s sin is the most obvious one. He *saw* his father lying naked but rather than covering his father’s shame, he went outside and *told* his brothers: “Hey guys, wanna see something funny? Come look at Dad!” In other words, Ham broke the (not yet given) fifth commandment: “**Honor your father** and mother.” Ham’s sin seems to have involved:

1. **Resentment** against his father’s authority.
2. A rebellious attitude.
3. A disregard for **boundaries**.
4. Dishonoring his father.
5. Taking advantage of his father’s moral failure and vulnerability.
6. Finding **enjoyment** in shaming his father to others.
7. Doing nothing to **protect** the dignity of his father.

- C. The behavior of Shem and Japheth confirms this interpretation by showing what Ham *should* have done! “Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness” (Gn 9:23).

Shem and Japheth preserve their father’s honor and dignity by **covering** him. Note it well: they are very aware of how their father has dishonored himself and acted like a drunken fool, but they knowingly choose to leave some things in the dark. Theirs is a kind of **willful blindness** to their father’s shameful behavior.

- D. O be careful little eyes what you see! Ham’s sin was primarily with his **eyes**. Carelessly, he let his eyes wander and this opened the floodgates of wickedness. This

⁴ For example, in Leviticus 18, “uncovering the nakedness of” someone is a euphemism for various types of incest.

⁵ See the troubling story in Genesis 19:30–38 where Lot’s daughters cause their father to become drunk and then sleep with him, becoming pregnant.

happened in the Garden of Eden as well (Gn 3:6) and is a recurring theme through Scripture (Gn 13:10; 19:26; Ex 19:21; Job 31:1; Ps 101:3; 1 Jn 2:15–16). “It is the tendency of things that are gazed at to get through the eyes into the mind and the heart” (Charles Spurgeon).

V. Why Was Canaan Cursed?

Noah's response to Ham's evil deed is swift, strong, and surprising! Rather than pronouncing a curse on Ham, Noah curses his **grandson** Canaan⁶ (who had nothing to do with it)! “When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers’” (Gn 9:24–25). To our modern and western way of thinking, this is very strange and **unfair**.⁷ But consider:

A. Noah's words are more **prophetic** than imprecatory. It is not that Noah is placing a curse on his grandson but rather he is anticipating what the future of Ham's family is going to experience! Think about it: what kind of father will a man like Ham be? What kind of sons will such a man rear? If they follow the example of their father, they will grow up to be rebels who have **no respect** for authority and delight in shaming others! They will create a world where no one's “nakedness” is off limits to their egocentric desires.

Note well how Ham's descendants mentioned in the Table of Nations (Gn 10) have a long history of moral impurity and hostility to the Semites (Jews). Egypt, Babel, Assyria, and then later Canaanites.

B. That children suffer for the sins of their parents is not so much some vindictive penalty that God inflicts as it is simply a description of **how life works**! Few people question the opposite truth: that the **blessings** of the fathers are visited on their children. It is simply a law of nature that the iniquity of the fathers will be visited on their children “to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex 34:7).⁸

VI. Conclusions

- A. Godliness in the past does not guarantee godliness in the future. Walking with God for the first 600 years does guarantee you will walk with him for the remaining 350 years. The race is determined at **the finish line**. Be alert!
- B. Ham's sin began with carelessly letting his **eyes** wander. Is there some area of my life where I have been negligent about what I look at?
- C. Ham's sin was failure to **honor his father**. Rather than covering his father's shame, he broadcast it. Even though Noah behaved like a jerk, Ham's actions were by no means justified.
- D. Is there some authority figure in my life who is acting like a jerk? Have I perhaps sinned by exposing his/her shameful behavior to outsiders? What can I do **to cover** his/her impropriety?

⁶ It is interesting to note that this is the first time in the entire narrative that Noah speaks. His first recorded words are a curse on his grandson.

⁷ Tragically, the “curse of Ham” was sometimes used in early America as a biblical justification for the enslavement of Africans (Hamites).

⁸ On the other hand, notice Scriptures that teach “a son shall not suffer for the iniquity of his father” (Ezek 18:20; cf. Ezek 18:2; Jer 31:29–30).

- E. It is a sobering truth that the sins of the father are indeed visited on his children and his grandchildren. This chain of **generational curse** can indeed be broken, but only by the grace of God.
- F. Noah's nakedness speaks of the **shame** that comes from sin and the terror that we would one day be **exposed** before others. In the West, Christians have long understood how Jesus' death saves us from the *guilt* of sin but have had a shallow understanding of how it saves us from *shame*. Fig leaves are inadequate! On the cross, Jesus took not only our guilt, but our shame! His blood **covers us!** "Whoever believes in him will never be put to shame" (Rom 9:33).

CONCLUSION

Look over the six conclusions mentioned above and ask the Spirit to take one of them (just one) and make a personal application. Take a few moments of silence and prayerfully let the Spirit of God guide you to an area in your life where specific application of this truth is needed.

Like a River Glorious

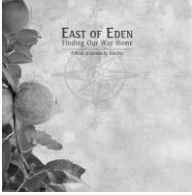
By Frances R. Havergal (1876)

*Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious, in its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way.*

*Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.*

*Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.*

*Every joy or trial falleth from above,
Traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love;
We may trust Him fully all for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE CITY OF MAN

Genesis 11:1–9

I. Brief Comments on the Text

A. This amazing passage of Scripture tells us the origin of two things we seldom think about, yet which define almost everything we do:

- **Language**—how we communicate (Or fail to communicate).
- **Cities**—where we live.

God wants us to realize that these two realities have profound **spiritual meaning**. God is inviting us to talk about talking and to think deeply about where our homes are located. In other words, God wants us to examine the glasses through which we see the world. This study will focus primarily on the meaning of the city.

B. After the flood, God gave a clear, unambiguous command to the descendants of Noah: “Be fruitful and multiply and **fill the earth**” (Gn 9:1). The divine mandate was to scatter, to disperse, to go into all the world.¹ The building of Babel was a flagrant decision to do just the opposite.

C. The motivation to build the city and its tower are reminiscent of what happened in the Garden of Eden:

1. **Pride**. “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves . . .” (Gn 11:4). Far from wanting to exalt God, their desire was to **exalt themselves** and be remembered forever. Ironically, they succeeded! 4,000 years later we remember their foolish failure. “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled” (Mt 23:12).
2. **Fear**. “Lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth” (Gn 11:4). The people feared isolation. Perhaps they also feared another global cataclysm (a flood, etc.) and they thought a tower might provide safety and refuge. Ironically, their greatest fears were realized when the confusion of languages caused them to be scattered.
3. **Rebellion**. The founder of Babel (Babylon) was Nimrod (means, rebel; see Gn 10:8–10). He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah who had received a curse (Gn 9:18–25). As a mighty hunter/warrior his goal was conquest and power. His city brazenly refused to obey God’s command to fill the earth.

D. The tower was likely a ziggurat (a type of **stairway to heaven**) whose purpose was to link heaven and earth, to connect with the gods, to reach heaven’s gate.² The endeavor was a spectacular failure. Heaven is too high and God is too holy for

¹ The similarities between this command and the Great Commission passages in the New Testament are not accidental!

² The term Bab-el is derived from a Sumerian phrase meaning “gate of god.”

sinners to make contact. But note how the chasm between heaven and earth will be successfully spanned years later by Jacob’s stairway to heaven:

*And [Jacob] dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder [a flight of steps] set up on the earth, and the top of it **reached** to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it [or, beside him] and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac..." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place . . . This is none other than the house of God, and this is the **gate of heaven**." (Genesis 28:12–13, 16–17)*

The contrast between Babel’s Tower and Jacob’s Stairway is surely one of the most important messages in all the Bible!

Babel’s Tower	Jacob’s Stairway
Man’s search for God	God’s search for man
Made by man (= religion)	Made by God (= Good News)
Failure! Did not reach God	Success! Did reach God
Real world	Only a dream (but see Jn 1:51)

II. A Tale of Two Cities

- A. Charles Dickens’ most famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), recounts the dramatic contrast between life in two very different locations: Paris and London. On a much grander scale, the Bible recounts the cosmic saga, stretching from Genesis to Revelation, of the reality of two—and only two—cities that define human history: the City of God (**Jerusalem**) and the City of Man (**Babylon**).
- B. Numerous writers and thinkers have seized on the reality of “the city” to define the meaning of human existence. For example:
 1. *Neil Postman* (1931–2003). In his influential book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman describes how cities have defined American culture. In the late 1700s, **Boston** was the focal point of the American spirit (patriotism, political idealism, revolution). Then in the mid-1800s the city that defined the nation was **New York** (Ellis Island and the melting pot). Moving west, the early 1900s saw **Chicago** as the symbol of the American identity (industry, railroads, entrepreneurship). Today, the city that serves as a metaphor of our national character is **Las Vegas**, for she is

*a city entirely devoted to the idea of entertainment, and as such proclaims the spirit of a culture in which all public discourse increasingly takes the form of entertainment . . . The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death.*³
 2. *Augustine* (354–430 AD). When the city of Rome was overrun by barbarians and destroyed, Augustine wrote his monumental theology of history, *The City of God* (426 AD). His purpose was to show God’s people that these two cities (the City of Man and the City of God) are **entangled** together in this world so that we must define our true citizenship and then live accordingly. His point is

³ Postman, 3–4.

to show that the City of Man is all about the love of power while the City of God is all about the **power of love!**

3. *John Bunyan* (1628–1688). *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) highlights the role of cities. Pilgrims must travel from the City of Destruction through **Vanity Fair** to the Celestial City.
 4. *Jacques Ellul* (1912–1994). French philosopher, sociologist, and theologian, Ellul wrote *The Meaning of the City* (1970), which explores what the Bible says about “the city.” He believes that the city represents man’s ultimate **rejection** of God. Redemption, however, is not achieved in an idyllic return to Eden but in the ultimate coming of the City of God.
- C. The story of Babel (Babylon) is the story of man’s attempt to create **a home**, a place to live. God’s response to Adam’s aloneness was to create the family. Man’s rebellious response was to build a city. Though many pretend that cities are man’s highest achievement (Aristotle, etc.), in the eyes of God, the City of Man is “The Great Whore.” Beware! The space we inhabit is not neutral. It is pregnant with spiritual implications. “We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us” (Winston Churchill).

*Babylon is not a city. She is the city . . . All the cities of the world are brought together in her, she is the synthesis of them all (Daniel 3–4; Revelation 14, 18). She is the head of, and the standard for the other cities . . . Babylon, Venice, Paris, New York—they are all the same city, only one Babel always reappearing . . .*⁴

III. The Meaning of the City

We can readily see the spiritual significance of cities when we examine the biblical record.

- A. *Enoch*. One understands immediately the tainted history of cities when one discovers that the first city, Enoch, was founded by the first **murderer**, Cain (see Gn 4:16–17). In an effort to cope with the terrible consequences of his sin (guilt, fear, wandering, etc.), Cain built a city. Apparently, Cain believed that his city would satisfy his inner yearning for **security, stability**, and meaningful **relationships**. Ellul points out that all future city builders will be “sons of Cain” who “act with his purpose.”⁵
- B. *Sodom*. After Enoch (Gn 4:16–17) and Babel (Gn 11:1–9), the next important city mentioned in the Bible is Sodom. It became so wicked that God destroyed it with fire and brimstone (Gn 19). The most obvious sin in Sodom was **sexual perversion**, but this was not her only transgression.

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. (Ezekiel 16:49–50)

- C. *Jerusalem*. Once in possession of Canaan, Israel built Jerusalem, but the City of David was a **strange mixture** of good and evil. On the one hand, she was holy because the Temple was there (Ps 87, etc.). On the other hand, Jerusalem was often no different from other cities in the ancient world. Ezekiel goes so far as to say that in comparison to Jerusalem, Sodom appears righteous (Ezek 16:52)! Isaiah laments, “How the faithful city has become a whore” (Isa 1:21). As a result of her continued sin

⁴ Ellul, 20–21.

⁵ Ibid., 10.

and rebellion, God sent his people into **exile**. The choice of their place of exile was not accidental. They were sent to Babylon!

- D. *Babylon*. The life of God’s people living as exiles in Babylon is perhaps the picture that best describes the **human situation**. It is here that followers of Jesus must learn how to deal with “the city” for this is the place where we must live. Surprisingly, God does not tell his exiled people to rise in revolt or to escape. Nor does he encourage them to try to reform (“Christianize”) the city. God’s words to his children in Babylon are startling:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare [shalom] of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare . . . For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare [shalom] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope . . . (Jeremiah 29:4–11)

Settle down, build houses, get married. Love your Babylonian neighbors and seek their well-being (shalom). Live in Babylon, but don’t become Babylonian! Sometimes there is more **shalom** in Babylon than in Jeru-shalom! But don’t be fooled. The City of Man cannot be saved. Babylon will one day be **destroyed** (Rv 18).

- E. *The New Jerusalem*. Though human history began in a garden, it will not end there. God has **designed** and **built** a city for his people (Heb 11:10).

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal . . . (Revelation 21:1–2, 9–11)

The City of Man—Babylon	The City of God—New Jerusalem
Designed and built by man	Designed and built by God
Made of bricks (human technology)	Made of precious jewels
Reveals the glory of man	Reveals the glory of God
We protect ourselves	God is our refuge, a mighty fortress
Man striving to reach God	God striving to reach man
The Great Whore	The spotless Bride
Confusion / division (many tongues)	Unity / understanding (Pentecost)
The love of power	The power of love
A place of exile—aliens	Our home—citizens
Will be destroyed	Will endure forever

IV. The Message of the City

- A. Live as **exiles**. This world is not our home. Live in Babylon, but don't become Babylonian! Our citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, be good neighbors but keep your bags packed.
- B. Seek the **shalom** of Babylon. God will destroy Babylon but he has a passionate love for Babylonians. His people must have the same love.
- C. Pray "**Thy Kingdom come**." In the model prayer, Jesus taught us to pray every day for the return of the King. Keep your eye on the eastern sky. You're not home yet!
- D. **Walk** with Abraham, the father of all who **believe** (Rom 4:16). The story of the tower of Babel is the final story in Part One of Genesis (Chapters 1–11). It is the end of the beginning. It serves as a kind of pivot and prepares us for the story of Abraham. It is only as we absorb the failure of the City of Man that we become ready for the next step in the journey to spiritual wholeness.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going . . . For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:8–10)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever experienced a city as a "spiritual presence"? Talk about this.
2. How has this study affected the way you think about cities? About the city/town where you live?
3. How does the story of the exile in Babylon help you to better understand the meaning of life?
4. The Bible says that Babylon is irredeemable, that it will be destroyed in final judgment. What implications does this have for Christian involvement in politics?
5. Jerusalem was (and is) a strange mixture of good and evil. What lessons should we learn from this?

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

By John Newton (1725–1807)

*Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
God, whose word cannot be broken,
formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
thou mayst smile at all thy foes.*

*See, the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters,
and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river
ever will their thirst assuage?
Grace which like the Lord, the giver,
never fails from age to age.*

*Round each habitation hovering,
see the cloud and fire appear
for a glory and a covering,
showing that the Lord is near!
Thus deriving from our banner
light by night and shade by day,
safe we feed upon the manna
which God gives us when we pray.*

*Blest inhabitants of Zion,
washed in our Redeemer's blood;
Jesus, whom our souls rely on,
makes us monarchs, priests to God.
Us, by his great love, he raises,
rulers over self to reign,
and as priests his solemn praises
we for thankful offering bring.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE CALL

Genesis 12:1–9

I. The Big Picture of Genesis

- A. The call of Abraham serves as a kind of pivot or hinge. The narrative changes dramatically with Genesis 12.

Genesis 1–11	Genesis 12–50
Universal history	History of the Hebrews (the patriarchs)
The despair of rampant wickedness	The hope of redemption
God's anger and judgment on the world	God's gracious election of Israel
Ends with God's judgment on the nations (Babel)	Ends with the Hebrews blessing on Egypt
Satan is bruising the heel of the seed of the woman	The seed of the woman is beginning to crush the head of the serpent
Babel's tower cannot reach God	God comes down to reach man
The failure of the City of Man	The search for the City of God
Several thousand years	Perhaps 300 years
The problem (sin and judgment)	The solution (a chosen people, the covenant)

B. The Patriarchs: Genesis 12–50

Our study of Genesis will now focus on four primary characters: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The narrative basically falls into three divisions:

Abraham and his sons, Ishmael and Isaac (especially Isaac)	Isaac and his sons, Esau and Jacob (especially Jacob)	Jacob and his 12 sons (especially Joseph)
Gn 12:1–25:18	Gn 25:19–36:43	Gn 37:1–50:26

II. Father Abraham (Genesis 12:1–9)

- A. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of Genesis 12. Not only is Abraham's call important for historical reasons, just as importantly, it serves as a **model** for everyone who pursues righteousness and seeks the Lord.

*Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord:
look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
that I might bless him and multiply him. (Isaiah 51:1–2)*

- B. Abraham's historical significance is seen in the fact that he is the **biological** father of 12 million Jews and 1 billion Muslims. Beyond that, the New Testament insists that Abraham is also the **spiritual** father of anyone who puts their faith in Jesus

Christ. “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring” (Gal 3:29; see also Gal 3:7; Rom 4:16).¹

C. In Abraham’s life there are numerous themes that will have a profound impact on the remainder of human history in general and salvation history in particular:

1. **The Covenant** (Gn 15 and 17). One could argue that the concept of covenant is the dominant theme in the whole Bible. The Bible itself is divided into two parts: the Old and New Covenants (Testaments). We have already seen the covenant with Noah (Gn 8:20–9:17). And there will be future covenants with Moses and David. But the *Abrahamic Covenant* is the first and most foundational covenant that speaks to the need of a restored **relationship** between God and man. The sign of this covenant is **circumcision**.
2. **Salvation as Journey**. Standing at the beginning of salvation history, Abraham anchors us in understanding salvation and faith as a journey. From Ur to Haran to Canaan to Egypt and back to Canaan, Abraham lived as a pilgrim as he follows God’s call. The symbol of his life is a **tent**. God’s greatest work is done in the humble tents of a family, not in the arrogant walls of a city.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. . . .

*[Abraham] died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were **strangers** and **exiles** on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. (Hebrews 11:8–10, 13–14)*

3. **Worship**. Converted out of idolatrous paganism (see Jos 24:2–3), Abraham exhibited the zeal and passion of all **first-generation** believers. We will see how this passionate love for God becomes somewhat **diluted** when it is passed on to the second (Isaac) and third (Jacob) generations. But with the fourth generation (Joseph), we see a rediscovery of Abrahamic worship.

A second symbol of Abraham’s life, then, is the **altar**: a place of worship, praise, encounter, sacrifice, public testimony. You can chart Abraham’s journeys by following the altars that he built: at Shechem (Gn 12:6–7), at Bethel (Gn 12:8; 13:2–4), at Hebron (Gn 13:18), at Moriah (Gn 22:9–19).

4. **Family**. The Abraham narrative is full of information about Abraham’s success and failure as a husband² and as a father. It is no accident that we speak of “Father Abraham.” God is teaching us that before Abraham can be the leader of a “great nation” (Gn 12:2), he must *first* learn to be a great **husband** and a great **father**. His record in this respect is mixed.

¹ The New Testament not only says that those who are not biological descendants of Abraham may indeed become his children but it also insists that “not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they belong to his offspring” (Rom 9:6–7; see also Mt 3:9; Jn 8:39).

² Twice he claimed Sarah was his sister to protect himself (Gn 12:10–19; 20:1–18), once he slept with a family servant (Gn 16), and after Sarah’s death he married Keturah and had other concubines and children (Gn 25:1–6).

5. *How to be **right with God (righteous)**.* Abraham had such a good relationship with God that he was called God's **friend** (Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23). In other words, Abraham was right with God (= justified) 430 years **before** the Law was given on Mount Sinai (see Gal 3:17). In Abraham's day there was no Temple, no Law, no priests, no liturgy, no Jewish religion, etc. Abraham "believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gn 15:8). Abraham is the supreme example of **justification by faith**.
6. This introduces us to the primary theme in Abraham's life: **faith**. And though his faith will be tested many times, it is his **first step** of faith that sets the stage for all that follows. We will understand Abraham's faith only when we understand **his call**. Likewise, in our own personal journey, we will never grasp the significance of faith until we grasp the significance of God's call.

III. Abraham's Call

Now the Lord said [or, had 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 12:1-3)

A. Analysis of the text.

1. There is one primary **command** that has two aspects (Gn 12:1):
 - **Go from.** Leave your family, your tribe, and all that is familiar, comfortable, and safe.
 - **Go to.** I'll not yet tell you where to go but I'll show you the way. Begin a journey.

Note:

- a. This is a verbal command. It came in **words**: "The Lord said . . ." This reminds us of Genesis 1 when the Lord *spoke* and created the universe. It reminds us also of Jesus' initial call to his disciples: "Follow me" (Mk 1:17). So too with Abraham. The magi may have responded to a visual invitation when they followed a star (see Mt 2:1-2), but salvation only comes through the Word of God! "Faith comes from **hearing**, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).
 - b. The **two-fold** nature of the command (to *go from* and to *go to*) points to the foundational necessity of making a clean break with our past (idols, securities, identities, comforts, etc.) and of moving toward the future that God has prepared for us (the City of God, the people of God, a life of service, fruitfulness, significance, etc.). "He brought us out . . . to bring us in . . ." (Deut 6:23). In general terms, this corresponds to **repentance** and **faith**; emptying our lives so that God may fill them.
2. There is a seven-fold **promise**. This promise is **conditional**. Abraham must first leave his old life for these promises to be realized. Faith must show itself in **obedience**. Note the "I will" statements:
 - a. "I will show you" the way to go (Gn 12:1).
 - b. "I will make you a **great nation**" (Gn 12:2). In other words, you will have many descendants. But there is a problem: Sarai is **barren** (Gn 11:30). This will constitute one of Abraham's greatest tests of faith!

- c. “I will bless you” (Gn 12:2).
 - d. “I will make your **name great**” (Gn 12:2). Remember that the builders of the Tower of Babel aspired to make their own name great (see Gn 10:4). Abraham shows us that true greatness is a gift of God not a human achievement. But it is a gift that God longs to give!
 - e. “I will bless those who bless you” (Gn 12:3).
 - f. “I will curse those who dishonor you” (Gn 12:3).
 - g. “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gn 12:3). God’s real interest in electing and blessing Abraham is *not* Abraham! He is chosen not for his sake, but for the sake of **the world**! He is blessed to be a blessing. He is a channel, not a reservoir.
- B. Abraham “went, as the Lord had told him” (Gn 12:4). Note it well: faith is not mere **mental assent** to certain truths. The demons have this kind faith and tremble (Jas 2:19). Abraham did not merely believe *in* God; he trusted God’s character. He took God at his word and acted on the promises. Faith without works is dead (Jas 2:14–26). True faith always expresses itself in **obedience**. (Do you believe in bungee jumping?)
- C. When Abraham stepped out in faith and began the journey of salvation, God then **appeared** to him and added another important element to the promise: “To your offspring I will give this **land**” (Gn 12:7). But there is problem. There are **Canaanites** in the land (Gn 12:6). Furthermore, the land of promise is experiencing **famine** (Gn 12:10). Just as God will test Abraham’s faith when it comes to his promise of children, so he will test Abraham’s faith when it comes to his promise to give him the land.
- IV. What about You? Are You Called?
- A. The real problem for most people is not that God is not calling; the problem is that they are not **listening**!
1. John Muir (1838–1914), mountaineer, and one of the fathers of the U.S. National Parks, famously said: “The mountains are **calling**, and I must go . . .”
 2. Oswald Chambers: “The call of God is like the call of the sea, or of the mountains; no one hears these calls but the one who has the nature of the sea or of the mountains; and no one hears the call of God who has not the nature of God in him.”³
- B. Six characteristics of a call.
1. It is **initiated** by God. There is no calling without a Caller. Abraham didn’t choose his life work; he was **chosen**! Babel’s Tower had taught him the futility of trying to reach God. God was looking for Abraham—and Abraham was listening! The Lord called on the name of Abraham long before Abraham called on the name of the Lord (Gn 12:8). Frodo, in *Lord of the Rings*, often struggled with his calling: “Why was I chosen?” Every child of God recognizes this basic truth: “You did not choose me, but I chose you . . .” (Jn 15:16).
 2. Answering the call will be the **most important** decision of your life—and the most difficult. God gave very little information to Abraham at first. He just said, “Go . . . Leave . . .” All Abraham knew was that his current reality must change.

³ Chambers, 864.

His call became clear only as he obeyed! It made sense only in the **rearview mirror**. If we insist on clarity and explanations before we begin, we will never begin! “In the spiritual domain, nothing is explained until we obey.”⁴

3. The call is to a **journey** as much as to a destination. Like Enoch and Noah, Abraham **walked** with God (Gn 5:22; 6:9; 17:1). God’s answer to the question “Where are we going?” is always the promise, “I will show you.” So, Abraham went out “not knowing where he was going” (Heb 11:8). Abraham lived in tents all his days. He was a pilgrim and stranger. The only real estate he owned in Canaan was a **burial plot** (Gn 23). “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom 8:14).
4. The call is to a **relationship** as much as it is to a task. Abraham was a friend of God. The call to walk with God was an invitation to intimacy. Jesus appointed the twelve, first of all, to be **with him** and then to send them out to preach (Mk 3:13–15). The call is first **to be** something and then **to do** something. Who you are is much more important than what you do!
5. Responding to the call will **cost you everything**. Abraham has to leave his home and family to follow the call. Eventually, he will be asked to sacrifice his only son (Gn 22). “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die” (Bonhoeffer). The only way to move forward on the journey of salvation is to leave everything behind (like a trapeze artist wanting to jump to the next trapeze . . . he must let go).
6. The call is **not about me**, it is about others. God called Abraham so that he could bless the nations through him. God blessed Abraham so that Abraham could be a blessing. The doctrine of election has nothing to do with **favoritism**! It has everything to do with being used for the sake of others! Luis Palau (*Urbana*, 1976): “Christians are a lot like **manure**”

C. Abraham’s true children

The New Testament makes clear that to be a true child of Abraham is not a matter of biology but rather a matter of faith to:

- *Hear* God’s call.
- *Believe* the promises.
- Start *walking*; it’s a journey.
- Live as a stranger and *pilgrim*.
- *Be a blessing*.

Remember: Faith is not the result of human striving. It is the gift of God. “Faith comes from **hearing**, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:17).

⁴ Chambers, 866.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Am I listening? There is no calling without a Caller. The problem is always in our ears and hearts, not in the Voice of the One who calls.
2. Am I responding in faith to the will of God that I understand? Don't wait for clarity. That will come later. Take the first step.
3. Are my bags "packed"? Do I live in a "tent"?
4. Am I a channel of blessing to others? Or do God's blessings stop with me?

He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought

By Joseph H. Gilmore (1862)

*He leadeth me! O blessed thought,
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught;
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis Christ's hand that leadeth me.*

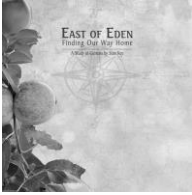
Chorus:

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By His own hand He leadeth me;
His faithful follower I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me.

*Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
By waters still, o'er troubled sea,
Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me.*

*Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur or repine;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since it is Thou that leadest me.*

*And when my task on earth is done,
When, by Thy grace, the vict'ry's won,
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
Since Thou in triumph leadest me.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE TEST OF FAITH

Genesis 12:10–13:18

I. Understanding Faith

Abraham is the supreme example of faith.¹ Paul calls him “the father of all who believe” (Rom 4:11). Therefore, understanding faith is necessary not only in helping us to discover the significance of Abraham but also in learning what it means for us.

A. Without faith:

1. It is impossible to **please God** (Heb 11:6).
2. We will fail to do the **work** of God (Jn 6:28–29).
3. We cannot be **saved** (Acts 16:30–31).
4. We have no **shield** to protect us from satanic attacks (Eph 6:16).
5. We will be unable to do anything but **sin** (Rom 14:23).
6. We will be condemned and go to **hell** (Jn 3:18).

B. With faith:

1. Nothing is **impossible** (Mt 17:20).
2. We receive whatever we ask in **prayer** (Mt 21:22).
3. We can **overcome** the world (1 Jn 5:4).

C. This explains why:

1. Followers of Jesus are called “**believers**” (Acts 2:44; 5:14; etc.).
2. The Christian religion is called “**The Faith**” (1 Tm 4:6; 2 Tm 4:7; Jude 3; etc.).

D. Faith is not:

1. **Optimism**. A cheery, positive outlook on life is not faith. “Don’t worry, everything will work out in the end.”
2. **Sincerity**. “Some trust in chariots and some in horses . . .” (Ps 20:7). Sincere and passionate faith in an unworthy object is foolishness, not faith!
3. **Mental assent**. Affirming and recognizing that God exists is not faith. Even the demons have this level of “faith”—and they tremble (Jas 2:19).
4. **A leap in the dark**. Many seem to believe that what matters is the leap, the commitment, being authentic. No, that is putting faith in faith. Faith never saved anyone! It is the *object* of faith that is of supreme importance.

E. Faith is:

1. **Trust**. There will certainly be an **intellectual** component to faith and perhaps an **emotional** component. But at its core, biblical faith is **volitional**; an act of

¹ “Faith” is the noun, “to believe” is the verb. Though the terms in English are different, in Greek the root form is the same.

the will. It is simply taking God at his word and acting on the assumption that he will do what he has promised.

2. In this sense, faith is almost indistinguishable from **obedience**.
 - “By faith Abraham *obeyed* when he was called . . .” (Heb 11:8).
 - “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever *does not obey* the Son shall not see life . . .” (Jn 3:36).
 - “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the obedience of faith* for the sake of his name among all the nations . . .” (Rom 1:5; see also Rom 16:26).
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *The Cost of Discipleship*, writes: “Faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience” (64).
3. Faith does not save us, but it is **the link** that connects us to the One who can (like an electric cord). Small faith in a great God is much preferable to great faith in a false god. Note the prepositions: “For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith** . . . For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works** . . .” (Eph 2:8–10).

II. The Test of Faith

- A. We have seen how God called Abraham and gave him two incredible promises: 1) to make him a great nation (he will have **many children**), and 2) to give him the **land of Canaan**. We briefly were introduced to two possible problems: Sarai is **barren** (Gn 11:30) and there are **Canaanites** living in the land (Gn 12:6).
- B. Untested faith is no faith at all. So, God arranges a series of **tests** that will prove the authenticity of Abraham’s faith. Some of these tests he will pass. Some he will fail. But when he comes to the **supreme test** (final exam) of his life on Mount Moriah, Abraham passes with flying colors. In response, God says, “**Now I know** that you fear God” (Gn 22:12).
- C. But **why** does God need to test our faith? Is he cruel? Isn’t taking that initial step of faith (leaving Ur and starting the journey) enough? Two passages in the New Testament are instructive:
 - “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that *the testing of your faith* produces **steadfastness**. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be **perfect** and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1:2–4).
 - “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that *the tested genuineness of your faith*—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in **praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 1:6–7).

III. Three Tests for Abraham (Genesis 12:10–13:18)

- A. Read Genesis 12:7 then 12:10. The test of **adversity**.

Key Question: Can I trust God when he **disappoints** and **underperforms**?

Abraham’s grade: **F**

 1. When Abraham discovered that the Land of Promise resembled **Death Valley**, he packed up and left. Did I leave Ur for *this*? Is this some kind of cruel joke?

No, it is a test! But Abraham wasn't ready. The faith that got him to Canaan wasn't strong enough to sustain him there!

2. There is no indication that he prayed or sought God's will. He just did what seemed **logical** at the time. This is not the only time in Scripture when the people of God put their trust in **Egypt**. "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help . . . but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!" (Isa 31:1).
3. Once on the wrong path, other decisions only **deepen the crisis** of faith. Three bad consequences happen in Egypt:
 - a. Marital strife between Abraham and **Sarah**.
 - b. **Lot** is captured by the glitter of Egyptian worldliness (the City of Man).
 - c. **Abraham** becomes rich. Pharaoh rewards him. But ill-gotten gain is dangerous. Among the Egyptian "female servants" (Gn 12:16) was a woman named **Hagar**.

B. Read Genesis 12:11–20. The test of threats to my **self-interest**.

Key Question: Can I trust God when I'm in **danger**?

Abraham's grade: **F**

1. Pharaoh collects women² for his harem. Abraham places self-protection over his marriage.³ His motivation is brazenly **selfish**: "Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you . . ." (Gn 12:13).⁴ To save his own skin, he puts his wife (and the mother of the future Messiah!) in the harem of a pagan king.⁵
2. Actually, Sarah is Abraham's sister; same father but different mothers (see Gn 20:12). So, Abraham's story is a **half-truth**.
3. Abraham may have failed to protect his wife, but God didn't! He sent **plagues** on Pharaoh and his house. Though God had called Abraham to be a blessing to the nations (see Gn 12:2–3), he had become a **curse**!
4. Genesis 12:18–19 is surely one of the most **ironic** scenes in all Scripture: a pagan king rebuking the patriarch Abraham and giving him a lecture on **morality**!

C. Interlude. Read Genesis 13:1–4.

On returning to Canaan, Abraham goes **back to Bethel**, "to the place where he had made an altar at the first" (Gn 13:4; see Gn 12:8). Sobered by the debacle in Egypt, Abraham needs to reset his compass and get back on track. In calling on the name of the Lord, perhaps Abraham said something like this: "Lord, I blew it! I stepped out of your plan for my life. I left the land you gave me and failed to love my wife. Can you forgive me? Will you give me **another chance**?"

² At age 65, Sarah's beauty must have been truly remarkable! She lived to be 127, so she was "only" middle-aged.

³ This is a tragic example from the one who is called to model fatherhood and the sanctity of the family!

⁴ Abraham will pull a similar stunt 25 years later with the king of Gerar, Abimelech (see Gn 20). To make matters worse, his son Isaac will do the same thing (see Gn 26:6–11). The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

⁵ The text is unclear whether Pharaoh actually had a sexual relationship with Sarah, but it seems to hint that he did (see Gn 12:15, 19).

D. Read Genesis 13:1–18. The test of **conflict**.

Key Question: Can I trust God to watch out for my well-being when there is **strife** and **conflict**?

*Abraham's grade: **A***

1. Because of ill-gotten gain in Egypt, Abraham and Lot are very rich. The land cannot support them both. This creates conflict and strife. As the senior partner, Abraham could have resolved the situation by **pulling rank** and mapping out a plan. Surprisingly, he let his worldly, second-hand-faith nephew make the decision. (Something indeed had happened during that worship service at Bethel!)
 2. We will learn more about Lot as the story of Abraham unfolds, but here we catch a glimpse of his true character:
 - a. Lifting up his **eyes**, Lot sees the Jordan Valley (cities of Sodom and Gomorrah) and is reminded of Egypt. **Worldliness** and double-mindedness cause him to “choose for himself” the cities of the valley (Gn 13:10–11).
 - b. Lot moves his tent “**near** Sodom” (Gn 13:12).
 - c. Later, we learn that Lot is living “**in** Sodom” (Gn 14:12).
 - d. Still later, we discover that he is “sitting in **the gate** of Sodom” (Gn 19:1), a place typically reserved for the rulers.
 3. Abraham's **motivation** for giving Lot first choice seems to be two-fold:
 - a. My **relationship** with my nephew is more important than getting my own way. (If only he had said *this* concerning Sarah when he was in Egypt!)
 - b. I can **trust God** to take care of his promises. I don't have to scheme and manipulate to accomplish the will of God. God is able to work it out.
- E. Remember, Abraham's greatest test of faith is yet to come (see Gn 22). These smaller tests are preparing him for his final exam!

At times, it appears as if God has not only forsaken his word but has deliberately deceived us. We asked him for a particular thing . . . and expected that it would mean the fulness of blessing, and actually it has meant the opposite—upset, trouble and difficulty all around, and we are staggered, until we learn that by this very discipline God is bringing us to the place of entire abandonment to himself.⁶

⁶ Chambers, 868.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Where is your faith being tested? _____
2. If this lesson has helped you to go "back to Bethel," what is God asking you to do?

Farther Along

By W. B. Stevens

*Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder
Why it should be thus all the day long;
While there are others living about us,
Never molested, though in the wrong.*

Refrain:

*Farther along we'll know more about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.*

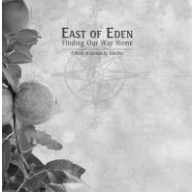
*Sometimes I wonder why I must suffer,
Go in the rain, the cold, and the snow,
When there are many living in comfort,
Giving no heed to all I can do. [Refrain]*

*Tempted and tried, how often we question
Why we must suffer year after year,
Being accused by those of our loved ones,
E'en though we've walked in God's holy fear. [Refrain]*

*Often when death has taken our loved ones,
Leaving our home so lone and so drear,
Then do we wonder why others prosper,
Living so wicked year after year. [Refrain]*

*Faithful till death, saith our loving Master;
Short is our time to labor and wait;
Then will our toiling seem to be nothing,
When we shall pass the heavenly gate. [Refrain]*

*Soon we will see our dear, loving Savior,
Hear the last trumpet sound through the sky;
Then we will meet those gone on before us,
Then we shall know and understand why. [Refrain]*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

A LOT TO REMEMBER

Genesis 13, 14, and 19

I. Don't Forget to Remember

- A. “Remember Lot’s wife” (Lk 17:32). My purpose is to call us to obey this **commandment**. In the Greek, it is in the present imperative tense: “*Keep on remembering Lot’s wife.*” Jesus never tells us to remember Isaiah, Daniel, or Ruth. But he pleads with us not to forget this nameless woman. Why?
- B. Spiritual amnesia is not cute or innocuous. It is very **serious**. The things we forget typically point to the things that are destroying us and creating dysfunction. Thus, the Bible often call us to remember:
- “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8).
 - “Remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness . . .” (Dt 8:2).
 - “Remember from where you have fallen; repent . . .” (Rv 2:5).
 - “Do this in *remembrance* of me” (Lk 22:19).
- C. To remember involves more than cognitive recall. If your wife tells you to *remember* her birthday, she is not talking about mental awareness of the date in history! To remember means to **act**, to **do something**. Literally, it means to put the *members* of a past event into place again. To forget something is to **dismember** it. So, let’s *remember* the story of Lot and his wife.
- D. Lot was Abraham’s **nephew**. When Lot’s father, Haran, died, Abraham “adopted” him (Gn 11:27–32). This seemed like a perfect match since Abraham had no son and Lot had no father. Thus, Lot was Abraham’s potential **heir**. The defining quality of Lot’s early life is captured in the phrase, “and Lot went with [Abraham]” (Gn 12:4; 13:1, 5). Abraham walked with **God**. Lot walked with **Abraham** (at first).

II. Survey of Lot’s Life (Genesis 13, 14, 19)

- A. Lot’s choice (Genesis 13:5–13).
1. The ill-gotten gain in Egypt (see Gn 12:16) made both Abraham and Lot wealthy men. The land could not support them both and this resulted in conflict. So, they agreed to separate. Abraham, the senior partner, gave the **first choice** to Lot (a gracious and magnanimous thing to do).
 2. The text is precise in describing Lot’s choice:
 - a. He “lifted up his **eyes** . . .” (Gn 13:10). Just as Eve’s fall began when her eyes became fixed on something forbidden (Gn 3:6), so with Lot. He assumed that his eyes could be **trusted** to lead him to something good.

- b. He saw that the Jordan Valley was lush and green, like **Egypt** (Gn 13:10). Lot's experience in Egypt had introduced him to the glitter and glamour of **worldly** pleasures and life styles. He wanted more.¹
 - c. "He **chose for himself** all the Jordan Valley" (Gn 13:11). He didn't pray about his decision or seek counsel. He simply opted for what seemed to be in his best interests.
 - d. He "pitched his tents **near** Sodom" (Gn 13:12 NIV). Though enamored with the glitter of Sodom, he seems to know better than to live **in** this notoriously wicked place (see Gn 13:13).
 - e. "Abraham settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley" (Gn 13:12). We see that Lot's choice was **outside** the land of promise. This meant he could no longer be considered a possible heir of his uncle; he **could not inherit** the land promised to Abraham.
3. Lot's choice was the **greatest mistake** of his life. Because he never revisited this tragic moment and repented, his life went **downhill** from here. Let's pause to analyze Lot's calamitous choice:
- a. It was **selfish**. What's in it for me?
 - b. It was based on **external appearances**. He trusted his eyes, his desires. "Let us then learn by this example, that our eyes are not to be trusted."²
 - c. It seemed to be **logical**; grounded in human wisdom.
 - d. It was Lot's way of **coping** with the conflict with his uncle. He ran away.
- B. Lot's rescue (Genesis 14:11–16)
1. Lot has now moved out of his tents near Sodom and is living in a house **in the city** itself (Gn 14:12). He has become a **Sodomite**.
 2. When taken captive by an enemy army, Abraham could easily have said: "Not my problem. He made his bed, let him lie in it!" Amazingly, Uncle Abe holds **no grudges** and quietly forms a militia and, in a daring raid, defeats the invading army and brings back all the hostages.
 3. Looking at this story from Lot's perspective, what should he have learned from this incident?
 - a. I've made some bad choices, but **God still loves** me and has a purpose for my life. I need to **repent** and get back on the journey to spiritual wholeness.
 - b. My uncle still loves me and wants to relate to me even though I've treated him poorly and have chosen to go my own way. I need to **rebuild the relationship** and get back into fellowship.
 - c. Sodom is **dangerous**! Though prosperous and full of cultural entertainments, it can poison the soul. Maybe this isn't the best place to live and **raise my family**. Perhaps I should move back to Canaan.

¹ Before the destruction of the cities of the plain, what is today known as the Dead Sea was apparently a fertile, well-watered region. Today, it is one of the harshest environments on earth. The Dead Sea is filled with salt and is 1,286 feet below sea level, the lowest spot on Earth.

² John Calvin, quoted by Ross, 287.

- d. _____.
- e. _____.
- f. _____.

C. Lot's life and legacy (Genesis 19:1, 4–18, 23–29)

1. Lot is now “sitting in the gate” of Sodom (Gn 19:1). This is where the ruling elders sit. He is apparently fully integrated into Sodomite culture and is a respected **civic leader**. He calls the other Sodomites “my brothers” (Gn 19:7).
2. The visitors are “**angels**” (Gn 19:1). Earlier, they had visited with Abraham and Sarah (see Gn 18:1–8). Only later does Lot learn of their mission (see Gn 19:13). In the Ancient Near East, showing **hospitality** was of supreme importance. The host was to guarantee the safety of his guests.
3. When we studied Babel (see Gn 11:1–9), we learned that cities in Genesis are hotbeds of wickedness. Sodom is perhaps the worst! We will not see a comparable city until the end of history (Rv 17–18) when Babylon, the **Great Prostitute**, “will be burned up with fire” (see Rv 18:8). Let's describe this “city of man” (Sodom) and its sinful condition:
 - a. Her sin is not the garden variety of sin but is described in extreme terms:
 - “The men of Sodom were wicked, **great** sinners against **the Lord**” (Gn 13:13).
 - “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is **very grave**. I will go down to see . . .” (Gn 18:20–21).
 - “We are about to destroy this place because the **outcry** against its people has become great before the Lord” (Gn 19:13).
 - After naming other sins of Sodom, the Lord says: “They did an **abomination** before me. So, I removed them” (Ezek 16:50).
 - b. Ezekiel 16:49–50 gives a sobering list of sins that were being practiced:

*Sodom's sins were **pride, gluttony, and laziness**, while the **poor and needy** suffered outside her door. She was proud and committed detestable sins, so I wiped her out, as you have seen.*
(NLT)
 - c. 2 Peter 2:6–10 gives us more information about this wicked city.

*If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of **defiling passion** and **despise authority**.*
 - d. The sin of Sodom seems to be summarized in an attitude that cares only for my kind. **Xenophobia** is hatred of the stranger/foreigner and love of my own kind. **Sodomy** is hatred of the other gender and love of my own kind. And **incest** is a preference of family over the detested outsider.

Sodom is a city notorious for injustice, for that unqualified love of one's own and that unqualified hatred and mistreatment of strangers, exemplified in the attempted homosexual rape of the men-angels visiting Lot. . . . The city thus blinds its inhabitants to the truth silently carried by all strangers and beggars: any stranger or beggar may be a "god in disguise."³

4. In answer to Abraham's intercessory prayer (see Gn 18:22–33), Lot is graciously rescued from Sodom's destruction. But notice:
 - a. He **lingered** and the angels had to coerce him to leave (Gn 19:16).
 - b. He lost his **family**: his married daughters and their husbands and his wife (Gn 19:14, 26).
 - c. He **negotiates** with the angels, asking not to escape to the hills but to be permitted to go to another **city** (Zoar), only a "little one" (Gn 19:17–22).
 - d. The aftermath makes a bad situation even worse⁴ when Lot's daughters make him **drunk** and then **sleep with him** in order to have children. This is the origin of the Moabites and the Ammonites (Gn 19:30–38). One could say that Sodom was **reborn** in that cave!
5. Thus, we learn that it is one thing to get Lot out of Sodom. It is another thing to **get Sodom out of Lot**.

III. Characteristics of Worldly (Carnal) Christians⁵

- A. **Second-hand** faith. As long as Lot walked with Abraham (who walked with God) his life seemed to be okay, but once he separated from Abraham, the truth came out!
- B. Trusts his **eyes** (desires). Lot wanted what he wanted. He leaned on his own understanding and trusted his instincts. He did what his heart told him to do.
- C. Foolishly assumes **he can resist** the corrosive influence of sin. He sees (ogles) Sodom (Gn 13:10). He moves near Sodom (Gn 13:12). He bought a home and moved into Sodom (Gn 14:12). He became a respected leader in Sodom and considered the citizens his brothers (Gn 19:1, 7). Unconfessed sin always puts us on a **slippery slope**.
- D. **Double-mindedness**. Though Lot apparently loves the Lord and wants (most of the time) to do the right thing, he also loves Sodom and its glitter and glamor. He waivers between the City of God and the City of Man. A double-minded man "is **unstable** in all his ways" (Jas 1:8).
- E. **Hypocrisy**. Though he says the right things and professes the right beliefs, his actions give a different message. Lot's family saw him for the hypocrite that he was. Thus, when he told them to flee, they did not take him seriously; they thought he was "jesting" (Gn 19:14).
- F. Saved as **through fire** (see 1 Cor 3:15). We are surprised to learn that the New Testament calls Lot a "righteous man" (2 Pet 2:7). In comparison to the Sodomites, his actions certainly did seem righteous. But we should not glibly conclude by saying,

³ Kass, 328–39.

⁴ I'll leave it to the reader to determine whether incest is worse than sodomy!

⁵ If one inverts the following seven statements so that they say the opposite, one can easily see what it takes to be a healthy, mature, godly child of God.

“Well, at least he was saved; at least he made it to heaven.” Assuming he did make it to heaven; consider the cost of his worldliness:

- He had no positive influence on Sodom. Though he lived there for years and was a respected citizen, the Lord could find **not even ten** righteous people in the entire city.
- He had no positive influence on **his family**. His wife and his married daughters and their families were clearly lost. His unmarried daughters were a moral disaster and the result of such worldly living was the birth of some of Israel’s greatest enemies: the Moabites and Ammonites.

IV. Remember Lot’s Wife

There are three things that I think Jesus wants us to remember about Mrs. Lot:

- A. Remember her **opportunities**. As a member of Abraham’s family, she had the greatest privilege in history of knowing the truth about God. “To whom much is given, from him much will be required . . .” (Lk 12:48 NKJV). This explains why it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Sodom than for Capernaum (Mt 11:23–24).
- B. Remember her **sin**. It wasn’t some great moral perversity that brought God’s judgment but her love of this world. She looked back. She couldn’t let go of the things of this world. “Don’t you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” (Jas 4:4; see 1 Jn 2:15–17).
- C. Remember her **judgment**. She was turned into a pillar of salt. It was terrifying, painful, and permanent. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Pv 9:10).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jesus insist that we remember Lot’s wife?
2. Early in his life Lot made a tragic choice and the consequences remained with him the rest of his life. Can you think of someone you know who made a tragic choice early in life? What should we learn from this?
3. Lot felt he could resist the corrosion of sin. What do we learn from Lot’s tragic example? What does his example teach us about the temptations around us today?
4. Why doesn’t the church talk about the sin of worldliness anymore? What should be done about this?
5. Are sexual sins worse than other sins?

How Firm a Foundation

(to the tune, *Adeste Fideles*)

By John Rippon (1787)

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

*In every condition, in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.*

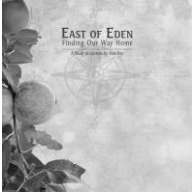
*Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.*

*When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.*

*Even down to old age all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.*

*The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home
A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

GROUND ZERO

Genesis 15

I. The Bottom Line

- A. On three occasions in the New Testament, at a critical point in the argument, authors refer to **Genesis 15:6** in their effort to explain how a person can be right¹ with God (Rom 4; Gal 3; Jas 2:14–26).

“[Abraham] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Gn 15:6).

This is not only a summary statement about Abraham’s spiritual journey, it underscores the indispensable role of **faith** in the Christian walk. More than moral **behavior**, doctrinal **orthodoxy**, or sincere **piety**, those who want to be right with God must believe. Without faith we *cannot* please God (Heb 11:6).

- B. A powerful contrast: Billy Graham and Chuck Templeton

When Billy Graham was beginning his ministry, one of his closest associates and friends was Chuck Templeton (1915–2001). Both were great preachers with a passion for evangelism, but Templeton could not shake his **doubts**. He felt belief in the Bible was “intellectual suicide.” He left the ministry. In an interview with Lee Strobel, Templeton (age 83) told of perhaps the key moment on his path to agnosticism:

*It was a photograph in Life magazine. It was a picture of a black woman in Northern Africa. They were experiencing a devastating drought. And she was holding her dead baby in her arms looking up to heaven with the most forlorn expression. I looked at it and I thought, “Is it possible to **believe** that there is a loving or caring Creator when all this woman needed was rain?”²*

The two men discussed the growing chasm several times. Graham also wrestled with the intellectual questions that made faith difficult. But one night, just before the famous Los Angeles Crusade (1949), at age 30, Graham knelt and prayed a prayer that changed everything. Gripping his Bible, he said,

*“O God! There are many things in this book I do not understand . . . I can’t answer some of the philosophical and psychological questions Chuck and others are raising . . . Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word—by **faith!** I’m going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will **believe** this to be Your inspired Word” . . . When I got up from my knees . . . I sensed the presence and power of God . . . Not all my questions were answered, but a major bridge had been crossed. In my heart and mind, I knew a spiritual battle in my soul had been fought and won.³*

¹ Righteous, justified; in a right relationship.

² Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 14.

³ Graham, 139.

- C. For Abraham, the bottom line—Ground Zero—was not his obedience, his moral character, or his doctrinal orthodoxy. It was his faith. This is what set him apart as a hero and caused him to become “the father of all who believe” (Rom 4:11).

II. Talking It Out

Those who think that believing in God is easy reveal their ignorance. Trusting in God is the **hardest** thing anyone can do. Prior to this moment, God’s appearances to Abraham had been a monologue. But now, Abraham **talks back!** He *wants* to believe but needs reassurance, evidence, and some questions answered.

Let’s reconstruct the passage by compressing and summarizing the dialogue so as to better understand the dynamics of what is happening in this classic passage on faith:

A. God speaks **first** and makes an amazing (three-fold) **promise**.

True faith is always a response to God’s initiative. Faith comes by **hearing** the word of God (see Rom 10:17). Though Abraham has heard some of this before, in this encounter, God’s promise is in its clearest form yet:

1. “Do not be afraid, Abram. **I am** your shield, your exceedingly great reward” (Gn 15:1 NKJV). God promises protection and provision, but in essence he is promising **Himself**. The Giver is more important than the gifts! A. B. Simpson’s famous hymn *Himself* (1891) says it well:

*Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is his Word.
Once the gift I wanted, now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.*

*Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me.
Once the pow’r I wanted, now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.*

2. ““This man [Eliezer] 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.’ . . . ‘So shall your **offspring** be” (Gn 15:4–5).⁴
3. “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur . . . to give you **this land** to possess To your offspring I give this land . . .” (Gn 15:7, 18).

B. Abraham responds by asking two questions that reveal his inward struggle to believe. The promises sound great, but he knows there are some **huge obstacles** related to promises #2 and #3.

1. ““O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ . . . ‘Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir”” (Gn 15:2–3).

The promise of a son and many descendants is complicated by the fact that Abraham is approximately 80 years old and Sarah is about **70** and **barren**. They will wait **20** years before Isaac is born.

2. “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” (Gn 15:8).

⁴ It’s interesting to note that Sarah is not specifically mentioned in this promise.

The promise of the land is complicated by the fact that it is presently **inhabited** by the Kenizzites, Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites. Also, Abraham's descendants will have to spend **400** years in a foreign land before this promise will be realized.

Abraham struggles with faith. "How can I **be sure** about this?" God does not scold Abraham for asking questions but seeks to reassure and encourage him to **believe anyway**. The Lord does not remove the obstacles to faith, but rather reminds Abraham of the character of the God he worships!

- C. God responds to Abraham's need for reassurance by establishing⁵ a **covenant** with him and his descendants. "Bring me a heifer . . ." (Gn 15:9ff). In the Ancient Near East, a covenant was a type of **binding agreement** that defined how two parties were to relate to one another.
1. Typically, the ceremony that celebrated the ratification of the covenant involved the following:
 - Cutting animals in half and laying them out in two parallel rows.
 - Oaths and promises, blessing and curses.
 - The two parties walk between the bloody carcasses symbolically saying, "May I be ripped apart like these animals if I fail to keep my end of the covenant." A sort of **dramatized curse**.
 2. Jeremiah 34:18–20 gives a vivid picture of such a ceremony:

And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. And I will give them into the hand of their enemies . . . (Jeremiah 34:18–20)
 3. But notice that in *this* covenant-making ceremony with Abraham, only God passes between the sacrificial animals, seen by the smoking pot and the flaming torch! This is a **unilateral** covenant.⁶ God is stating in the most solemn manner possible: if I fail to keep my promise to you, may I be dismembered and my body ripped apart. "Cross my heart and hope to die . . ."
- D. Abraham's final response: "He believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gn 15:6). The Hebrew word for "believe" is *aman* (the root of the word "Amen"). To God's promise, Abraham said, "**Amen!** So be it! Let it be so!"
1. Abraham **knows God** well enough to trust his **character**, to take him at his word. "I can trust a God like that!" He puts his trust in the God of the promises and the promises of God. Salvation is not more complicated than that. Damnation is not more complicated than unbelief.
 2. God responded to Abraham's faith by counting it⁷ to him as **righteousness**. Though he had left everything, built altars, and won a great battle against pagan kings, none of this made him righteous. Abraham is justified (made

⁵ "Cutting" a covenant (in Hebrew).

⁶ The Covenant established at Mount Sinai centuries later would stipulate conditions that Israel was expected to fulfill (a bilateral covenant). But here with Abraham, God's promises were unconditional. All Abraham had to do was to believe that God would fulfill what he had promised.

⁷ Reckoning, crediting.

right) by **faith alone**. Paul makes this point in Romans 4 when he encourages us, today, to put our trust in God and his promises:

*He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that **God was able** to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (Romans 4:19–25)*

III. Children of Abraham: Live Out Your Calling

Abraham is the father of all who believe (Rom 4:11). His story is not just history, it is written so that his example will nudge us to live even as he did: by **faith in the promises** of God. Some of these promises are written below. Let the Holy Spirit direct you to the promise that is most relevant for you. Then, take the **revolutionary** step that Abraham took: believe! As you do, realize that this act of faith puts you in a **right relationship** with him!

1. A promise for **grace** to handle a difficult situation: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).
2. A promise for **provision** for some unmet need: "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19).
3. A promise of **hope** in some situation that seems to have no solution: "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11).
4. A promise of **strength** when confronted by a frightening foe or an intimidating obstacle: "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa 40:31).
5. A promise for **victory** in some conflict you are experiencing: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).
6. A promise for **peace** in some traumatic conflict or turmoil: "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (Isa 26:3).
7. A promise for **cleansing** for some inner sense of pollution: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9).
8. A promise of **rest** for one who is tired and fatigued: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt 11:28–29).
9. A promise of **the Holy Spirit** for one who feels empty and alone: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk 11:13).
10. A promise for **guidance** to one facing an important decision: "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isa 30:21).

11. A promise of **assurance** that God is with you as you face grief and pain: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you . . . when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned . . .” (Isa 43:1–2).

Tonight, God is not asking you to *do* something. He is asking you to *believe*.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:31–32)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In Abraham’s struggle with faith, which promise was most difficult for him to believe? Why?
2. Where is faith most difficult for you? What is the source of your doubts? Why is it so hard just to take God at his word?
3. Which promise of God is most important for you right now? Would you permit others in the group to pray for you?

We Rest on Thee

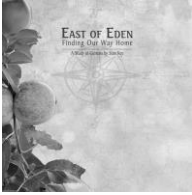
By Edith G. Cherry (c. 1895)

*We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
We go not forth alone against the foe;
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.*

*Yes, in Thy Name, O Captain of salvation!
In Thy dear Name, all other names above;
Jesus our Righteousness, our sure Foundation,
Our Prince of glory and our King of love.*

*We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,
And needing more each day Thy grace to know:
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
“We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.”*

*We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise;
When passing through the gates of pearly splendor,
Victors, we rest with Thee, through endless days.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

HOW TO BIRTH A DONKEY

Genesis 16

I. Delayed Gratification

A. The Marshmallow Test

B. This is Abraham's **fourth** test of faith.

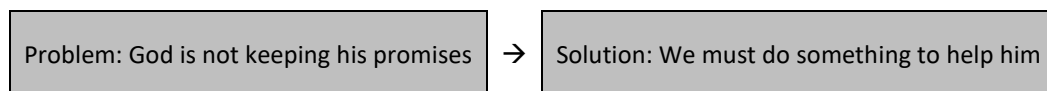
1. The "Follow the Call" test (Gn 12:1–4). Grade: **A**.
2. The "Famine in the Land of Promise" test (Gn 12:10). Grade: **F**.
3. The "Conflict with My Nephew" test (Gn 13–14). Grade: **A**.
4. We could call the test of Genesis 16 the "God Is Not Keeping His Promises" test. We'll give Abraham the grade of **F**.

Faith is far more than mental agreement with certain truths about God and it is much more dynamic than a one-time prayer inviting Christ into one's life. Faith is a **walk**. It is a life attitude of confidence that God will do what he has promised. To verify its authenticity, it must be **tested**—again and again. Like a **muscle** being exercised, it grows stronger with repeated use.

C. The **context** of Abraham's test. Almost as if a psychologist were setting up a well-prepared experiment, God has arranged the details of Abraham's fourth test:

1. God has made a crystal clear, solemn **promise** to Abraham: he will have a son and many descendants (Gn 15:4–5). Abraham **believed** God's promise (Gn 15:6). God considers his faith as righteousness.
2. Ten years have passed since his initial call. Abraham is now 85 and Sarah is 75. She is also barren. This is an **impossible situation!**
3. Not to worry, a **solution** is at hand. Many in the Ancient Near East practiced **surrogate** parenting. This was not considered immoral. A wife could designate another woman (concubine) who would be impregnated by her husband. The child would then be "adopted" by the married couple and, if the father so chose, could become the heir. Surely, this must be how God's promise is meant to be fulfilled! (Go ahead, eat the single marshmallow now!)

D. We can diagram the situation like this:



Note: This "solution" is a **human** invention. As the story unfolds, we discover that God has a very different solution. The wisdom of man cannot achieve the purposes of God. The creative genius of the characters in Genesis 16 (Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar) gave rise to a global crisis that is still with us today: the **Arab-Israeli** conflict.

II. Examine the Text

A. Sarah's bright idea (Gn 16:1–6).

1. Time is running out. After seeing fertility specialists and undergoing hormone therapy, Abraham (85) and Sarah (75) decide to help God out. Ten years is a long time to wait! After all, God helps those who **help themselves**, right?
2. Though surrogate parenting may have been accepted by the culture, the text makes it clear that this was *not* God's plan for fulfilling his promise. Though Abraham was justified by faith (Gn 15:6), he is now walking **in the flesh**.
3. The text emphasizes the **dysfunction** that is painfully evident in the marriage of Abraham and Sarah:
 - a. Sarah is **manipulative** and urges her husband to do something morally questionable. Like what happened in the Garden of Eden, the woman is the origin of the sinful path.¹

Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:14–15)
 - b. Abraham is **passive**. Though the head of his home, he is failing miserably as a leader! He submits to his wife's leadership in both sleeping with Hagar and then remaining silent as Sarah abuses her (Gn 16:3, 6). As in the Garden, the husband is a silent **wimp**.
 - c. Notice how this episode is a mirror image of what had happened earlier in Egypt (see Gn 12:10–20 and 20:1–18). In Egypt, Abraham pushed Sarah to **deny their marriage** by pretending to be his sister. This meant she was taken into Pharaoh's harem to (potentially?) be his sexual partner! Now, Sarah is pushing Abraham to deny the meaning of marriage and commit quasi-adultery by sleeping with their Egyptian servant. It's tit for tat. All is fair in love and war!
4. Sarah seems to be something of a **bitter old woman**. She blames God for her barrenness and then blames Abraham for the chaos going on in their family (Gn 16:2, 4–5). She has waited long enough! She seems to be controlled by the motto: "Don't just stand there, **do something!**"²
5. The moral of the story. Though Abraham and Sarah have a clear, unshakeable knowledge of **God's will** (children), they go about doing God's will in the wrong way.³ "The fanatical passionate desire to fulfil God's will lead them into desperate error."⁴ Stated in New Testament terms: they are trying to do the will of God in the **power of the flesh**.

¹ Though Adam and Abraham should *not* have taken the advice of their wives, Pilate should have (Mt 27:19), as well as Nabal (1 Sm 25)! The dynamics of the marital relationship and the origin of sin are truly deep and complex.

² And yet, the story will reveal that this is one of those situations when Sarah and Abraham should have been controlled by the motto, "Don't do anything; just sit there!"

³ Note how later in the Genesis story, when Isaac's wife Rebekah is discovered to be barren, Isaac, rather than resorting to human ingenuity, simply prays for her, and God opens her womb (see Gn 25:21).

⁴ Chambers, 877.

- B. God's love for Hagar and Ishmael (Gn 16:7–16; see also 17:20–21; 21:8–21 and 25:12–18).
1. This is the first mention of the “angel of the Lord” in the Bible. This may well be a **preincarnate** manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity. Running away to her home in Egypt, Hagar is told to go back to Sarah and submit⁵ (Gn 16:9). Though God is comforting Hagar, it is an example of tough love.
 2. The primary message and the key to the entire chapter seems to be found in three names:
 - Hagar's son is named *Ishmael* (Gn 16:11)—**God hears**.
 - Hagar gives God a new name: *El Roi* (Gn 16:13)—**God sees**.
 - The well is named *Beer Lahai Roi* (Gn 16:14)—The well of the One who **sees me**.
- These names serve as a **rebuke** to the unbelief and impatience of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. If they could have only remained strong in the confidence that God hears and sees, they could have avoided creating the mess they did.
3. It is shocking to hear God describe Hagar's son as “a **wild donkey** of a man” (Gn 16:12). This is prophetic of the conflict that will come into the world between the families of Ishmael and Isaac.

III. How to Birth a Donkey

This story gives us an unforgettable picture of what happens whenever a child of God tries to accomplish the will of God by using human ingenuity; when a Christian tries to achieve a holy end by utilizing unholy means; when the **work of the Spirit** is done in the **power of the flesh**. The result is always the birth of a donkey!

Here is a sure-fire, bona fide, money-back-guarantee formula for birthing a donkey:

- A. Do God's work **my way**.
1. Abraham and Sarah came up with their own method for doing God's will. They did not realize that in God's kingdom, the **means** are just as important as the **goal**. They assumed that if their plan was rational, practical, efficient, and culturally acceptable, it would be fine. Jesus is the way (Jn 14:6) not just the destination!
 2. Look again at Proverbs 3:5–6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on **your own understanding**. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” The Bible has a special term to describe those who believe in themselves and trust in their own knowledge: **fool**.
 3. We can imagine that the “national anthem” of hell will be Frank Sinatra's famous song, “I Did It **My Way**.”
 4. Fifteen years later, when Sarah (age 90) got pregnant, everyone knew that **God** was the author of *this* story.
- B. Do God's work in **my time**.
1. Abraham and Sarah knew what God wanted, but they were not willing **to wait** for him to accomplish it in his timing. They had already waited 10 years, and

⁵ This is similar to what Paul told the runaway Christian slave Onesimus (see Phlm 12).

they would have to wait for **15 years** longer. That's a long time. But the alternative to waiting on the Lord is... birthing a donkey!

2. In the Bible to wait on the Lord is a synonym for **trust/believe**. Abraham and Sarah felt they had to *do* something, but the real test of faith lies in **not doing!**
 - “They who **wait** for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isa 40:31).
 - “**Wait** for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (Ps 27:14).
3. To wait on the Lord is not a call to **passivity**. It is a call to trust!

C. Do God's work in **my power**.

1. Abraham and Sarah used their own **human resources** in their attempt to do the will of God. They succeeded but discovered that they had birthed a donkey. They climbed the ladder to success only to discover that it was leaning against the wrong wall (see Ps 106:15)!
2. When Peter took a sword and single-handedly attacked a squad of Roman soldiers in Gethsemane, he was on the right team, zealous and ready to die for his faith, but he was using the **wrong weapon**.

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

3. “God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply” (Hudson Taylor).

PRIVATE AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Though Abraham was justified by faith (Gn 15), he was still walking in the flesh (Gn 16). He would never be the father that God had called him to be until he learned to walk in the Spirit. Is there an area where you are seeking to accomplish some work of the Spirit in the power of the flesh? Describe what this looks like.
2. Is there an area in your life (a conflict, an unanswered prayer, a task to accomplish, a relationship, etc.) where you have deep certainty about what God's will is, but you're not certain that your approach is the right one? You know what the result is supposed to be but you're not certain of the means you're supposed to use to get there. Ask the Lord what he is trying to tell you.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Translated from Latin, *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

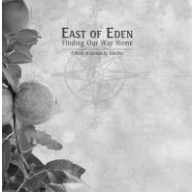
*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home ;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Desire of nations, bind
All people in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall to thee, O Israel.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

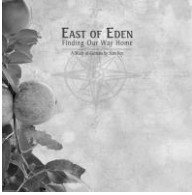
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East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

ANSWERS

Deep Waters, Part 1

- I. (A) fairy tale; historicity; judged; trivialize; (B) de-creational; (C) anchor us; (C1) sin; possible; (C2) wrath; (C3) grace; redeem
- II. very interesting; (A1) advanced civilization; (A2) 200 legends; (B1) no rain; canopy; (B2) global flood; (B3) continents; stratification; (B4) Grand Canyon; (C1) pitch; (C2) sail; rudder; (C3) modern; (C4) 450; (D) kinds; 1400; (E) long periods; rapidly; (F) climate
- III. (A) baptism; washing; starting over; from ;by; (B) deeper work; water baptism; (B1) transforms character; (B2) fire; (C) causes; signs; (C1) be alert; (C1a) physical appetites; (C1b) marriage; (C1c) technology; (C1d) entertainment; (C1e) violence; (C1f) Corruption; (C2a) preaching the gospel; (C2c) False prophets; (C2e) Man of Sin; (C2f) Israel; liberation

Deep Waters, Part 2

- I. (A) details; the message; (B) Superficiality; deep; sin; wrath; grace
- II. (A) reason; (A1) depth; (A2) breadth; (A3) before; (B) surprise/irony; unchanged; grace; (C) sin problem; (C1) drunk; (C2) Babel; (D) superficial; worse; (D1) deceived; (D2) enslaved; (D3) perverted; (D4) darkened; (E) babes; impotent
- III. fixed attitude; love; (A) patience; everyone; (B) suddenness; long for; hasten; (C) finality; shut the door; (D) horror; (E) fairness; excuse; alibi
- IV. (A) found grace; (A1) initiative; no one may boast; (A2) participation; faith; speaks; (A3) through; (A4) one door; safe; secure; (B) covenant; oath; cuts; unilateral; rainbow
- V. unfinished; image of God; bring it to completion

Daddy's Drunk

- I. (A) new beginning; (A1) one race; (A2) bad start; (A3) a single man; a people; all the earth; (B1) Indo-European; (B2) African; Babel; (B3) Semitic; Abraham
- II. (A) disturbing content; fatherhood; moral failure; shame; jerk; (B) our own families
- III. (A) walked; obeyed; preacher; good finish; wicked old man; (B1) substance abuse; dignity; (B2) nakedness
- IV. saw; told; (A) sexual behavior; (B) Honor your father; (B1) Resentment; (B3) boundaries; (B6) enjoyment; (B7) protect; (C) covering; willful blindness; (D) eyes
- V. grandson; unfair; (A) prophetic; no respect; (B) how life works; blessings
- VI. (A) the finish line; (B) eyes; (C) honor his father; (D) to cover; (E) generational curse; (F) shame; exposed; covers us

The City of God

- I. (A) Language; Cities; spiritual meaning; (B) fill the earth; (C1) Pride; exalt themselves; (C2) Fear; (C3) Rebellion; (D) stairway to heaven; reached; gate of heaven; [Jacob's Stairway column] God's search; Success!
- II. (A) Jerusalem; Babylon; (B1) Boston; New York; Chicago; Las Vegas; (B2) entangled; power of love; (B3) Vanity Fair; (B4) rejection; (C) a home
- III. (A) murderer; security; stability; relationships; (B) sexual perversion; (C) strange mixture; exile; (D) human situation; shalom; destroyed; (E) designed; built
- IV. (A) exiles; (B) shalom; (C) Thy Kingdom come; (D) Walk; believe

The Call

- I. [Genesis 1–11 column] the seed of the woman; sin; judgment; [Genesis 12–50 column] the Hebrews; hope; election; City of God; chosen; covenant; (B) Abraham; Jacob; Joseph
- II. (A) model; (B) biological; spiritual; (C1) Covenant; relationship; circumcision; (C2) Journey; tent; strangers; exiles; (C3) Worship; first-generation; diluted; altar; (C4) Family; husband; father; (C5) right with God (righteous); friend; before; justification by faith; (C6) faith; first step; his call
- III. (A1) command; Go from; Go to; (A1a) words; hearing; (A1b) two-fold; repentance; faith; (A2) promise; conditional; obedience; (A2b) great nation; barren; (A2d) name great; (A2g) the world; (B) mental assent; obedience; (C) appeared; land; Canaanites; famine
- IV. (A) listening; (A1) calling; (B1) initiated; chosen; (B2) most important; rearview mirror; (B3) journey; walked; burial plot; (B4) relationship; with him; to be; to do; (B5) cost you everything; (B6) not about me; favoritism; manure; (C) hearing

The Test of Faith

- I. (A1) please God; (A2) work; (A3) saved; (A4) shield; (A5) sin; (A6) hell; (B1) impossible; (B2) prayer; (B3) overcome; (C1) believers; (C2) The Faith; (D1) Optimism; (D2) Sincerity; (D3) Mental assent; (D4) A leap in the dark; (E1) Trust; intellectual; emotional; volitional; E2) obedience; (E3) the link; by grace; through faith; for good works
- II. (A) many children; land of Canaan; Canaanites; (B) tests; supreme test; Now I know; (C) why; steadfastness; perfect; praise and glory and honor
- III. (A) adversity; disappoints; underperforms; F; (A1) Death Valley; (A2) logical; Egypt; (A3) deepen the crisis; (A3a) Sarah; (A3b) Lot; (A3c) Abraham; Hagar; (B) self-interest; danger; F; (B1) selfish; (B2) half-truth; (B3) plagues; curse; (B4) ironic; morality; (C) back to Bethel; another change; (D) conflict; strife; conflict; A; (D1) pulling rank; (D2a) eyes; Worldliness; (D2b) near; (D2c) in; (D2d) the gate; (D3) motivation; (D3a) relationship; (D3b) trust God

A Lot to Remember

- I. (A) commandment; (B) serious; (C) act; do something; dismember; (D) nephew; heir; God; Abraham
- II. (A1) first choice; (A2a) eyes; trusted; (A2b) Egypt; worldly; (A2c) chose for himself; (A2d) near; in; (A2e) outside; could not inherit; (A3) greatest mistake; downhill; (A3b) selfish; (A3b) external appearances; (A3c) logical; (A3d) coping; (B1) in the city; Sodomite; (B2) no grudges; (B3a) God still loves; repent; (B3b) rebuild the relationship;

(B3c) dangerous; raise my family; (C1) civic leader; (C2) angels; hospitality; (C3) Great Prostitute; (C3a) great; the Lord; very grave; outcry; abomination; (C3b) pride; gluttony; laziness; poor and needy; (C3c) defiling passion; despise authority; (C3d) Xenophobia; Sodomy; incest; (C4a) lingered; (C4b) family; (C4c) negotiates; city; (C4d) drunk; sleep with him; reborn; (C5) get Sodom out of Lot

- III. (A) Second-hand; (B) eyes; (C) he can resist; slippery slope; (D) Double-mindedness; unstable; (E) Hypocrisy; (F) through fire; not even ten; his family
- IV. (A) opportunities; (B) sin; (C) judgment

Ground Zero

- I. (A) Genesis 15:6; faith; behavior; orthodoxy; piety; (B) doubts; believe; faith; believe
- II. hardest; talks back; (A) first; promise; hearing; (A1) I am; Himself; (A2) very own son; offspring; (A3) this land; (B) huge obstacles; (B1) 70; barren; 20; (B2) inhabited; 400; be sure; believe anyway; (C) covenant; binding agreement; (C1) dramatized curse; (C3) unilateral; (D) Amen; (D1) knows God; character; (D2) righteousness; faith alone; God was able
- III. faith in the promises; revolutionary; right relationship; (1) grace; (2) provision; (3) hope; (4) strength; (5) victory; (6) peace; (7) cleansing; (8) rest; (9) the Holy Spirit; (10) guidance; (11) assurance

How to Birth a Donkey

- I. (B) fourth; (B1) A; (B2) F; (B3) A; (B4) F; walk; tested; muscle; (C) context; (C1) promise; believed; (C2) impossible situation; (C3) solution; surrogate; (D) human; Arab-Israeli
- II. (A1) help themselves; (A2) in the flesh; (A3) dysfunction; (A3a) manipulative; (A3b) passive; wimp; (A3c) deny their marriage; (A4) bitter old woman; do something; (A5) God's will; power of the flesh; (B1) preincarnate; (B2) God hears; God sees; sees me; (B3) wild donkey
- III. work of the Spirit; power of the flesh; (A1) my way; (A1) means; goal; (A2) your own understanding; fool; (A3) My Way; (A4) God; (B) my time; (B1) to wait; 15 years; (B2) trust/believe; not doing; wait; Wait; (B3) passivity; (C) my power; (C1) human resources; (C2) wrong weapon

I Want a Principle Within

By Charles Wesley (1749)

*I want a principle within
of watchful, godly fear,
a sensibility of sin,
a pain to feel it near.*

*I want the first approach to feel
of pride or wrong desire,
to catch the wandering of my will,
and quench the kindling fire.*

*From thee that I no more may stray,
no more thy goodness grieve,
grant me the filial awe, I pray,
the tender conscience give.
Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make;
awake my soul when sin is nigh,
and keep it still awake.*

*Almighty God of truth and love,
to me thy power impart;
the mountain from my soul remove,
the hardness from my heart.
O may the least omission pain
my reawakened soul,
and drive me to that blood again,
which makes the wounded whole.*



O for a Closer Walk with God

By William Cowper

(Sung to the tune *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*)

*O for a closer walk with God
A calm and heavenly frame
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb.
Where is the blessedness I knew
When I first saw the Lord?
Where is that soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?*

*What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.
Return, O holy Dove! return
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn
And drove Thee from my breast.*

*The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be
Help me tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee.
So shall my walk be close with God
Calm and serene my frame
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.*



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