

“Hope Doesn't Disappoint”

Shortly after the first Easter, the church was born. With it was launched one of the great enterprises the world has ever seen. Christ was not shy about his mission. Unreservedly, he was passionate to reach the nations with the gospel. His method was simple – people reaching people. This week, FBC begins a four week look at “missions.” One of the first questions we should ask is, “What does the Bible say about missions?”

“The missionary enterprise of the church is not a pyramid built upside down with its point on one isolated text in the New Testament (Matthew 28:18-20) out of which we have built a huge structure known as ‘missions.’ Rather, the missionary enterprise of the church is a great pyramid built right-side-up with its base running from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. All of Scripture forms the foundation for the outreach of the gospel to the whole world.” – David Howard, former director of the Urbana missionary convention.

This week, we will look at an event in the life of Abram (a man perhaps better known to us by his later name, Abraham). Abram is called out of his “comfort zone” into a life where he must depend on God. God promises to bless Abram, but taking a closer look reveals a purpose for the blessing: so that others – and specifically all the nations – can be blessed through him.

Monday – A Big Blessing

“And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.” Hebrews 11:12

1. Please read Genesis 12:1-9. How old was Abram at that time? What did God call him to do? Where?
2. If we are not careful, we might glance over the purpose of Abram's life calling. What was it? How far would Abram's blessing extend?
3. Perhaps when you have read the Old Testament you have thought that Israel was the sole or primary recipient of God's blessing. How does this passage help broaden that idea?

Prayer Focus – As we did during the *Call to Prayer*, we want to continue to unite together in prayer. Today, choose any foreign nation and pray for the people of that country. Ask God to spread his Word in that land.

Tuesday – Leave Here, Go There

“But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.” Isaiah 52:12

1. Please read Genesis 12:1. What was Abram asked to leave? Where was he asked to go? Knowing how difficult that would be for you, consider how difficult that would have been for Abram.
2. Think of a time you left something or someone behind, not knowing when - or even if - you would ever return. What saw you through this?
3. Isaiah 52:12 contains a comforting promise for God's people (see above). How much confidence do you gain from knowing that God will not only go ahead of you but also follow closely behind?

Prayer Focus – FBC has several missionaries who have left their country, their people, and their family. Pray for one of our FBC missionaries today, asking God to help them deal with the losses of being far from home.

Wednesday – All He's Got

1. Please read Genesis 12:2-5. What did God promise Abram? How did Abram respond?
2. The promise to Abram in verses 2-3 is not only for his benefit, but also for the benefit of people he has never heard of (let alone ever met). How would this type of promise motivate you? How about Abram?
3. Look at verses 4-5. What did Abram hold back from God? Abram committed all he had to this venture, holding nothing back. What do you think enabled Abram to fully obey God like he did (see Hebrews 11:8-10)?

Prayer Focus – Pray for someone you know who is struggling in an area of his/her life to give all to Christ.

Thursday – Stranger in the Land

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” Hebrews 11:8

1. Please read Genesis 12:6-9. Where did Abram end up?

Text insight: The name of the city, Bethel, translates to “House of God.”

2. As Abram continued along, he built successive altars. Why do you think he did so?
3. Do you remember to call on the name of the Lord (verse 8) as you go from day to day? How do you think doing so helped Abram in carrying out the mission God had given him?

Prayer Focus – In the spirit of Abram, call on the name of the Lord today.

Friday – Israel's Blessing

1. Please read Psalm 67. How does this song carry on the charge given to Abram (recall Genesis 12:2-3)?
2. Verse 1 speaks of a blessing for those already belonging to God. What is the purpose of that blessing according to verse 2? How do verses 3-7 help you to understand God's heart for the entire world?

Prayer Focus – How can you be a blessing to those around you who do not yet know God? Take time to pray for them.

For the Weekend: Read Psalm 67:2 and Isaiah 26:8. Pray through these verses, asking God to use you to be a blessing to those around you and that God's name will be renowned. Whether he takes you to a strange land or uses you where you are, remember that God wants everyone to know of his salvation, and he desires that we know the privilege of being his messengers.