

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

DEVO

FEBRUARY 3 - 7, 2025

THE STORY OF US

Sermon Series
Jan 5 - Mar 2



MONDAY

Read [Genesis 11:27-12:2](#); [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Anyone doubting that God's ways are infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9) need only consider the strange call of Abram (Abraham) by God. Abram was born nearly 300 years after the Great Flood, nine generations removed from Noah. He hailed from "Ur of the Chaldeans" (Genesis 1:29)—present-day southern Iraq—a hotbed of paganism and idolatry, previously giving rise to the Tower of Babel and, later, Babylon. Abram's father, Terah, undoubtedly worshiped multiple "gods" (polytheism) and/or nature itself (pantheism) per local pagan practices.

It is *possible* that Abram would have had prior knowledge of the living God, given his ancestry. Otherwise, he looked like a questionable candidate for Yahweh's favor. However, the same might be said of the Eastern magi who journeyed to worship the Christ child. Their gifts of gold (for a King), incense (representing prayer—for our Great High Priest) and myrrh (embalming spice—for the One who died for our sins) indicate deep insights into Jesus' mission. Like Abram, these foreign sojourners illustrate God's aim that all would know salvation (2 Peter 3:9), even those appearing "beyond reach" to us.

When first encountering God, 75-year-old Abram was commanded, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). He responded faithfully,

taking wife Sarai (Sarah), nephew Lot, servants, and possessions to settle in Canaan. Though Sarai already exceeded childbearing age, God promised Abram, "To your offspring I will give this land" (v. 7). But it was years later—perhaps ten—before Yahweh clarified the covenant, promising Abram a son and descendants to possess Canaan. Yet at least another fifteen years passed before the promised child was born to 90-year-old Sarah and 100-year-old Abraham.

God always answers the prayers of the faithful. Sometimes the answer is "Yes," sometimes "No"; however, it can also be "Not now" or "I've got something better for you." The living God who does the "impossible"—give a promised child to a virgin teenaged girl or to a 90-year-old woman—still works miracles in our lives. His ways and timing are perfect. To what is He calling you?

QUESTIONS

Why do you think God called someone like Abram to commence His plan of salvation for fallen humankind? How did the Magi's gifts indicate insight into Jesus' mission? What are some of the ways God answers faithful prayers?

PRAYERS

[For Stephen and Kate Clark—Campus2Campus \(C2C\) Ministries](#)

Pray for Kate's role as C2C Stateside Director. Pray that she would manage the support staff well, guide young people well with decisions about their future in her role as a mobilizer, and launch the new C2C staff to the field in a prepared way.

TUESDAY

Read **Genesis 17:1-17**

Abraham's birth name, Abram, means "exalted father"—he must have found this ironic, as he and his wife, Sarai, remained childless in their old age. Addressing the Abrahamic covenant once again, God declared, "*No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations*" (Genesis 17:5). Abraham means "father of multitudes," reinforcing one aspect of the covenant. "At the same time, God changed Abraham's wife's name from 'Sarai,' meaning 'my princess,' to 'Sarah,' meaning 'mother of nations' (v. 15)." (GotQuestions.org)

Such renaming might have felt like a joke to this elderly couple. "*Abraham fell facedown ... [and] laughed*" (v. 17) upon hearing this. When subsequently learning of her renaming, "*Sarah laughed to herself*" (18:12). They named the promised son Isaac, meaning "to laugh."

Abraham's and Sarah's story is but one wherein "*God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise ... [and] the weak things ... to shame the strong*" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Moses struggled with eloquence and hotheadedness, yet God fashioned him into "*the meekest man on earth*" (Numbers 12:3), suited to leading Israel's flight from Egyptian bondage toward the Promised Land. Gideon, formerly hiding from the Midianites in a wine press (Judges 6:11),

later led Israel's undermanned army in several successful battles. And shepherd boy David defeated the giant Goliath prior to becoming Israel's greatest king.

The Apostle Paul came to grasp how God uses people, declaring, "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2 Corinthians 12:10). The former Saul of Tarsus forsook worldly wisdom and a career as "*a Pharisee of Pharisees*" (Acts 23:6) projecting toward High Priesthood for a life of migrating homelessness, persecution, and eventual Roman execution. Yet, those whom God calls He equips. The Lord used Paul mightily to pen about half of the New Testament, to found ancient Mediterranean churches, and to mentor various early church leaders.

Apart from actors in character or comedians, no one likes looking ridiculous or incapable. Be wary of our fallen tendency toward pridefulness, an obstacle to being used by God. Does pride ever limit your Kingdom impact? Ask for God's help here.

QUESTIONS

What was ironic about Abram's and Sarai's birth names? How did their promised son's name reflect their response upon learning what God would do? Which example of "*God ... [choosing] the foolish ... or weak*" resonates most with you?

PRAYERS

For Stephen and Kate Clark—[Campus2Campus \(C2C\) Ministries](#)

Pray for the Stateside Staff. Pray for their work to further the C2C goals on the field through the Overseas Staff by reaching unreached people with the gospel in Indonesia, Japan, and India.

WEDNESDAY

Read [Isaiah 6:1-8](#); [Exodus 33:18-23](#)

Ever met anyone claiming, “I had an angelic visitation, giving me this word from God ...”? You might ask, “How was it, encountering an angel?” If they respond nonchalantly or with an “It was peaceful ...!” response, be skeptical. Almighty God still speaks and can commission His angels (“messengers”) to earthly contacts. However, human biblical encounters with powerful, holy angels generally result in terror (Luke 2:9) or, at least, feeling “*greatly troubled*” (Luke 1:29).

Sin cannot endure God’s holiness. We, as fallen people, are unequipped to stand in God’s awesome, almighty presence. His warning “*No one may see Me and live*” (Exodus 33:20) is not a “You’ve seen Me, now I have to strike you dead” threat. We cannot process God’s holiness, transcendence, and infinite nature; His holiness consumes sin and we are sinners.

The prophet experienced this in Isaiah 6. Upon his heavenly vision, Isaiah’s response: “*Woe to me! ... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips*” (Isaiah 6:5). Did God then forsake Isaiah? On the contrary: Isaiah’s self-aware confession prepared him for cleansing and reconciliation (Isaiah 6:7), enabling his commissioning as God’s prophet.

“[Isaiah] ministered from about 740 to 680 BC. For about 20 years, he spoke to both ... Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. After Israel’s fall to [Assyria] in 722 BC, Isaiah continued [prophesying] to Judah. ... Israel was [then] a little nation often caught in the middle of the wars [among] ... superpowers: Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. ... Isaiah means *Salvation is of the LORD*.” (David Guzik) “Isaiah’s prophecies date from the year of Uzziah’s death ... through the period when the independence of Judah was lost by Ahaz, who ... [rebelliously] turned to Assyria (instead of Yahweh) for help (2 Kings 16:7), to ... great success under Hezekiah.” (Peter Pett)

Isaiah lived and served during interesting times, as do we. Before revisiting Isaiah’s story tomorrow, ask yourself: Do I have any unconfessed sin? What things keep me from serving God as fully as I might? How can I be “*salt ... [and] light*” (Matthew 5:13-14) for God’s glory and Kingdom purposes?

QUESTIONS

What does “Sin cannot endure God’s holiness” mean? When having a vision of God, why did Isaiah proclaim, “*Woe to me! ... I am ruined!*” What impresses you most about Isaiah’s ministry?

PRAYERS

For Stephen and Kate Clark—[Campus2Campus \(C2C\) Ministries](#)

Pray for new believers in Indonesia. There are two new brothers and one new sister in Indonesia (all converted from Islam). Pray for their spiritual growth, strength to stand strong in difficult cultural and social circumstances as Christian converts, and perseverance in the faith.

THURSDAY

Read [Isaiah 6:9-13, 52:13–53:12](#)

In the 2004 film *Napolean Dynamite*, Pedro monotonously pledged during his ASB presidential speech, “Vote for me and all of your wildest dreams will come true.” You may have heard a “prosperity Gospel” preacher or two make similar claims regarding Christianity. Such was not the prophet Isaiah’s experience. Rather, upon commissioning him, God promised the prophet a dismissive, hard-hearted Jewish audience (Isaiah 6:9-10).

Likewise, Jesus Himself taught His disciples of the many challenges in following Him. A couple of His related “hard teaching” quotes include: “*In this world you will have trouble*” (John 16:33) and “*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*” (Matthew 10:34). Jesus regularly urged followers to “*take up [your] cross*” (Matthew 16:24) just as He would.

Isaiah’s challenging call pictured the Lord’s. “*Though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to ... His own, but His own did not receive Him*” (John 1:10-11). Fittingly, “more than any other book in the Old Testament, Isaiah focuses on the salvation that will come through the Messiah. ... The book of Isaiah also presents the Messiah as One who will suffer. Isaiah chapter 53 vividly describes the Messiah suffering for sin. ... In His

second advent, [however,] Jesus will be the conquering and ruling King, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).” (GotQuestions.org)

Isaiah’s prophetic warnings and Messianic imagery fell generally on deaf ears. Did he fail? By no means! Isaiah faithfully ministered despite the lack of immediate, temporal “results.” However, his legacy endures via the majestic book bearing his name, the major prophets’ first book broadly considered “the pinnacle and Gospel of the Old Testament.” Only the Psalms are more frequently quoted in the New Testament than Isaiah.

We are not responsible for results—those are God’s responsibility. We are called, however, to faithfulness—to “scatter seed” (Matthew 13:4), aiming to draw others toward “*the Lord of the harvest*” (Matthew 9:38). Ever get discouraged when loved ones disregard Jesus Christ? “*Take up [your] cross*” in interceding faithfully for them, persevering prayerfully!

QUESTIONS

What do you think of teaching that suggests, “Come to Christ and all of your problems will go away”? How did Jesus’ own teaching contradict this “prosperity Gospel” view? How did Isaiah’s mission demonstrate that God’s ways are infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9)?

PRAYERS

For Stephen and Kate Clark—[Campus2Campus \(C2C\) Ministries](#)

Pray for the beginnings of a church in Japan. A group of interested students has started meeting together to study the Bible more regularly. Pray that this would be the seeds of a church in Osaka.

FRIDAY

Read [Isaiah 6:1-5](#); [Exodus 20:1-26](#)

Consider Isaiah's account when envisioning our holy God of glory: "I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; ... His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphim, ... [declaring]: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.' ... [Everything] shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1-4). The prophet's surrendered response: "Woe to me! ... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, ... [for I] have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (v. 5).

Isaiah's call brings to mind Jesus calling Simon. Despite nightlong fishing futility, the following morning Simon and colleagues landed abundant fish per Jesus' instruction. Recognizing Jesus as no ordinary Man, Simon Peter "got down at the feet of Jesus. He said, 'Go away from me, Lord, because I am a sinful man'" (Luke 5:8).

God's majesty, holiness, and glory are infinitely beyond us. The Israelites experienced this during the exodus. Before receiving the Ten Commandments, they were warned, "Do not approach [Mount Sinai] or touch the foot of it ... [lest you die]" (Exodus 19:12). On the day the Commandments were given, there was "thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled" (v. 16). Their resultant,

fearful appeal to Moses: "Speak to us yourself ... But do not have God speak to us or we will die" (20:19).

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, there is an exchange regarding the lion Aslan, the story's Christ figure. Susan asks, "'Is he—quite safe?' ... 'Safe?' said Mr. Beaver, '... Course he isn't safe, but he's good.'" (C.S. Lewis)

Though Jesus is "a friend of ... sinners" (Luke 7:34), One "who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:34), we diminish Him when considering Him only as a "buddy." Those calling God "the big guy upstairs" perilously approach "[taking] the name of the LORD ... God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). God created us for loving, intimate fellowship. That wonder should never prompt casual overfamiliarity. Rather, such awesomeness should fuel gratitude, reverence, and selfless sacrifice for His glory.

QUESTIONS

What are the parallels between the prophet Isaiah's commissioning and Jesus' call to Simon Peter? Why did the ancient Israelites appeal to Moses to buffer them from God? What does "God isn't safe, but He's good" mean to you?

PRAYERS

For Stephen and Kate Clark—[Campus2Campus \(C2C\) Ministries](#)

Pray for visas in India. The visa situation in India is always a bit in flux. Most of the C2C team is on a more stable visa now, but some of the team members are still working on it. Pray for the current team and future team members to have stable visa situations for many years to come.



Sources

- GotQuestions.org's first quotation is from <https://www.gotquestions.org/name-change.html>; the second set of quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Isaiah.html>.
- David Guzik's comments can be found at https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/isaiah/isaiah-1.cfm.
- Peter Pett's quote is from <https://www.bibliaplus.org/en/commentaries/138/peter-petts-commentary-on-the-bible/isaiah/1/1>.
- Pedro's quote is from the motion picture, *Napoleon Dynamite*, written by Jared and Jerusha Hess; distributed by Fox Searchlight Pictures, © 2004.
- C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, was first published by Geoffrey Bles in London, © 1950.

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