

Week Four: Teachers Guide

"The Role of Covenant"

[You'll notice the prompts to show slide. These are optional. However, you will notice that they will enhance the experience by placing images to words as you share certain aspects of the Bible Study]

Overview:

1. The Beginning of All Nations and Languages
2. The Beginning Of Covenant
3. Abraham
4. The Beginning of Arab Nations
5. Covenant Reestablished
6. Circumcision and Covenant
7. Spiritual Circumcision
8. The Greatest Test
9. Closing

Brief Week Three Recap

Last time we got together we looked at how:

[Show WEEK THREE Title Slide from last week]...

The Foundational Theme of salvation is "Grace, Faith, and Obedience."

[Show Slide with words, "Grace, Faith, and Obedience"]...

We saw this theme in the lives of Cain and Abel...and again when God called Noah to build the Ark.

Scripture clearly states that "Faith without works is dead."

We cannot just “believe” and then skip “obedience.”

And this leads us into our lesson today...

- WHY are we called to obedience?
- What is the big deal?
- Is God just a “**power-hungry**” Savior who wants to see if He can control us?

Before we can talk specifically about **WHAT** God’s plan for our salvation is... let us first understand **WHY** He has a specific plan for that salvation.

[Show Title Slide for THIS week... “The Role of Covenant”]

Our title for this week’s lesson is, “The Role of Covenant.”

Before we start, we always want to ask God to bless the lesson and help us to draw closer to Him... **PRAY!**

1. The Beginning of All Nations and Languages

[Show Slide on “BABEL: Beginning of Nations/Languages”]...

Last lesson, we ended by mentioning that Noah and his family came out of the Ark, worshipped God, and then God spoke to them and told them to “multiply and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1).

Well, only about 130 years pass, and humankind is already slipping in to the same pattern of thinking as:

- Adam and Eve,
- Cain,
- And humanity around the time of Noah.

They were being led by selfish desires, pride, and sin.

So much, in fact, that they decided to try and build a tower all the way to Heaven so they didn't have to scatter and spread out (which is actually what God told them to do).

[Show Scripture]...

Genesis 11:1–6

1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

- Just like humanity before them, they thought they could just alter God's plan because it was against their own.
- God never works that way.
- Like we talked about last lesson... God doesn't expect perfection, but He does expect obedience.

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 11:7–9 (KJV)

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

They would not move out and replenish the earth, so God introduces multiple languages here at this place in what we now know as **the Middle East**.

This is the first Biblical reference we have to multiple languages. It is the earliest that we can trace nationalities and cultures.

But if God was going to choose one of these nationalities and cultures to be His “chosen people,” and give them special promises and a future, how would He make that choice?

After all, God loves all people and not just one specific culture.

So on what parameters did a certain nation or culture become God’s **“chosen people?”**

2. The Beginning of Covenant

- God had “relationship” with humanity before this time, but now He was going to establish something even deeper.
- For those who are married, you will probably understand this concept very well.
- It is the concept of covenant.

[Show Dating Picture on Beach]...

- When someone is dating a person, they are developing a relationship with that person.
- There might be an official time that dating began.
- There may be a specific place where the romantic relationship started.
- Yet in American culture, there are usually not “vows” exchanged in the initial stages of relationship.

[Show Picture of bride and groom exchanging wedding rings]...

Those come at a later time when the decision has been made to be married.

At that point, a man and woman will typically stand before a minister and commit vows to one another.

- For better or for worse,
- For rich or for poor,
- In sickness and in health,
- As long as you both shall live.

This process of exchanging vows forms what we might call a "Covenant."

A covenant is similar to a business agreement that could also include legal ramifications.

The marriage covenant did not start in some American court room, it started when God created humanity and marriage.

And it is pretty interesting that God calls His church the "Bride of Christ" because our relationship with Him is also one of covenant.

There were also "spiritual" covenants that God initiated between Himself and humankind.

That, in itself, shows the love and grace of God!

Our Creator was never obligated to bind Himself to a deal with His own creation.

Yet, He loved us enough to give parameters by which we could live by, and then in turn, He would live by as our Savior.

3. Abraham

So God reaches out and calls specifically to a man named, "Abram," who later has his name changed to "Abraham."

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 12:1–4 (KJV)

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

God calls Abram to not just “believe” in him, but to also take his faith and step out and make a drastic life change.

Abram is called to leave the pagan gods that his family most likely worshipped and go on a “journey of faith.”

Anytime God calls to you, it is an invitation to enter into a “journey of faith.”

God never shares the entire roadmap with all the stops, the challenges, and the entire plan spelled out.

I wish He did! That’s just not the way He works.

He will take us through things that test us and develop our faith.

And just like lifting weights... “resistance” builds strength!

[Show Pic of Full Moving Truck]...

Can you imagine packing up your family, and when your neighbor walks over to ask where you are moving, you simply say, “I have no idea. God is going to show me as we go”

People would think you were crazy!

But walking by faith can seem a bit crazy at times.

God told Abram that He did not only want to bless him personally, but also...

- To bless an entire world through him,
- To curse those who curse him,
- And to make an entire nation out of him!

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 15:6 (KJV)

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Just because God had a **PLAN**, that does not mean it was carried out yet.

God's plan was going to be dictated by Abram's faith and his response to the invitation God was giving him.

Interesting point:

The first 11 Chapters of the Book of Genesis covered 2000 years. Now, God spends 14 chapters on Abraham.

There are some very important things to be learned about Abraham!

The important foundation of "covenant" is solidified in the Bible through the life of Abraham.

[Show Title Slide Again]...

I wish I could say that Abraham left his father's house, embarked on a journey of faith, and never made a mistake as he walked in God's plan for his life.

That isn't the case. He traveled through Egypt and got afraid and lied to the Egyptian leadership.

He tried to take matters into his own hands. As a matter of fact, in some ways, he was a lot like us.

He responded to God, but God still had work to do to develop him along the journey.

4. The Beginning of Arab Nations

The Lord promised Abram (still had not yet changed his name) many children, but Abram struggled with God's initial call when the Lord said He would make an entire nation out of him.

Abram and Sarai (later changed to "Sarah") could not have children.

And when you reach your 80s and 90s without children... that dream typically dies at that stage of life!

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 15:2–5

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Of course, God never moves as fast as man wants him to, so Abram and Sarai take matters into their own hands.

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 16:1–4 (KJV)

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

There is no part of this that sounds like a good idea!

Your wife telling you to sleep with another woman. A woman who is her servant, mind you.

When that woman is able to give the child that Sarai is not... that creates quite a bit of tension in the home.

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 16:11 (KJV)

11 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 16:15–16 (KJV)

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old (**86 years old**), when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

Note: This child Ishmael is the father of all the Arab nations.

The modern-day Palestinians say that Jerusalem is theirs. They say Abraham was their father, (and this is true.)

However, God promised the land specifically to Abraham and Sarah's child.

NOTICE: Abram and Sarai getting impatient and trying to "help" God move His plan along... is still the source of contention and even bloodshed in the Middle East.

Three major religions claim Abraham as their Patriarch (or "founder" or "religious head"):

- (1) Judaism
- (2) Christianity
- (3) Islam

5. Covenant Reestablished

Thank God that He is a faithful God who is also full of grace and mercy!

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 17:15–16 (KJV)

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

God changes their names because a person was a reflection of their name.

It was not like American culture where you just look online and see the list of 100 top baby names and choose one you like.

God changed and gave names based on His plan and purpose for a specific life.

[Show Scripture]...

Genesis 17:19–24 (KJV)

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

[Show Title Slide Again]...

God was still going to bless Ishmael (and he has), but notice God starts using the word "**covenant**" over and over again!

This was **NOT** just about

- A plan,
- Blessing,
- Salvation,
- Future,
- A nation,

It was about "**covenant**."

It was God binding Himself to a legal deal with humanity!

So God says, "Yes, I will bless Ishmael, but my **covenant** will be with Isaac!"

Covenant was everything with God!

He was, and is, a God of covenant!

In our next lesson, we will look at how the most important piece of furniture in Israel's history... and throughout the entire Old Testament...

A place where God says He will meet with His people...

Is not called an "Ark of" ...

- Blessing,
- Worship,
- Doctrine,

But He calls it an "Ark of **Covenant.**"

6. Circumcision and Covenant

God's parameters of His covenant may not always make perfect sense.

Look back at what God asked of Abraham when he is an elderly man in his 90s...

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 17:9–14 (KJV)

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my **covenant** therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This is my **covenant**, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting **covenant**.

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my **covenant**.

God's demands for covenant relationship are not based on our desires or interpretation.

God offers to enter into an amazing relationship with Abraham where He will bless him and offer him a great future.

But in order for Abraham to be a part of that, Abraham is called to circumcise every man in his entire traveling party (including himself).

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Genesis 17:23–24 (KJV)

23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Abraham knew it was **"obey or no deal."**

But he also knew that if he was going to experience all that God had planned for him in this offer for a COVENANT relationship...

Then he also needed to keep **HIS** end of the covenant!

7. Spiritual Circumcision

Circumcision might have seemed a bit odd to be the token of that covenant, but like I said, God always has a plan.

Circumcision is done with hands and surgical instruments.

Today circumcision is still done, but when we are speaking about it “spiritually”... it is done “without” hands!

Now THAT seems really crazy!

But check it out...

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Colossians 2:11–12 (NLT – Just for ease of understanding here)

11 When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.

12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

The Apostle Paul here compares circumcision to being buried (or covered or engrossed) in water in the Name of Jesus!

The foreskin was viewed as unclean, so when it was removed through a surgical procedure, filth was removed.

Paul used this comparison to sin being removed in the waters of baptism.

So, when God set up this part of the covenant way back for Abraham...

He always knew it would point to water baptism.

Here is more proof of that as the Apostle Paul communicates this with extreme clarity!...

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Galatians 3:27 (KJV)

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

[\[Show Scripture\]...](#)

Galatians 3:29 (KJV)

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Now WE TOO can enter into COVENANT relationship, just as Abraham did!

But instead of physical circumcision... we are baptized **in His Name!**

We will talk more in depth about water baptism in a later lesson, but I just wanted you to see its connection to **Covenant!**

8. The Greatest Test

The last thing we will cover today is Abraham's greatest test in his journey of faith.

Remember, he and Sarah had been waiting 25 whole years for the promise of their own child.

Isaac is finally born when Abraham is 100 and Sarah is 90, and they circumcised him on the eighth day, just as God commanded.

- God told Abraham to leave his father's house... and he left.
- He told Abraham to get circumcised as a 99 year old man... and he did.
- But now this...

[Show Scripture]...

Genesis 22:2–8 (KJV)

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

This is where Abraham became **"Father of the Faithful."**

God asked Abraham to give his only son from Sarah...

The supposed "child of promise"...

As a sacrifice to him.

It is a sad reality, but child sacrifice to pagan gods was common in that day.

Abraham thought God was different, but he was still willing to obey.

He was willing to lay his greatest treasure on earth upon an altar in worship to God.

But God never intended for anyone to sacrifice a child!

In this case, God was just testing Abraham's faith.

Abraham passed and God stepped in...

[Show Scripture]...

Genesis 22:9–11 (KJV)

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

9. Closing

We will all face our own “Mt. Moriah” someday. Maybe you already have faced it?

A time where you have to choose between God and whatever He is calling for at that time.

Just remember, standing strong for God will NEVER be let down!