

The background of the slide is a dark night sky filled with numerous small stars. Several prominent stars have bright blue and white starburst effects. At the bottom of the image, there is a dark silhouette of a forest or a line of trees.

We Are
Abraham's
Seed

The Family *of* Promise

We are Abraham's Seed

**A Study on the life of Abraham in relation to the current day
Christian**

Class 7 Abimelech and Birth of Isaac

Genesis 20-21

Allen Thomas 2026

Narrative Questions to Use

Each week, as we read the narrative, ask these kinds of questions:

- Where is trust being tested?
- Where are relationships strained or repaired?
- Who has power, and how is it used?
- Who is protected, restored, or harmed?
- What choices move the story toward life and blessing—and what choices move it toward chaos?

Scripture also asks:

- How does God (Jesus) restore what is broken?
- How does God (Jesus) form a people who reflect His character?
- How does God (Jesus) confront evil and oppression?
- How does God (Jesus) create a community where blessing can spread outward?

Where We Have Been

- Gen 1-11 is the prologue to the rest of Scripture
 - The promise of a seed
 - The result of rebellions
 - God's mishpat (justice) and His tzedakah (righteousness) are working together
- Abram is called to be a blessing
 - Called to leave land, kin, home
 - God will give him nationhood, blessing, a great name
 - Yet we see failure in the trip to Egypt
- Abram retraces his steps to the beginning
 - He and Lot separate
 - The promise is restated
 - Power through conquest is refused and the encounter with Melchizedek
- God's promise clarified for the heir
 - Trust (Faith) counted as tzedakah
 - Covenant cutting ceremony
 - Prophecy of exile and return
- The couple renamed and the Heir identified
 - Ishmael is born through natural means
 - New names given to signify new roles
 - The heir will come through Sara
 - A covenant sign of circumcision is given
- God appeared and the promise is Realized
 - Abraham's extravagant hospitality
 - Commanded to do mishpat and tzedakah
 - Abraham is educated on mishpat and tzedakah
 - Abraham intercedes for Sodom
 - Lot is rescued from Sodom's mishpat

Living within the Triangle

CHESED

Covenant loyalty · steadfast love · faithful kindness

- Relational faithfulness, not sentiment
- Love that acts for the good of the other
- Loyalty that persists even when undeserved
- God's commitment to remain present and faithful
- The covenant bond that holds relationships together

THE MOTIVE:

Love that refuses to abandon



SHALOM

Wholeness · flourishing · restored life

- Life lived without fear
- Restoration of a right relationship
- Life as it is meant to be, flourishing
- Harmony between God, people, and creation

THE RESULT:

The world put back together



THE CHARGE TO ABRAHAM

"to guard the path of YHWH by doing mishpat and tzedakah." (Gen 18:19)



MISHPAT

Justice · right ordering · accountability

- Restrain what causes harm
- Restoring order and protection
- Setting things right when order is broken
- Impartial justice that protects the vulnerable

THE DISCERNING JUDGEMENT:

Justice that confronts disorder and names it

TZEDAKAH

Right relationship · faithful action · doing what is needed

- Giving what is needed, not earned
- Acting rightly within relationships
- Trust expressed through obedience
- Faithfulness expressed in concrete action
- Doing what restores dignity, life, and relationship

THE ACTION:

Doing what needs to be done for the sake of the other person

THE PATH OF GOD – LIVING WITHIN THE TRIANGLE

Chesed sustains relationships • **Mishpat** confronts disorder • **Tzedakah** embodies faithfulness

Shalom emerges when all three are lived together

Where We Are Going

- Abimelech and Abraham - the call to be a blessing is challenged
 - The Son of the Promise Arrives
 - The Son of the Flesh is Sent Away
- Abimelech and Abraham - the call to be a blessing is lived out

What to look for

1. **Fear vs faith:** Where does Abraham revert to self-protection, and what does the story expose about fear-driven “half-truths”?
2. **Outsider mishpat:** How does Abimelech reason about righteousness/innocence—and what does that reveal about God’s concern for justice beyond the covenant line?
3. **The Promise made visible:** What words/phrases does the narrator repeat in 21:1–8 to underline “God kept his word”?
4. **The Triangle in action:** Where do you see **chesed** (faithful provision), **mishpat** (accountability/fair dealing), and **tzedakah** (restored dignity)—and what happens to **shalom** when one corner is missing?

She is still your Sister ???

20:1 Avraham traveled from there to the Negev,
And settled between Kadesh and Shur
Sojourning in Gerar.

² Avraham said of Sara his wife:

She is my sister.

So Avimelekh, king of Gerar sent and **had Sara taken**.

³ **But God came** to Avimelekh **in a dream** of the night and said to him:

Here, you must die

Because the woman whom you have taken,
For she is a wedded wife!

⁴ Avimelekh had not come near her.

He said:

**My Lord,
Would you kill a nation,
Though it be righteous?**

⁵ Did not he say to me: She is my sister,

And also she, she said:

He is my brother!

With a **whole heart** and with **clean hands** have I done this.

Vocation Deepened

⁶ God said to him **in the dream**:

I also know that it was with a whole heart that you did this.

And so I held you back from being at fault against me,

Therefore, I did not let you **touch her**.

⁷ But now, return the man's wife

Indeed, **he is a prophet**,

He can **intercede** for you and live!

But if you do not return her:

Know that you must die, yes, die

You and all that is yours!

The first 'prophet' in the Bible is not a predictor first, but an intercessor. Abraham is named prophet at the moment his failure threatens others, which highlights God's commitment to bless and protect the nations through an imperfect covenant family. Even in Abraham's failure, he remains the conduit of blessing.

Fear-based Action is not Right

⁸ **Early in the morning** Avimelekh called all his servants,
He spoke all these words in their ears,
And the men became exceedingly afraid.

⁹ Then Avimelekh had Avraham called and said to him:

What have you done to us?

In what did I fault you?

That you brought me and my kingdom into such great fault;

Deeds which are not to be done,

You have done to me!

¹⁰ And Avimelekh said to Avraham

What did you foresee, that you did this thing?

¹¹ Avraham said:

Indeed, I said to myself:

Surely there is no awe of God in this place,

They will kill me on account of my wife!

¹² then, too, she is truly my sister,

My father's daughter,

However not my mother's daughter

So she became my wife!

Shalom restored

¹⁴ Avimelekh took sheep and oxen

Servants and maids

And gave them to Avraham,

And returned Sara his wife to him.

¹⁵ Avimelekh said:

Here, my land is before you,

Settle wherever seems good in your eyes.

¹⁶ and to Sara he said:

Here, I have given a thousand silver to your brother,

Herein, it shall serve you as a covering for the eyes for all who are with you

And with everyone, that you are beyond dispute.

¹⁷ **Avraham interceded with God**

And God healed Avimelekh: his wife and his slave-women

So that they gave birth.

¹⁸ for YHWH had obstructed, obstructed every womb in Avimelekh's household

On account of Sara, the wife of Avraham.

Reflections on the Narrative

The contrast is striking: in Genesis 18 Abraham, the covenant insider, appeals to God's mishpat (justice) on behalf of others, but in Genesis 20 it is Abimelech, the outsider, who now appeals to that same mishpat (justice) on behalf of himself. The insider who once questioned whether the righteous would be swept away now becomes the one whose actions put another innocent party at risk.

Abimelech appeals to a category that still matters deeply in Scripture—the category of **innocence**. He does not claim sinlessness, but integrity in this matter, and God himself acknowledges that distinction in this matter.

Coming right out of the Sodom narrative, this becomes especially searching. In Sodom, Abraham models costly intercession, careful concern for the righteous, and a refusal to be careless with human life. But in Genesis 20, Abraham **prejudges** Abimelech and his people—‘surely there is no fear of God in this place’—before he truly knows them. That is the danger of prejudging: once we decide too quickly what kind of people we are dealing with, we can slip outside the triangle almost without noticing it.

Mishpat weakens because we stop discerning carefully, and

Tzedakah weakens because we stop treating others with the dignity and fairness they are due.

Who is within the Triangle?

- In modern language, Abraham looks like the “elect” insider, and Abimelech like the “non-elect” outsider.
- But the narrative does not let those categories explain everything.
- Abraham, the chosen one, acts out of fear and prejudice.
- Abimelech, the outsider, appeals to justice, innocence, and integrity, and God acknowledges that distinction in this matter.
- The story does not erase covenant distinction, but it does resist neat boxes in which the insider is always morally clear and the outsider is always spiritually dark.

We are still to be a blessing

- Abraham is still the chosen vessel through whom the blessing is meant to flow.
- The narrative does not erase his calling even though he has just failed badly.
- Abimelech may be acknowledged in his innocence in this matter, healing still comes through Abraham's prayer of intercession.
- That means the story holds both truths together: the chosen one can fail seriously, and yet God still works through him for the sake of others.

The Promised Heir Arrives

- 21:1 Now YHWH took account of Sara **as he had said**,
YHWH dealt with (visited) Sara **as he had spoken (promised)**.
- 2 Sara became pregnant and **bore Avraham a son in his old age**,
At the set time of which **God had spoken to him**.
- 3 And Avraham called the name of his son,
Who was **born to him**
Whom Sara **bore to him**:
Yitzhak (**He Laughs**).
- 4 **and Avraham circumcised Yitzhak his son at eight days old**
As God had commanded him.
- 5 Avraham was **a hundred years old** when Yitzhak his son **was born to him**.
- 6 Now Sara said:
God has made **laughter** for me,
All who hear of it will **laugh** for me.
- 7 and she said:
Who would have declared to Avraham:
Sara will nurse sons?
Well, I have **borne him a son in his old age!**
- 8 The child grew and **was weaned**,
And Avraham made a great drinking feast on the day
That Yitzhak **was weaned**.

Conflict Returns

⁹ Once Sara saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian woman
Whom she had borne to Avraham, laughing...

¹⁰ She said to Avraham:

**Drive out this slave woman and her son,
For the son of this slave woman shall not share inheritance**

With my son,
With Yitzhak!

¹¹ The matter was exceedingly bad (*ra*) in Avraham's eyes

Because of his son.

¹² But God said to Avraham:

Do not let it be bad (*ra*) in your eyes concerning the lad

And concerning your slave woman;

In all that Sara says to you,

Hearken (*shema*) to her voice,

For it is through Yitzhak that seed will be called by your name.

¹³ But also the son of the slave woman

A nation will I make of him,

For he too is your seed.

God Still Hears

¹⁴ Avraham started **early in the morning**,

He took some bread and a skin of water

And gave them to Hagar

Placing them on her shoulder

Together with the child and sent her away.

She went off and roamed in the wilderness of Be'er-Sheva.

¹⁵ and when the water in the skin was at an end,

She flung the child under one of the bushes,

¹⁶ and went and sat by herself, at a distance

As far away as a bowshot,

For she said to herself:

Let me not see the child die!

So she sat at a distance,

And lifted up **her voice and wept**.

¹⁷ But **God heard (Elohim shema) the voice of the lad**,

God's messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her:

What is the matter with you, Hagar?

Do not be afraid,

For **God has heard (Elohim shema) the voice of the lad**

there where he is.

¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad and grasp him with your hand,

For a great nation will I make of him!

¹⁹ **God opened her eyes**,

And **she saw** a well of water;

She went,

Filled the skin with water,

And gave the lad to drink.

²⁰ and **God was with the lad** as he grew up,

He settled in the wilderness,

And became an archer, a bowman.

²¹ He settled in the wilderness of Paran

And his mother took him a wife from the land of Egypt.

Why Banish Ishmael

Ex 34:5-6 YHWH, YHWH—God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing in *chesed* (loyal love) and faithfulness, keeping *chesed* (loyal love) for thousands [of generations], bearing iniquity, rebellion, and sin, yet not acquitting the guilty, so that the iniquity of fathers carries over into children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generation.

Ishmael did not create this crisis, and Hagar did not deserve to bear its weight.

They are caught up in the consequences of Abraham and Sarah's fear-driven actions.

Yet the God who guards the covenant line also sees the vulnerable ones cast out by that brokenness and remains faithful to them.

Abraham can no longer control the outcome, but must relinquish a son, the only son of his mother, whom he loves, to the care of God

Shalom portrayed

²² It was about that time that Avimelekh, together with Pikhol
The commander of his army said to Avraham;
God is with you in all that you do.
²³ So now, swear to me here by God:
If you should ever deal falsely with me,
With my progeny and my posterity...
Rather, *chesed* (faithfully), as I have dealt with you,
Deal with me,
And with the land in which you have sojourned.

²⁴ Avraham said:

I so swear.

²⁵ But **Avraham lodged a complaint** with (rebuked) Avimelekh
Because of a well of water that Avimelekh's servants had
seized.

²⁶ Avimelekh said:

I do not know who did this thing,
Nor have you ever told me,
Nor have I heard of it apart from today.

²⁷ So Avraham took sheep and oxen
Gave them to Avimelekh,
And the two of them cut a covenant.

²⁸ Then Avraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock aside.

²⁹ Avimelekh said to Avraham:

What mean these seven ewe lambs that you have set
aside?

³² He said:

Indeed,

These seven ewe lambs you should take from my hand,
So that they may be a witness for me that I dug this well.

³¹ Therefore that place was called Be'er-Sheva (Well of the
Seven Swearing).

For there the two of them swore an oath.

³² Thus they cut a covenant in Be'er-Sheva.

Then Avimelekh and Pikhol the commander of his army arose
And returned to the land of the Philistines.

The Blessing Lived Out

This moment shows Abraham finally living Genesis 12:

- blessing the nations without fear
- practicing mishpat without violence
- trusting the promise without grasping
- dwelling as a life-giver, not a taker

Trusting the Promise

³³ and he planted a tamarisk in Be'er-Sheva

And there he called out his name: **YHWH God of the Ages.**

³⁴ And Avraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.

A tamarisk planted by a well functions as:

- shade for people drawing water
- rest for travelers and animals
- hospitality infrastructure
- a sign that the well is meant to be shared, not defended



The Formation of faith

The Abraham narrative is marked by a recurring faith–fear tension. Abraham often trusts God, but under pressure he can revert to fear and self-protection. Yet across the narrative, God patiently forms him so that trust grows deeper and more costly.

Next week we will examine Abraham and a very costly test of his faith

My Walk On The Path

- **Mishpat (fairness + accountability):** Where did fear or assumptions tempt Abraham to protect himself at others' expense? Where do I do that—and what would *measured, truthful* mishpat look like instead?
- **Tzedakah (restored dignity):** Who is most vulnerable in this story (Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael)? What does God do to protect dignity and future—and what does “restoring dignity” look like in my real relationships this week?
- **Chesed (faithful love):** God keeps the promise even through messy humans. Where do I need to trust God's chesed when I feel stuck in old patterns?
- **Shalom (the center):** What practices move a household/community from fear and grasping toward durable peace—truth-telling, restitution, intercession, generosity, covenant-keeping?



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The Family *of* Promise

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Class 7 - Abimelech and the Birth of Isaac (Genesis 20-21)

Where we are in the story

Genesis 20-21 comes right after Sodom and shows that Abraham is still being formed. He has learned to intercede, yet he can still slip back into fear and self-protection. These chapters hold together outsider integrity, covenant vocation, the long-awaited birth of Isaac, the wilderness preservation of Ishmael, and a final scene of peaceable settlement at Beersheba.

Where we are going today

- **Abimelech and Abraham- the call to be a Blessing is challenged**
 - **The. Promised Son arrives**
 - **The Son of the Flesh departs**
- **Abimelech and Abraham - the call to be a Blessing lived out**

Abraham's action in Gerar is not simple prudence. It is a relapse into fear. After the Sodom narrative, where he carefully weighs the fate of the righteous, he now prejudices another people: 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place.' That assumption lets him step outside the triangle almost without noticing it. Mishpat weakens because he stops discerning carefully, and tzedakah weakens because he treats others according to fear rather than truth. This episode shows that Abraham is being formed, not presented as instantly mature. The chosen one can still fail badly, and the narrative does not hide that failure.

Genesis 20 - Abimelech and outsider mishpat

What is striking is that the outsider now appeals to justice. Abimelech does not claim sinlessness; he claims integrity in this matter, and God acknowledges that distinction. In Genesis 18 Abraham, the covenant insider, appealed to God's justice on behalf of others. In Genesis 20 it is Abimelech, the outsider, who asks whether the righteous will be swept away.

The point is not that covenant distinction disappears. The point is that Genesis does not let us put people into neat boxes where the insider is always morally clear and the outsider is always spiritually dark. Abraham remains the chosen vessel, but the outsider becomes the one speaking the language of innocence, justice, and accountability.

Genesis 20 - Vocation preserved through intercession

Even here, election still matters. Abraham is named a prophet at the very moment his failure has endangered others. The first prophet in Genesis is not primarily a predictor, but an intercessor. Healing comes to Abimelech's house through Abraham's prayer.

Genesis 21:1-8 - Isaac and the promise kept

The birth of Isaac slows the narrative down so the reader cannot miss the point: God did what he said, as he had promised, at the set time. Sarah's laughter is no longer the laughter of strained unbelief, but the laughter of fulfilled promise. Isaac's arrival is covenant faithfulness made visible.

This is why the heir matters so much in Abraham's story. The promise does not move forward through human control or natural strength, but through God's faithful action. Isaac is not just a child long desired; he is the promised seed through whom the covenant line will continue.

Genesis 21:9-21 - Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness

The covenant line is clarified through Isaac, but Genesis refuses to treat Hagar and Ishmael as disposable. They are caught in the consequences of Abraham and Sarah's earlier fear-driven actions, yet God still hears the cry in the wilderness. The God who guards the promise also sees the vulnerable ones cast out by human failure.

This matters for the triangle. Chesed appears in God's continued faithfulness. Mishpat appears in his hearing of the vulnerable, not only the chosen. Tzedakah appears in the restoration of dignity and future: water, survival, nationhood, and presence. Ishmael is not the heir of the covenant line, but he is not outside God's seeing and hearing.

Genesis 21:22-34 - Beersheba and shared shalom

The final scene with Abimelech is very different from the earlier one. Abraham no longer acts from panic. He raises a grievance without violence, Abimelech answers without escalation, and the two make covenant over a well. This is what mishpat sounds like in speech: truthful, proportional, and aimed at resolution.

Abraham then plants a tamarisk and calls on the everlasting God. The act suggests patience, settledness, and hope in a future larger than the immediate moment. He is learning to live as a life-giver rather than a taker, trusting God's promise without grasping.

For our own walk

- Notice where fear or assumption is shaping your response to another person - before you have truly seen them clearly.
- Do not confuse election, calling, or insider status with moral immunity. Abraham remains chosen, yet still needs correction.
- Listen for the outcry of the vulnerable. God also hears those who are cast out, not just those at the center of the promise.
- Practice mishpat in speech: clarify, tell the truth, and pursue resolution without escalation.

Key Takeaway

Genesis 20-21 shows that Abraham's calling continues even through failure. God preserves the promise, corrects fear, honors real integrity where it appears, hears the cast out, and teaches Abraham to become a blessing without grasping. If we are Abraham's seed, then we too are being formed to live with chesed, mishpat, tzedakah, and future-oriented faith.