

Pressing Play on God's Redemptive Plan – *Genesis 15*

Intro: The history of our redemption cannot be understood apart from this key covenant granted 4,000 years ago to Abram, a seemingly insignificant figure who becomes the Patriarch of Judaism and Christianity. After the flood and humanity's continued rebellion against God, God chooses to enact his greatest gift to humanity, by pressing play on a covenant that will eventually be fulfilled through Jesus.

READ Genesis 15

1. The life of Abraham should not be read as a myth or legend, but rather as a real history of a real God calling a real man to a real land to receive real promises.

If this is true, do you think God can act in similar ways in our real lives today?

2. Abraham is “blessed to be a blessing” with a covenant containing three promises:

- An unknown land is the first promise given to Abraham.
- Descendants as numerous as the stars and the sands is the second promise given to Abraham.
- Abraham's seed will be a blessing to the entire world is the third promise given to Abraham.

What barriers were there to these promises being fulfilled?

Think about some future plans that you feel God is unfolding in your life – what human barriers prevent you from fully trusting God?

3. Dallas Willard says "Faith is an extension of knowledge, based on knowledge". An example of this is sitting on a chair. In order to sit on a chair we must exercise faith, but this faith is based on previous experiences of that chair holding our weight (knowledge). In a similar way, every time God asks us to have faith, He is asking us to draw from our knowledge of his provision in the past, and calling us to extend that knowledge just a little (or a lot!) through trusting that he can do something new.

In what ways is God asking you to extend your knowledge of what He can do?

4. The covenant that God makes with Abraham in v7-20 is one of the most scandalous acts of God's grace recorded in scripture. An ancient covenant required two parties to walk between animal carcasses, with the threat of becoming like those animals if either of those parties broke the covenant.

What is the significance of Abraham falling asleep and God (in the form of a flaming furnace) walking alone through the animal carcasses?

In what ways does this act foreshadow God's ultimate act of dying for the human race?

5. In this story, Abraham has no control of the outcome of this covenant, it is all up to God. Sometimes it can be hard for us to grasp the reality of God's grace, simply because we like to remain in control of the outcomes. When we punish ourselves for our sin, or try to overcome on our own, we are trying to remain in control. God's sacrifice through Jesus means that he controls the outcome of our sin now, and he has chosen forgiveness for all who call on his name. How does this change the way you deal with your own sin?