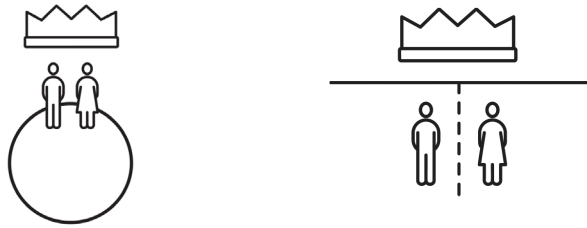


# PROMISES KEPT BIBLE OVERVIEW, WEEK THREE (GENESIS 12–50)

## THE STORY SO FAR... (1 MIN)



Remind your group what you've seen so far:

1. In Genesis 1-2, we saw that God created people to know the happiness of life lived in his presence, under his rule, in perfect relationship with each other, in a perfect place. This is the world we were created to enjoy.
2. In Genesis 3-11, we saw that people listened to Satan and chose not to live under God's good rule. They were therefore unable to live in his presence, experienced strained relationships with each other, and the world itself was spoiled. This is the world we live in today.

## OPENING QUESTION (2 MINS)

**What, if anything, would persuade you to move permanently away from your... • country? • friends? • family?**

It's worth underlining the word "permanently"—this isn't a gap year or holiday! The point is that for most people, it would take something very special to make them leave behind all they've ever known.

## VIDEO TALK (14 MINS)

### APPLY TIME... (10 MINS)

**1. If we have real faith, as Abraham and Sarah did, how will it show itself in our lives?**

a. In obedience. If we trust God (rather than ourselves, or what the world gives us), then we'll obey what he says, no matter what the cost, because we trust that God will do what he has promised. You can't see faith—but you can see the costly obedience that real faith produces.

b. In joy. Because we know that God has kept and will keep his promises, we have a baseline joy that cannot be extinguished by circumstances. What is most precious to us—knowing God, and knowing that he's promised to bless us—we cannot lose.

**2. In Abraham and Sarah's time, land, community and family were what people looked to for security in life. What are the things people look to for security today?** This will vary depending on your culture. Some ideas: pension plans, family, bank account, house, relationship, insurance, superstition (eg: astrology), job.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR OUR HEARTS AND LIVES (10 MINS)

You could talk about these as a group or, probably better break into twos or threes to discuss. You may want to pick one or two that you know are particularly helpful for your group and focus on those.

**What do you value most? Your possessions, family, career, comforts... or your relationship with God? If God were to call you to "leave ... and go", what would you find hardest to leave behind?**

**How should an attitude of promise-trusting risk-taking, joyful obedience look in your life and decisions right now?**

## PROMISE KEPT (16 MINS)

Read John 8 v 31-44

### 1. It's 1800 years later, and Jesus is talking to members of Abraham's family. But what problem do they all have (v 34-35a)?

They are all a "slave to sin"—rejecting God in attitude and action. They couldn't stop sinning even if they wanted. And a slave to sin can't be a part of God's family (v 35a). Though they are physically descended from Abram, spiritually they are not: they are not blessed.

### 2. What do they need Jesus, God the Son, to do for them (v 36)?

To set them free from slavery to sin, so they are free to belong to God's family again (v 35b).

### 3. What do they want to do with Jesus (v 40)? What does this show about them (v 39)?

They want to kill him. This shows (v 39) that they're not really Abraham's children at all, because a true child of Abraham would be related to him by action, rather than merely by blood.

### 4. How are they different to Abraham (v 40—think back to how Abraham reacted to God's words in Genesis 12)?

Abraham heard God speaking, knew God was speaking truly, and acted accordingly. These men want to kill the Word who has come from God in the flesh (John 1 v 14).

*The conversation continues...* Read John 8 v 54-59

### 5. What does Jesus say Abraham did while he was still alive (v 56)?

He rejoiced at the prospect of "my day" ie: the time when Jesus would be alive on earth.

**We've seen that God promised that he would bring blessing to people from all over the earth through one of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12 v 3). This is what Abraham was rejoicing at the thought of.**

### 6. So what claim is Jesus making for himself in John 8 v 56?

That as Abraham looked forward to the day when God fulfilled his promise to bless the earth, it was actually him, Jesus, that Abraham was looking forward to ie: Jesus is the one who fulfils the promises of Genesis 12.

### 7. Who, today, are the true children of Abraham (v 39, 56)? (Galatians 3 v 29 may help you here.)

- v 39: Those who do the things he did ie: trust God's promises and so obey God.
- v 56: Those who rejoice at the day God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled—ie: look at Jesus and rejoice.
- Gal 3 v 29: Those who "belong to Christ".

[Optional, if you have time]

### 8. Imagine someone said to you (or you found yourself thinking to yourself), "Of course I'm a Christian. I've been baptised. I was born into a Christian family. I go to church." What does John 8 have to say to that view?

Being a Christian, having God's promised blessing, is not about being part of a particular family, or community, or having gone through a particular rite such as baptism or (in the Old Testament, see Gen 17 v 9-14) circumcision. By nature, we are slaves to sin. We need to ask the Son, Jesus, to set us free from sin, bring us into God's family, and rejoice that by trusting him we can look forward to life in God's perfect world. That's a Christian!

## PRAY (7 MINS)

Encourage your group to pray in a way that:

- praises God/Jesus for who he is, as you've seen in Genesis 12 – 50 and in John 8
- confesses where you are not living in risk-taking obedience or in joy
- asks God's Spirit to show you how to rely on God's promises in particular areas of life where you're finding that hard

## **EXTRA BIBLE TIME (to slot in after 'Apply Time...')**

**We're going to the very end of the book of Genesis. Abraham's grandson, Jacob (also known as Israel), has just died. And he's died in Egypt, because he and his family moved there when there was a famine. They moved there because one of his sons, Joseph, was already there, having been sold into slavery by his eleven brothers, then living as a slave and a prisoner before ending up second-in-command of the entire kingdom due to his supernatural ability to decipher dreams.**

**Read Genesis 50:15-25**

### **1. What are the brothers worried about when their father dies (v 15)?**

That, now that his father is not around to forbid it or be upset about it, Joseph will pay them back for selling him into slavery—that he will use his power over them in the same self-serving, vengeful way as they had used their power over him all those years before.

### **2. How does Joseph respond (v 19, 21)?**

He tells them not to worry! He is not God (ie: he is not their judge); he will provide for them and their families. Joseph is generous rather than being vengeful.

### **3. What is his perspective on their awful action, years before, of selling him into slavery (v 20)?**

It was evil (he does not excuse or justify what they did). But it was also part of God's good plan. God had a good purpose in allowing their evil purpose—and it was to save many lives, the lives of his people, the family of Abraham. If Joseph had not had to go into Egypt, he would not have been in a position to store up food before the famine, nor to welcome his family to Egypt when they were facing starvation. God had therefore worked through even the brothers' sin to make sure that his promises would continue to work themselves out.

### **4. When it is Joseph's turn to die, what does he make his brothers swear to do (v 25)?**

To carry his bones out of Egypt, and into (v 24) the land he promised to give Abraham and his family.

### **5. What do verses 24-25 show us about Joseph's attitude to the promises made to his great-grandfather Abraham?**

He trusts God to keep them. He has total confidence that God will enable Abraham's family to get back to the promised land.

Not only that (and this is harder to draw out—you may need to simply point it out to the group), he trusts that God's promises are good. He does not want the family to stay in Egypt, even though he has given them wealth and security there. No matter how good life in Egypt has been, he has wanted God to come to their aid and take them out of Egypt and to the promised land. In other words, Joseph is convinced that the best thing that can possibly happen is for God to keep his promises, and nothing else that this world offers compares to that.

