

# GENESIS—WEEK 10

## THE PATH



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is The Creation by Michael van der Borch (~1300 – 1370)  
On display at the Museum Meermanno in The Hague, Netherlands*

This section gets to the beginning of Abram’s walk of faith. It’s part good and part not so good. While Abram follows the LORD’s leading, his stumbles are the stuff of legend.

Abram is growing.

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Thank you.

Genesis 11:10–13:9 — The Path  
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1 Genesis 11:10–26 (ESV)

*These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah. And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber. And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg. And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu. And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug. And Reu lived after he fathered Serug 207 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor. And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah. And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters.*

*When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.*

In a single page, the Bible records a history that's longer than the United States has existed. All the life events are skipped. This highlights how God's revelation to us is designed for human consumption. A "total history" Bible would be unimaginably long, plus much of it would be over our heads.

If God gave us all the details, no one would be able to read it.

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This abbreviated account is like a giant arrow pointing to Christ. God's plan is unfolding. In just a few verses, centuries go by, but soon everything will slow down and the life of Abram will take 14 chapters.

The Bible only prints what's important for us to know about God's plan. Imagine all the drama that went unmentioned in this passage.

But God's agenda isn't man's agenda, and we need to connect better to God's agenda. The way we stress over things sometimes resembles the way teens can get a case of the vapors over a silly Facebook post.

Ask God to give us a better sense of the grand sweep of things and the ability to ignore trivialities.

2 Genesis 11:26–12:1 (ESV)

*When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.*

*Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.*

*Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.*

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."*

This passage is another example of how genealogies skip generations. If you assume Abram was born when Terah was 70, then he was 135 when Terah died. But note Stephen's speech in chapter 7 of Acts.

*And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living." — Acts 7:2–4 (ESV)*

But Abram was a lot less than 135 when he left Haran.

*Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. — Genesis 12:4b (ESV)*

While it's possible that this 60 year discrepancy can be resolved by assuming Abram was not Haran's first son, inserting an extra generation or two between them makes more sense.

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When we pray seeking the Lord's leading, what should we do if nothing happens? How should we interpret no answer to a prayer like this?

Actually, this is pretty common. God doesn't always want a big change in plans.

The interpretation depends on what you're praying about. If you're asking for guidance on, say, whether to accept a job offer, silence can mean, "You need to make this decision on your own."

But in a lot of cases, no response just means that everything's okay. This leads to an important rule—don't sit idle while you're waiting for the Lord's leading.

You get more feedback when you're active.

3 Genesis 12:1–9 (ESV)

*Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

*So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.*

Abram/Abraham is typically seen as the father of faith because of his willingness to kill Isaac, but this might be a greater example. By the time Abraham is told to kill Isaac, he has already seen numerous miracles and is used to trusting God. Sure, it's an immense test, but of a more mature Abraham.

Here, Abram just walks away from his life. He carries lots of possessions, but he leaves behind all the real estate along with many friends and family.

He doesn't know where he's going; he just knows that God said, “Go.”

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When *the LORD said to Abram, “Go”* He was speaking in an audible voice. Oh, if only He would speak to me that way!

The great thing about God speaking in an audible voice is that there's no doubt about what He said. But we typically don't have that blessing. This leads to two problems. First, we struggle to know God's will. Second, we use that struggle as an excuse to ignore His leading.

Solve the first problem and the second one goes away, but the first problem is rooted in the second. You must be ready to answer before you'll be called (or at least trying to get ready).

Two more points. First, it's okay to ask God for a sign, but the sign should be appropriate. For example, don't pray, “If you want me to quit my job and become a missionary, make the next 10 traffic lights be green.” Instead, make the condition something that fits like, “Have my job eliminated.”

Second, being ready doesn't just come from our efforts. That misunderstands the gospel of grace. No matter what happens, we can't keep our side of the bargain without supernatural help.

Prayers to be sent begin with prayers to be prepared.

4 Genesis 12:10–19 (ESV)

*Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.” When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.*

*But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.”*

This passage is disturbing because Abram’s actions were so incredibly immoral—not to mention faithless. This guy is the father of faith and yet he pulls a stunt like this?

It does make sense if you consider two things. First, Abram was right about the Egyptians and what they would do. From a secular point of view, his plan was shrewd.

Second, Abram’s faith was in the process of growing. He had not yet reached the point of counting on miracles. The plagues God inflicted on Pharaoh weren’t part of Abram’s plan, and they undoubtedly got his attention. This became a teachable moment.

The heroes of the Bible weren’t supermen and superwomen. They were sinners just like us who kept serving the Lord through thick and thin and wound up being useful.

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The encouraging thing about all this is that these great heroes didn’t start out being all that useful. They did lots of dumb stuff at first and were an embarrassment to the LORD.

But they learned from their mistakes. The key to how they became so great is that they weren’t in denial about those mistakes—and that they were such whoppers. The result was major growth.

Being a disciple is definitely a school of hard knocks. If you feel pretty knocked around, take heart. God teaches big lessons to the ones He has big plans for.

Take time to relax and take stock. Spend a while just getting quiet before the Lord. Consider how far you’ve come in His service and what the next phase might be. Ask God to strengthen you for the trials to come.

Serving Him is not for the faint-hearted.

5 Genesis 13:1–9 (ESV)

*So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.*

*Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD. And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.*

*Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left."*

Notice what's important here. Both men are described as rich, notably in livestock. But they must separate. Why?

The answer depends on your point of view. The secular answer is so that their riches will not be hindered by the limited grazing land. But that's not Abram's reason—and, don't forget, this split-up was his idea. Abram's reason is to avoid strife.

And notice that Abram does not propose an equitable division of resources. Instead, he gives Lot his pick of where to live and simply pledges to keep his distance. From a secular point of view, that's giving away the farm (literally).

But Abram isn't worried about his riches. He's worried about strife, and this solution is the perfect fix for that.

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Abram has reached the point where he trusts God. His focus is not on maximizing his own success; that's up to God. Instead, he's focused on serving the LORD and following His will.

That's the model for how every Christian should live. We must avoid getting sucked into the rat race mentality where success is the focus. Our job is to glorify God.

Today's passage highlights one aspect of following the LORD's will—knowing what **not** to do. Here Abram anticipates a problem and acts to preclude it. It's an advanced example of a simple principle.

While we should always seek God's will in giving us positive direction, avoiding the negatives is often the larger part following His will. As His ambassadors, we have frequent opportunities to glorify Him or embarrass Him. But the glory we might bring to Him can be dwarfed by the embarrassments.

Never forget that our own sinfulness is dangerous.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Do you struggle to ignore the useless “news”?
2. Did you ever have a prayer for which it not being answered turned out to be useful?
3. How ready are you to follow a major, life-changing call from God?
4. Has God taught or disciplined you via a “hard knock”?
5. Do you remember the things you’ve done for Christ as much as your mess-ups?