

## **Worship at Home Bible Month 2 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

### ***Call to Worship:***

We are met in the presence of God

**And we do not meet alone.**

With the angels in the highest heaven

**We gather to worship the Lord.**

With Abraham and Sarah

**We gather to worship the Lord.**

We embark on our own journey of faith

**God's Holy name be praised.**

God makes of us a great people

**God's Holy name be praised.**

We journey in the presence of God.

**And we do not journey alone.**

### ***Hymn: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord (StF 20)***

1 Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found --  
we stand on holy ground.

Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.

2 Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:

how awesome is the sight --  
our radiant King of light!

Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.

3 Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace:  
no work too hard for him --  
in faith receive from him.  
Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

*David J. Evans (b. 1957)*

*Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 20*

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### ***Opening Prayer:***

Generous God,  
you gave us our voices, no two the same.  
As you did with Abraham and Sarah,  
you take and touch our lives and they can become  
extraordinary. And in your Church you have gathered us,  
in your community of common folk and complainers,  
prophets and puzzled people, you have called us and made a  
place for us. So let what we say and do here, what we ponder  
and decide here, be real for us and honest to you,

as you prepare us for the life of the world in which you are praised. Amen.

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1-9

**Scripture:** Genesis 21:1-7, Genesis 25:7-11

**Hymn: The God of Abraham Praise (StF 91)**

- 1 The God of Abraham praise,  
who reigns enthroned above,  
Ancient of everlasting Days,  
and God of love.  
Jehovah! Great I AM!  
By earth and heaven confessed;  
I bow and bless the sacred name  
for ever blessed.
- 2 He by himself has sworn,  
I on his oath depend:  
I shall, on eagles' wings upborne,  
to heaven ascend;  
I shall behold his face,  
I shall his power adore  
and sing the wonders of his grace  
for evermore.
- 3 The God who reigns on high  
the great archangels sing;  
and 'Holy, holy, holy,' cry,  
'Almighty King,  
who was and is the same,  
and evermore shall be;  
Jehovah, Father, great I AM,  
we worship thee.'
- 4 Before the Saviour's face

the ransomed nations bow;  
o'erwhelmed at his almighty grace,  
for ever new:  
he shows his prints of love,  
they kindle to a flame,  
and sound through all the worlds above  
the slaughtered Lamb.

- 5 The whole triumphant host  
give thanks to God on high;  
'Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!'  
they ever cry.  
Hail, Abraham's God, and ours!  
We join the heavenly throng,  
and celebrate with all our powers  
in endless song.

*Thomas Olivers (1725-1799)*

*Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 91*

**Reflection:**

Here in the second week of Bible Month, we are asked to cover chapters 12-25 of Genesis. This takes us from the very beginning of the story of Abraham (who starts out as Abram) to the very end of his story in scripture. I'm sure over the years we have all heard bits and pieces of Abraham's story, but it is interesting to look at his overall narrative arc to see what we can learn about his relationship (and therefore our relationship) with God.

In the Daily Reading Guide produced for Genesis, they start out the second week with this summary and question:

The divine-human partnership that was offered globally (first via Adam and then via Noah), now finds a new focus in one family. The original instruction to multiply

and rule (1:28) is now redefined: Abram must go and leave behind all he knows and will father a great nation that is to be a blessing to all other nations. Abram's partnership with God gets off to a rocky start. He goes to the place God shows him, but when he arrives, he decides it doesn't look very promising: there is a famine, so he leaves. Whilst in Egypt, his fear and deception lead to curses, not blessings, falling on Pharaoh's household. This is the first of many occasions in which Abram struggles to trust in God's faithfulness; a theme we will focus on in the second week of this Bible Month.

Reflection Question: God's first word to Abram is "Go." How easy do you find it to trust God when the future is unclear?

I found myself fascinated by this question - how easy to you find it to trust God when the future is unclear? I don't know about you, but I find that the future is usually unclear more often than not. Even if I think the future is clear - if I have created a set plan for myself about what I want to do or where I want to be, it doesn't usually turn out that way. What's that famous saying - if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans?

For Abraham, at first it appears that he does have a set future. God comes to him and makes this very clear promise: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed through you." (12:2-3.)

Great, Abraham is all set! Just go and follow what God told him and those blessings are on the way. He set out to do what he was told, and almost immediately runs into problems. Over the years Abraham faces various obstacles that seem to contradict the promise of blessing that God has given him.

- When they first set out they end up in a land suffering from famine, so they go to Egypt to escape that.
- Abraham and his nephew, Lot, get embroiled in various local feuds, and then bound up with the wickedness of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Years later, Abraham and Sarah still have not had children, despite God's promise of abundant offspring, so they take matters into their own hands and Abraham has a child with his servant, Hagar.
- When God does once again promise they will have a child of their own, they laugh, because it seems absurd at their now advanced ages of well into their 90s.

Throughout all of these seeming obstacles and detours, God remains faithful and reaffirms the covenant with Abraham several times. In the materials they wrote: "Again, God reaffirms the covenant promises to Abraham...by this point we're in no doubt about the unworthiness of Abram and the relentless patience and faithfulness of God."

Despite the mistakes that Abraham makes in following what God asks of him, God remains faithful. And the promised blessings come in the end, even if perhaps they took longer than Abraham might have wanted, or look different than he might have expected.

So how easy is it to trust God when the future is unclear? Not very easy! Abraham shows us that it isn't easy, and we know from our own experience that it isn't easy.

But eventually, God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled, despite his unworthiness, despite the ways that he tried to go around God to make things happen for himself, despite the ways he didn't trust in what God has promised to him.

The story of Abraham gives us hope - that we are in relationship with a God who calls and blesses. We are called to follow God, and the blessings will come - even if they come later than we would like, even if they don't look like what we might want or expect.

May we keep our eyes open to see the ways God is working in our lives and our world, and keep watch for the blessings God bestows.

Amen.

### ***Prayers of Intercession:***

Praise God for the blessing that you have received...

Pray for one another and the wider church, that we might cope better with uncertainty...

Pray for people who are forced to leave their home due to warfare or natural disaster...

Pray for all that is on your heart and mind today...

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### ***Hymn: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (StF 494)***

1 *Come, thou fount of every blessing,  
tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
streams of mercy never ceasing*

*call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious measure  
sung by flaming tongues above;  
O the vast, the boundless treasure  
of my Lord's unchanging love!*

2 *Here I find my greatest treasure:  
'Hither by thy help I've come,'  
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,  
safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
wandering from the fold of God;  
he, to rescue me from danger,  
interposed his precious blood.*

3 *O to grace how great a debtor  
daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
bind my wandering heart to thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
prone to leave the God I love;  
take my heart, O take and seal it,  
seal it from thy courts above!*

*Robert Robinson (1735-1790)*

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**The Grace: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.**

Resources:

Call to Worship, Opening Prayer: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2014/02/call-to-worship-opening-prayer-genesis.html>

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