

## READ

---

Genesis 12

## REFLECT

---

Genesis 12 marks a big switch in Genesis' focus, from a global perspective to a very narrow one, focused only on Abram and the family that is promised to him in the opening verses of the chapter. Before God spoke to Abram, telling him to move based only on the promise of large family, there wasn't much information about him or who he was – all we know is his family tree, that he was married to Sarai who was barren, and that his father moved him and their family from Ur to Haran. It's not much of a beginning for one of the most important figures of the Bible, but then we get God's promise, that Abram will become a great nation from whom all families of the earth will be blessed. Without a single word in response to God's command, Abram did as he was told and made an altar where God told him to go, between Bethel and Ai. But apparently it was a short-lived stay, because a famine forced Abram and Sarai to Egypt.

Their time in Egypt is kind of a strange affair – Abram was afraid all the men would lust after his wife and possibly kill him to get her, so he made her promise to tell everyone that they were brother and sister. And the men did all lust after her and she was even taken into Pharaoh's court, which brought with it untold riches that went to Abram. The plot resulted in plagues brought on Pharaoh's household, and then eventually the truth – Sarai was Abram's wife, not sister. He and Sarai were cast out of Egypt in disgrace, but they got to keep all their stuff. It's a strange story that is reminiscent of the Exodus in many ways, and the basic plot will happen twice more, although in different settings. Despite that strangeness and the way it echoes other Biblical stories, there is an important detail that we learn – Abram was far from perfect, yet God worked through him anyway. The promise that God made Abram, despite Abram's best efforts to walk away from it through his own bad behavior, was too durable. God doesn't walk back the promised made to us no matter our faults. This, too, is a major theme of scripture, and one that should give us comfort – because we are as imperfect as Abram.

## REACT

---

- Often, the sordid pasts of Biblical heroes are diminished by the church and church leaders, as they don't want to engage in the difficult conversations that result from exploring them. Had you ever heard anything but positives about Abram/Abraham? How do you feel about him knowing that he tried to pass off his wife to another man to save his life?
- How do you respond when you learn about personal heroes having baggage? Does it lessen their status in your mind? Is there a way to celebrate their accomplishments while also condemning their bad actions?

## RESPOND

---

*Confession: Like Abram (and Moses and David, etc.), we're all guilty of saying/doing many things that are not in line with our faith. We're all equally in need of confession. Confession has been a part of the Christian faith from the very beginning. Engage in your own rite of confession by using this prayer from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, from the liturgy of St. James:*

*O God, you have taught us your divine and saving Word, enlighten the souls of us sinners to understand the things which have been spoken, so that we may be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, striving after guileless faith, blameless life, and pure conversation.*

*Release, pardon, and forgive, O God, all our voluntary and involuntary sins, such as we have committed in action and in word, knowingly and ignorantly, by night and by day, in mind and thought, forgive us all in goodness and love.*

*Sanctify, O Lord, our souls, bodies and spirits; examine our minds and search our consciences; take from us all evil imaginations, all impurity of thought, all inclinations to lust, all corrupt understanding, all envy, pride and hypocrisy, all falsehood, deceit and irregular living, all covetousness, arrogance and sloth; all malice, anger and wrath, all remembrance of injuries, all blasphemy and every motion of flesh and spirit that is contrary to the purity of your will. Amen.*