

## READ

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Genesis 15

## REFLECT

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Genesis 15 begins to offer the parts of Abram/Abraham's story that are best known. Before this point God had already promised numerous descendants, as many as the dust of the earth from which a great nation would arise. But through his adventures in Egypt and rescuing kings, it hadn't yet happened. Abram was still childless and his hope had run out. He and Sarai were well past any conceivable age to have children on their own, and Abram was afraid he'd have to leave his vast fortune to his chief steward, a man whom he'd have been close to but without the security of familial relation. This could have had a significant impact on how he and Sarai would have been cared for in their old age, but even more important was what being childless said in their culture. Children were seen as blessings from God, therefore those without children had apparently done something to deserve their un-blessed status. Abram's anger, therefore, makes sense – he'd been made a promise and it hadn't been fulfilled, and it seemed impossible to ever be fulfilled. But God made the promise again, this time with the metaphor of descendants as numerous as stars in the sky, and Abram believed. He was also promised land, and that's the point where Abram's trust began to wane. So, Abram was told to make a sacrifice, which he did, and God told him just how things would be – his offspring would eventually live as slaves for 400 years, but they'd be released from their slavery with great wealth. The 4<sup>th</sup> generation would be returned to the land central to God's promise. Finally, God "cut" the covenant promise with Abram – "cut" is the most literal translation of the Hebrew word as the promise was literally cut into stone; it was a permanent promise. This was the confidence Abram would need to begin to trust in God fully.

## REACT

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- Have you ever been angry at God? Have there been times when you hear someone mention God's promises and you think, "yeah, right, what can God really give me since God didn't do \_\_\_\_\_?" If you haven't, you're probably in the extreme minority. It's perfectly normal to be angry that the

lot you wind up with, thinking it doesn't seem to live up to the glorious promises we've received in scripture. How have you dealt with your disappointment? What has led you back to trust in God after your anger fades?

- Abram really struggled with what it would mean for him to be childless – our own culture still looks down on those without children. Sometimes those who desperately want children, but can't have them, get looked down on; sometimes those who could have children but choose not to are also judged. At the core of God's promise was that we – as heirs of the promise – were meant to be a blessing for others. How can we be a blessing even if we don't have children?

## RESPOND

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*Cutting the promise: God's promise to us is permanent, cut into stone so it can never fade, even if we're unable to trust in it in the moment for whatever reason. You're invited to create a reminder of God's promise – abundant and eternal life through God's love - in a way that you can keep it central in your life. Maybe you have the means to engrave a small piece of stone or metal, maybe it's purchasing an item that can serve as your reminder, or maybe it's finding something you already have that you can always keep around you. Keeping God's promise to us central in our lives can help change our attitude when things go awry, which they inevitably will at some point or another. If you can turn to your sign of the promise, whatever it may be, in both good and bad moments, it can draw you closer to God and God's love when you really need it.*