ISRAELU

LOVE WHAT GOD LOVES:

SEEING ISRAEL THROUGH THE FATHER'S EYES

COURSE STUDY GUIDE

COURSE ONE | LESSON TWO


SEEING ISRAEL THROUGH
THE FATHER'S EYES BEGINS
WITH UNDERSTANDING
ISRAEL WAS SOVEREIGNLY
CHOSEN WITH YOU IN MIND.



ISRAELU

Welcome to Lesson Two, *Established in Covenant: God Keeps His Promises.*

This week's study focuses on God's covenant with Abraham, and the enduring promises that shaped and still impact God's relationship with Israel. It's not just about the past, but serves as a living example of God's unchanging commitment today.

ESTABLISHED IN COVENANT: GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

IN ESSENCE

God established His relationship with Israel through the Abrahamic Covenant, an eternal agreement that God alone will uphold. God's unilateral and unconditional promise to Abram ensured his descendants would become a great nation, be blessed and be a blessing to all families on earth, and have a homeland. These covenant terms remain valid so long as the Lord is faithful.

The Abrahamic Covenant laid the relational foundation through which God would establish a family, a people, for Himself. It formed Abraham's physical family, the Jewish people, and opened the door of hope to people from every nation who could be grafted into Abraham's family through faith.

The enduring chosenness of Israel as a servant nation is a proclamation to us as well that we have a Father in heaven who keeps His covenants.

GETTING STARTED

Group leader, read the In Essence *summary as you begin your time together. This will help set up the direction for this lesson.*

As you open the group time, give everyone an opportunity to answer this question.

- **What's one unique role you had in the family you were brought up in?**
  (For example: oldest, baby, funny person, organizer, peacemaker, black sheep)

In the previous lesson, we looked at God's choice of Israel as a vessel for His purposes. Let's join Kayla and Michael again for the Lesson Two Video segment where we'll consider the question, Is Israel still chosen?

LESSON TWO VIDEO

Group leader, stream the video teaching.

As you watch the video teaching, use the following prompts and space provided to record anything that stands out to you.

1. **In Biblical times, when people entered into agreements, they did so by using a binding pledge called covenant.**

2. **God uses covenant as the foundation of His relationships. Let's see the development of the Abrahamic Covenant.**

- **Genesis 12**

  Through a series of "I will" statements, God promised . . .

- **Genesis 15**

  The delay caused Abram to question.

  Abram believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

  Cutting covenant...

- **Genesis 17**

  You will be the father of a multitude of nations.

  The Abrahamic Covenant laid the foundation through which God will establish a family, a people, for Himself.

3. **Is Israel still chosen?**

4. **The olive tree illustrates the family of God.**

> *I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! . . . This is My covenant with them . . . from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* **Romans 11:1, 27-29**

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Group Leader, read aloud the questions and prompts below and lead the discussion.

1. **Have you had to wait an extended time for something very important to you?** If possible, share with the group about it.

   Is it hard or easy for you to wait?

2. **Two times we see Abraham suggest to the Lord that the promised son might come through a means other than himself or Sarah.** Who did Abraham suggest the promise might come through?

   - **In Genesis 15:2-6**
   - **In Genesis 17:16-21**

   How did the Lord respond to Abraham? What can we learn about the Lord here that can be applied to our relationship with Him?

ABRAHAM AWAITED A PROMISED SON, *Isaac, but he also saw the ultimate Promised Son, the Messiah, Jesus, who would come through his family line.*

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT *was made with Abraham's physical family, Israel, and is open to anyone who will join through faith in Jesus.*

3. **Let's look at the cutting of the covenant scene**. Read Genesis 15:7-12, 17-18. We know it's the Lord who cut the covenant (v.18), but how is the One who walked between the pieces described in verse 17?

   - **Read Ezekiel 1:1, 26-27** which describes "a man" on heaven's throne.
   - **Read Revelation 1:14-15** which describes Jesus as He appeared to John.

   What similarities do you see between these descriptions and that of the One who passed between the covenant pieces? Who may it have been who walked the covenant path?

4. **Read John 8:56-58.** Speaking to the Pharisees, what did Jesus claim?

5. **Read Romans 4:17-24.** What do we learn about Abraham's faith? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about anyone who believes in the Lord?

6. **Read Psalm 105:8-11.** According to these verses, and considering Who walked through the covenant pieces, is the Abrahamic Covenant still in effect? Is Israel still a chosen instrument?

CONCLUSION

> *I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.* **Genesis 17:7**

Is Israel still chosen for a unique purpose? Yes. The Father's relationship with Israel was established by an unconditional, everlasting covenant. The Lord alone walked between the covenant pieces therefore the covenant is valid as long as the Lord is faithful to the terms. Will He be? You can bet on it! God is not done with Israel, and He's not done with us.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you close your time together, see if anyone within your group has a need for prayer, and take a few minutes to cover those.

You might also take time to thank God for His faithfulness to His promises. For those in your group who are in an extended season of waiting, encourage them by joining together in faith for what God will do on their behalf.

GOD USES COVENANT AS THE FOUNDATION OF HIS RELATIONSHIPS.



PERSONAL STUDY FOR BETWEEN SESSIONS

This section is designed for your personal study to help you dig deeper into some of the themes from the teaching and discussion.

DAY ONE

BELIEVING FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

God often uses delay and impossible odds as refiner's tools to purify us from unbelief and self-sufficiency. God is working some things out of our character and working unshakable faith into us.

The prophet Habakkuk said, the righteous will live by his faith. This is a primary theme in scripture as Habakkuk is quoted by Paul in Romans and Galatians and by the writer of Hebrews.

1. **Is there something for which you're believing that is "impossible" in your own strength or ability?** Something that would be categorized as an "only God" provision.

2. Read **Habakkuk 2:2-4.** Do what the Lord instructed Habakkuk and write out what the Lord has spoken to you. Record the vision. What do you see with eyes of faith that you haven't seen in the natural yet?

> *The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.*
> **Psalm 138:8**

3. Read **Hebrews 11:8-16.** What inspires you about Abraham's faith that you want to implement in your own life?

Abraham awaited the natural fulfillment of descendants and land, but in verses 10, 13-16 we see he also understood the much greater promise of a spiritual inheritance prepared for him. He saw the kingdom of God.

4. **In Genesis 22,** Abraham was tested in his willingness to offer Isaac, the promised son, on an altar on Mt. Moriah. **Read Hebrews 11:17-19.** What was Abraham sure of? What had the 25 years of delay and challenge forged in him?

REFLECTION

Over Abraham's life we saw hope, doubt, personal efforts to bring about the promise, faith re-established, and finally unshakable faith. Does this process resonate with what you've experienced?

5. **Read Acts 2:25-26.** What is key to having unshakable faith? Where is your focus as you wait for your breakthrough?

6. **What is the promise given in 1 John 5:4-5?** Spend some time in prayer and ask the Lord to enlarge your faith, especially for the areas of concern for you.

For nothing will be impossible with God. **Luke 1:37**

FURTHER STUDY

If you'd like more on God's covenant with Abraham in the Bible, scan this QR code, or click on this link for an article written by FIRM staff, titled "The Abrahamic Covenant: God's Promise to Abraham."

DAY TWO

GOD IS FAITHFUL

- When Abraham and Sarah had their eyes on themselves and their inabilities, they invented alternate plans to help God fulfill His promise. **(Gen. 15:2-3; 16:2; 17:17-18)**
- When Peter shifted his eyes off Jesus and onto the crashing waves, he became unable to walk in the supernatural. **(Matt. 14:28-31)**

We're no different. We're prone to the same self-sufficiency and fear that we read about in our favorite Bible characters.

In his last letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul gave what he called "a trustworthy statement."

> *If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.* **2 Timothy 2:13**

It's important for us to get this truth locked into the core of our being: *God is faithful.*

1. Look up these verses and write out what you learn about the Lord.

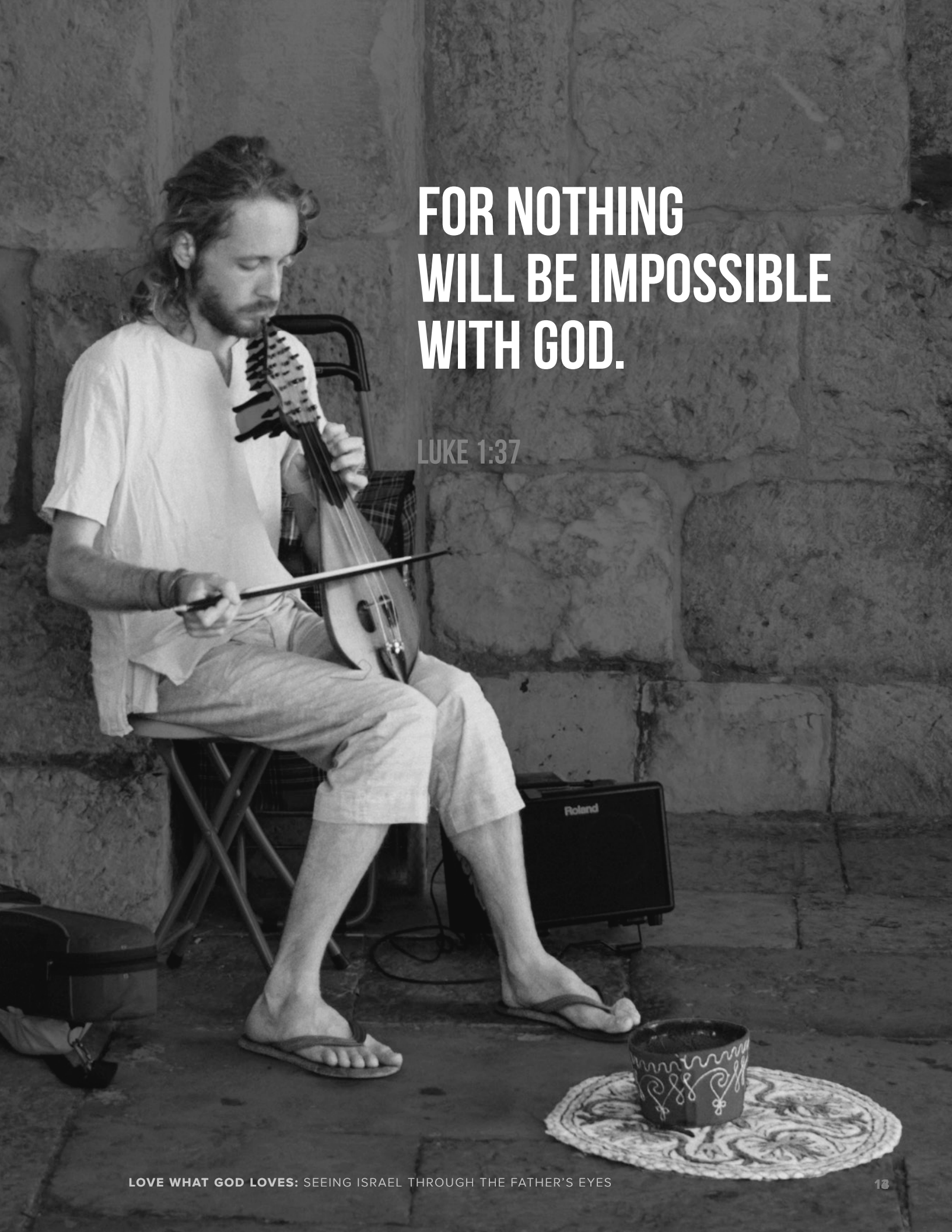
Lamentations 3:21-23

Psalm 36:5

Hebrews 10:23

1 Thessalonians 5:24

2 Thessalonians 3:3


FOR NOTHING
WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE
WITH GOD.
LUKE 1:37
Roland

We've looked quite a bit at Abraham's faith, now let's consider Sarah's and see how she tethered her faith to God's ability to keep His word.

2. **Read** **Genesis 18:1-15** and answer the questions.

Who came to Abraham and Sarah's tent? It says 3 men, but one of them is identified in verse 1.

- The Lord appeared to Abram in **Genesis 12:7**.
- The Lord walked through the covenant pieces in **Genesis 15:17**.
- The Lord appeared to Abraham in **Genesis 17:1**.

Abraham knew what the Lord looked like! It's no wonder he ran to Him and bowed.

3. **What was Sarah's response in verse 12 to the Lord's announcement?** Why do you think she laughed?

What rhetorical question did the Lord ask in verse 14?

4. **Before we're tempted to criticize Sarah for her laughter, let's go to Hebrews 11:11 and see what is written of her there.** Did she believe the Lord? What was her faith based on according to the last phrase in verse 11?

REFLECTION

5. **Impossible odds, fear, outside voices, horrible circumstances…these are some obstacles that can threaten our resolve to believe God will come through.** What challenges have you had to overcome to maintain hope?

Is there a current obstacle? If so, what?

6. **Read Romans 5:2-5.** How can we rejoice in hope? Be sure to follow the progression in these verses.

(v.5) Why does hope not disappoint?

It's encouraging to find Abraham and Sarah in the Hebrews 11 list of those with remarkable faith, because we've seen their stories and know they weren't perfect. We relate to that!

The Lord isn't looking for perfect people, rather faithful ones. Let's lay hold of the "trustworthy statement," *He remains faithful.*

FURTHER STUDY

If you'd like more on hope and faith in the Bible, scan this QR code, or click on this link for an article written by Casey Tait, titled "Hope in the Bible: Faith, Waiting & Remembrance for Israel."

DAY THREE

EL SHADDAI

There are many names for God throughout the Old Testament and each one sheds light on His attributes. The Lord reveals Himself through His name and it is always the precise quality needed in that situation.

Twenty-five years after the Lord established a covenant with Abraham, the Lord appeared to him as "God Almighty" or in Hebrew, El Shaddai *(אֵל שַׁדַּי)*. The apostle John said no one has seen God the Father at any time, but El Shaddai is the Divine entity that men and women are allowed to see. Who is He?

Let's pick up the first recorded appearance of El Shaddai in Genesis 17:1-3.

1. What was Abram's response when El Shaddai introduced Himself?

The word *El* is an ancient term widely used to refer to Deity. *Shaddai* speaks of God's might or power and can be understood as "all-sufficient." We might be tempted to think brawn, or someone able to inflict violence, but this word doesn't speak to that. Instead, the Hebrew root word *shad* means the breast.

El Shaddai can be understood as the breasted One carrying also the attribute of "almighty." Think of the nourishing, life-giving milk that comes from a mother's breast, and the nurturing care she provides to a crying baby. Think of the father who draws his child into his strong chest to comfort, protect, and assure.

God Almighty, or El Shaddai, is used seven times and is known as the covenant name of God until the time of Moses.

Abraham and Sarah were still without a son, even 25 years after the promise was given. They had waited a long time and, most likely, there were days filled with discouragement. If anyone needed El Shaddai to comfort and love, to bring forth life and provide through His great power - it was them. Abram fell on his face before El Shaddai, God Almighty, the all-sufficient One.

2. **From his place of personal pain, Paul wrote about his "thorn in the flesh."**
   Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. What did the Lord tell Paul, and what was his response?

   Write out the last phrase in verse 10.

   Is there an area of your life where you feel weak and in need of His strength?
   If so, what is it? Can you accept that His grace is sufficient for you?

3. **Read also 2 Corinthians 9:8, Ephesians 3:20, and 2 Peter 1:2-3.** What is God able to do for us?

REFLECTION

4. **What does it mean to you that your God is El Shaddai, the breasted One?** Have you longed to be brought near, truly loved, nourished, and protected? Are you in need of His almighty power today? How so?

5. **Read Psalm 91:1-4,** and write out what you learn about the Almighty, or El Shaddai.

As Abraham did, bow before Him in prayer and allow Him to speak to you. Write out below what you sense the Lord saying.

6. Read the *In Essence* lesson summary provided at the beginning of Lesson Two.
As you have considered this topic of God's covenant faithfulness, have there been further questions come to your mind, or perhaps poignant moments when some dots were connected for you? If so, write them out.

The enduring chosenness of Israel, God's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, is a resounding proclamation that we have a Father in heaven who keeps His word. If God keeps His promises to Israel, we can be assured He will keep His word to us.

FURTHER STUDY

If you'd like more about God's plan for Ishmael in the Bible, scan this QR code, or click on this link for an article written by Kathi Shaw, titled Is Ishmael Part of the Abrahamic Covenant?

ISRAEL IS GOD'S CHOSEN VESSEL, ENTRUSTED WITH A UNIQUE PURPOSE THAT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH CONNECTING US TO GOD.

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