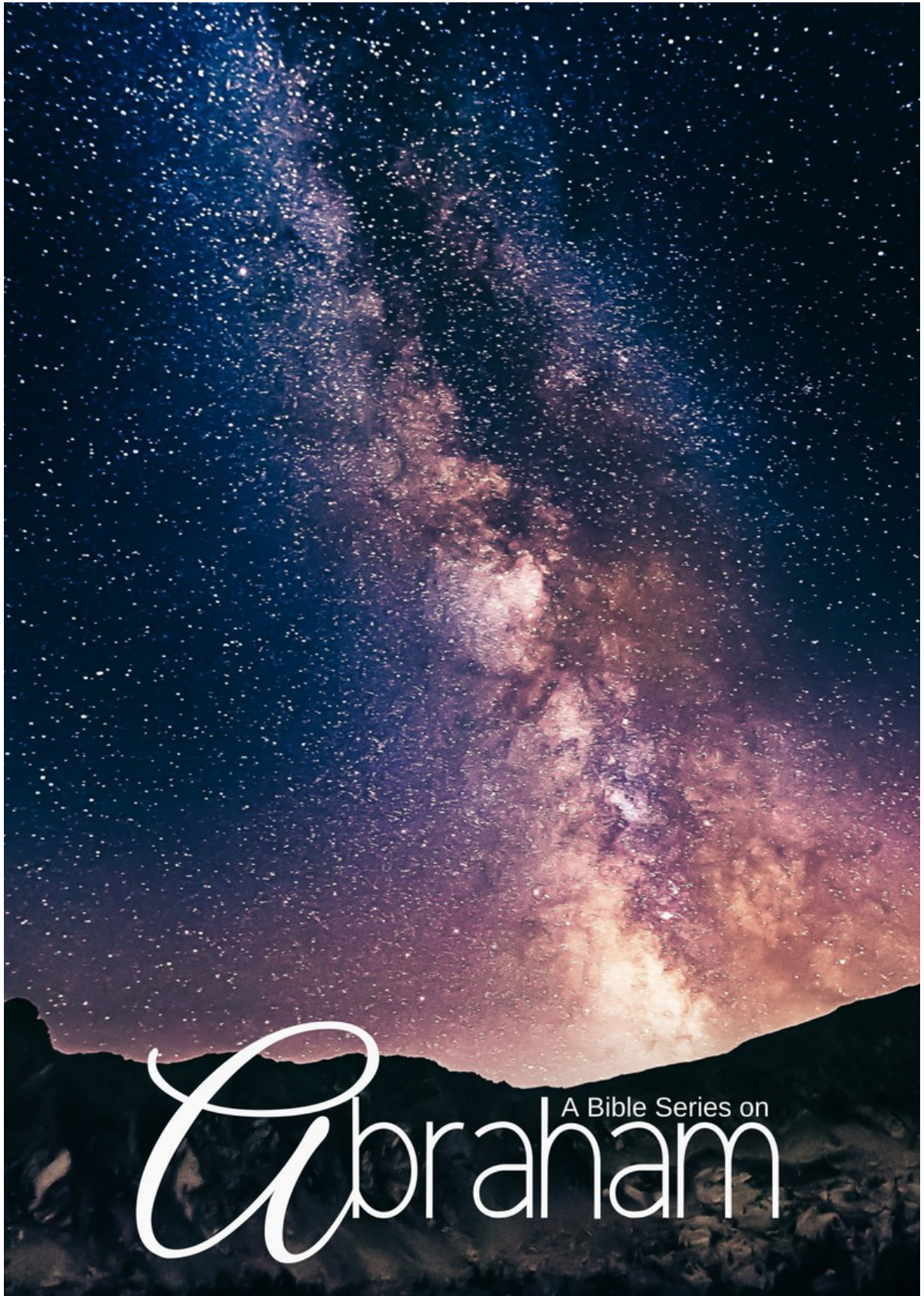


TERM 4 STUDY GUIDE



MANLY-LOTA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Welcome to Term 4

Hello there, Welcome to Term 4 and...Christmas! It's hard to believe that we are thinking about Christmas already. This term, we're looking at the life of Abraham. This can sound tired: often, we think of Abraham as just an old man who looked at the stars and didn't get up to much. And in one sense, that is true. Abraham was old and yet God gave him a newborn: that is part of the miracle! Abraham does and says all kinds of important things, but the reason we're spending time in his story isn't because of Abraham (even though he's remarkable). It's because of how God reveals himself to Abraham: his patience, his faithfulness to his word, his dogged determination to bless the world - despite humanity.

Abraham's faith is amazing. But God's faithfulness is far more awe-inspiring! We'll see together how God blessed Abraham, and how even today God is keeping his promise to Abraham by blessing us in Jesus: a promise he made all the way back in Genesis 12!

Telling others about Jesus can be amazing, tricky, scary, confronting: all at once! Where do we get the energy to do this? We only have the kind of confidence and faith we need if we spend time in God's word, where by his Spirit we find that Jesus is at the centre of everything and every promise: even the promises to Abraham.

If we want to know God, we need to trust Jesus. If we want others to know God, we need to tell them about Jesus so that they can know him too. Let's pray for each other as we sit under God's word this term. Let's pray that we'll be people who are able and ready to speak up to our friends and family about the Lord Jesus. Let's pray for each other that we will be praying for those in our lives who don't know him.

It's a huge task, far beyond what we are capable of by ourselves. But we are not on our own: God works in and through us in ways that we don't even understand! Let's keep asking him for mercy and courage to speak well of his Son.

your guide to term 1 sermons

SERMON/STUDY	DATE
1. Genesis 12:1-20	21st Oct
2. Genesis 13:1-14:24	28th Oct
3. Genesis 15:1-21	4th Nov
4. Genesis 16:1-16	11th Nov
5. Genesis 18:1-19:37	18th Nov
6. Genesis 20:1-21:34	25th Nov
7. Genesis 22:1-19	2nd Dec
8. Genesis 24:1-25:11	9th Dec

Study 1 - Genesis 12:1-20

Blessing Begins with God



Getting Started

What were the stories your parents always told when you were growing up, or that you always tell now? Eg. how your parents met, the events around you or your sibling's birth.

Read Genesis 12:1-12:20

1. What blessings does God promise Abraham?
2. In verses 4-6, what threats are there to God blessing Abraham? What evidence is there that God will bless him anyway?
3. In verses 10-20, what threats are there to God blessing Abraham? What evidence is there that God will bless him anyway?



Digging In

1. God's promise to "bless" and "curse" has a history in Genesis. Who does God bless or curse in the following passages and why?

Passage	Who?	Bless or Curse?	Why?
Genesis 1:20-22			
Genesis 1:26-28			
Genesis 2:1-3			
Genesis 3:11-19			
Genesis 4:8-12			
Genesis 8:20-9:7			

2. How is God's promise to bless Abraham different to those previous events? How does it offer hope in the face of the previous curses?

Read Galatians 3:6-14

3. In Galatians, Paul is arguing that Gentiles don't need to observe Jewish laws to know God. In the end, how did God bless the nations through Abraham?
4. In what sense is the Old Testament not our story? In what sense is it our story?



Ideas to Action

1. Sometimes people will say that people in the Old Testament are an example to us of how to receive blessing from God. Looking at how God treated Abraham in Egypt, is that really true?
2. What value is there in reading the Old Testament? Should we read it as our story or only as the story of Israel?



Prayer

- Praise God that his plans for Abraham were intended for the good of the whole world. Thank him for undoing the curse we deserve for our disobedience.
- Ask God to seek the blessing he is offering us through Jesus. Ask that as we study Genesis we will see how important it is to us today.
- Pray together about the encouragement and challenge raised by God's Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

Home Group Members	Unbelieving Friends

- Pray also for the final term of the year with its opportunities to tell others about Jesus and the inevitable busyness of the year's end.

Study 2 - Genesis 13-14

Blessings Begins in Abundance



Getting Started

If you had “a bit more” money than you do now, what would it allow you to do? I.e. what things would you like to do but can’t afford to?

Read Genesis 13

1. What causes tension between Abram and Lot?
2. What influenced Lot in choosing to move into the Jordan Valley?
3. Just as Lot “looks” at the land in verse 10, likewise God tells Abram to “look” in verse 14. How is what they see different?



Digging Deeper

Sometimes it can be hard to understand what an Old Testament “story” is teaching us. Often we aren’t told directly whether someone did the right or wrong thing. Instead, the way the story is told shows us. Let’s look at these chapters in more detail.

1. We are not told directly whether Lot made a good decision in chapter 13. But what comments show us indirectly?
2. What does comparing Lot and Abram show us?

Read Genesis 14

3. As we are shown the battle between the kings, what details are included? What impression does that give you about the different kings and their strength?
4. In verses 13-16, what impression are we given about Abram and his strength?

5. What impression are we given about King Melchizedek? According to Melchizedek, what is the source of Abram's strength?
6. What did these chapters teach Israel about the right way to receive blessings from God? Particularly, how does God's blessing relate to God's promises?



Ideas for Action

1. When you "look" at the world around you, what things seem to you to be potential sources of prosperity and blessing? What promise has God made us that we should "look" to instead?

Read Hebrews 12:2-3

2. Like Jesus, Abram gave up immediate satisfaction because he looked to what God had promised him. On a piece of butchers paper, list things that you will miss out on if you look toward God's promises?



Prayer

- **Praise** God that his promises are big and blessings abundant. Thank him for the good future he has planned for us.
- **Ask** that you would not be disappointed when we seem to miss out on the prosperity and wealth the world claims we "should" have.
- **Pray together** about the encouragement and challenge raised by God's Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

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- **Pray also** for students finishing Year 12 and planning what to do next year, that their plans would be shaped by God's promises.

Study 3 - Genesis 15

Blessing Begins with Words



Getting Started

What has someone said to you that continues to be significant and meaningful to you? Eg. a word of encouragement or a wise insight into life.

Read Genesis 15

1. What does God say to assure Abram in verses 1 and 7?

2. In what ways does Abram's experiences (verses 2-3 and 8) contradict God's words of assurance?

3. What does God do to increase Abram's assurance?

4. How satisfied do you think you'd feel in Abram's shoes?

5. Why does God consider Abram's trust (v.6) as righteousness?



Digging Deeper

Genesis 15 becomes a very important case-study in the New Testament.

1. Look at the following passages and discuss what it is used as evidence for.

Passage	What does Genesis 15 shows us about faith	Why it matters for Christians
Romans 4:18-25		
Galatians 3:5-9		
James 2:18-24		

2. How does Genesis 15 show us that righteousness requires faith, not our works?

3. Even in what we have seen of Abram so far, how has his faith led him to act in a particular way ie. what “works” has it prompted him to do?

4. Martin Luther said, “We are saved by faith alone. But the faith that saves is never alone.” How have we seen that in this study?



Ideas for Action

1. When Abram felt uncertain, all God gave him was words. Is it the same for Christians? Do we have any more reasons to be confident?

2. I’m struggling to obey God in a particular area. Should I try and “do” something about it, or should I wait for God to give me more “faith”?



Prayer

- Praise God for his words—that they reveal his plans to us and that we can trust them.
- Ask that you would listen to his words so that they shape your life. Ask particularly that you would trust them enough to bring an end to sin in your life.
- Pray together about the encouragement and challenge raised by God’s Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

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Study 4 - Genesis 16-18

Blessing: Impossible



Getting Started

Share about an advertisement you've seen that promised something simply unbelievable.

Read Genesis 16

1. What "unbelievable" promise has God made Abraham and Sarah?
2. What similarities are there between the actions of Abraham and Sarah, and those of Adam and Eve (compare 16:1-3 and 3:6)?
3. Looking at the example of Abraham and Sarah, what happens when we don't trust God?
4. How did God respond to Adam and Eve's disbelief? How does he respond to Abraham and Sarah's? Why the difference?



Digging Deeper & Ideas for Action

Read Genesis 18:9-14



1. In light of Genesis 21:1-7, how should we answer God's question in 18:14?

In Genesis 12, blessing begins as God promises a grand rescue plan. But by the time we get to chapters 16 to 18, there has only been small-scale fulfillment of God's promises.

2. In the Bible as a whole we can look back over a much longer time period. What large-scale fulfillment of God's promises can we see that helps us to trust God with the future ?

In the NT God makes us promises that might seem impossible.

3. In each of the following passages, identify the promise, discuss why it might seem impossible, and then talk about the implications for our lives if we either trust God about it or don't trust him.

Passage	Promise	Why might it seem impossible?	Result if we trust God	Result if we don't trust God
Romans 4:5-8				
Romans 8:28-29				
Philippians 3:20-21				



Prayer

- Praise God that nothing is too hard for him, and that he is faithful even when we are not.
- Ask God to help us trust his promises so that we might live holy lives of peace, joy and hope, and in doing so might bring him glory. Ask particularly that you would trust them enough to bring an end to sin in your life.
- Pray together about the encouragement and challenge raised by God's Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

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Study 5 - Genesis 18-19

Blessed Amongst Judgement



Getting Started

Why do you think many people have trouble with the idea of God judging us?

Read Genesis 18: 16-33

1. Why is God coming down to investigate Sodom (vv. 20-21)? What does this tell us about why God judges people?

In verse 19 we're told God has chosen Abraham to be like him "by doing *what is right and just*".

2. How does Abraham do what is "right and just" in verses 22-33, thereby being like God?
3. What do verses 16-33 as a whole tell us about the fairness of God's judgement?

As a group, quickly retell in your own words what happens next (19:1-29).

4. Verses 19:6-8 are very disturbing. To understand them, use the following table to trace Lot's "descent":

Verse	What we learn about Lot
13:10-13	
19:1	
19:7 NB. He calls them 'my brothers/friends'	
19:16	
19:30	

So, how are we judge Lot's behaviour in 19:6-8? Is he one of the hypothetical "righteous" Abraham pleaded for (vv. 23-24)?

- How does Lot escape God’s judgement (see vv. 16 & 29)?



Digging Deeper

In the New Testament we see the full extent of God truly being “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25).

Read Romans 3:9-18, 23

In these verses Paul summarises what the OT says all people are naturally like.

- Based on these verses, is anyone exempt from God’s righteous judgement?

Paul then explains how God has mercifully provided an awe-inspiring way of escape: “But now...”.

Read Romans 3:21-26

- How has God been able to be both just and merciful?



Ideas to Action

- In light of this study how would you answer someone asking, “Why would a loving God judge people? Why can’t he just forgive?”
- Sometimes it seems easier to just not talk about judgement. But if we don’t, will our friends truly hear the good news of God’s salvation in Jesus? Discuss.



Prayer

- Praise God that his justice is fair. Thank him for his love shown in Jesus standing in our place to satisfy God’s own justice.
- Ask God to help us to keep trusting in Jesus’ death as payment for our sin. Ask him to give you loving boldness to talk with friends about the reality of his judgement and the certainty of salvation in Christ.
- Pray together about the encouragement and challenge raised by God’s Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

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Study 6 - Genesis 20-21

Blessing to the Nations



Getting Started

Share a time when you've seen a VIP treated rightly or wrongly.

In Genesis 12:3, God promises Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you". In this study we'll see that God's blessing to the nations comes when they treat his "VIP" rightly.

Read Genesis 20: 1-18

1. God "curses" Abimelech and his household. Looking at Genesis 12:3, why is this?
2. Comparing the behaviour of Abraham and Abimelech, what is ironic about Abraham's statement in 20:11?

As a whole, chapters 20 and 21 are an Abimelech "sandwich" – they start and finish with Abimelech, with some "filling" in between 21: 1-21.

3. Look at what Abimelech says in verse 22. What happens at the end of chapter 20, and in the "sandwich filling", to prompt his response?

Now read Genesis 21: 22-34. In this section Abimelech makes a treaty with Abraham.

To answer the next three questions, it helps to compare Genesis 26: 26-31, where Abimelech makes a similar treaty with Abraham's son, Isaac.

4. How is Abimelech responding rightly to God's VIP? (Compare 21: 22-23 & 26: 28-29)
5. What is the significance of Abraham and then Isaac giving Abimelech a gift? (Compare 21:27 & 26:30)
6. What does Abimelech's response result in for him and his people? (See end of 26:30)



Digging Deeper

In the New Testament, God’s plan to bless all the nations finds its fulfilment through his biggest VIP.

Read Matthew 28: 16–20

1. For the nations, what is the right response to Jesus?

Now read Acts 13: 44–49

2. How do the Gentiles (those of “the nations”) respond rightly? What blessing from God does their right response result in?



Ideas to Action

For our friends to enjoy the full extent of God’s blessings, they need to respond rightly to Jesus.

1. What is the right way to respond to Jesus? What are some inadequate or half-hearted responses?

2. What part do you think God might have for us in our friends coming to know about Jesus and the right way to respond to him?



Prayer

- Praise God for his wonderful plan to bless all the nations. Thank him that it’s happening right now through his Son, and that in his kindness we’re part of it!
- Ask God to help us as individuals and as a church to lovingly tell people about Jesus and the right way to respond to him. Ask God to glorify himself by granting them repentance and faith, that they might fully share in his blessings.
- Pray together about the encouragement and challenge raised by God’s Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

Home Group Members	Unbelieving Friends

Study 7 - Genesis 22

Blessing Begins with Trust



Getting Started

1. Share a situation where it seemed doing the right thing would make things worse, not better Eg. admitting to telling a lie.

Read Genesis 22:1-19

2. What is emphasised about Isaac in verses 2 and 12? Why is that a surprising way to describe Isaac?
3. What do you find shocking about God's request of Abraham? How do you think Abraham felt?
4. Since God stopped Abraham from killing Isaac, what was God's purpose in asking this of Abraham? What did the test reveal about Abraham? What did it reveal about God?



Digging Deeper

The New Testament looks back on these events to better understand the nature of trust (faith) and how it works in a relationship with God.

Read James 2:14-24

1. According to James, what does the sacrifice of Abraham teach us about trusting God?
2. What situation in the early church does James apply that lesson to?

Read Hebrews 11:17-19

3. According to Hebrews, what does the sacrifice of Abraham teach us about trusting God?

4. What should we be encouraged to do by Abraham's example? (See also Hebrews 10:32–39)



Ideas to Action

1. How close do you think the following statements are to what we learn about faith from these passages?
 - a) faith is doing whatever God says even though it will cause you harm

 - b) faith is accepting that certain statements about God are true

 - c) faith is trusting God to keep his promises, no matter how unlikely it seems in the short term

2. So someone has said faith is the "highest praise" we can offer God. Why do you think that is?



Prayer

- Praise God that he did not want Abraham to kill Isaac and does not want meaningless sacrifice from us.
- Ask God for a deep understanding of why we should trust him, even when it seems obedience will lead our lives away from the blessing he has promised us.
- Pray together about the encouragement and challenge raised by God's Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

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Study 8 - Genesis 24

Blessing in the Gap



Getting Started

1. When you were growing up or dating, what were (or are) your must-have criteria for a husband or wife?

Read Genesis 24:1–67

2. Parts of the story seem to get repeated. Which parts and why do you think they're repeated?
3. In what different ways are we supposed to be impressed by Rebekah?
4. How many times does the servant tell us that it was God who led him to Rebekah? Why is that important?
5. How is this story intended to encourage an Israelite while they wait for God to keep his promises to Abraham?



Digging In

Read Titus 2:11–3:8

1. What blessing are we waiting for?
2. How are we to behave while we wait?
3. What motivates us to behave that way?



Ideas to Action

1. Why might a single Christian be tempted to read this story as a guide to finding a future husband or wife? Why isn't it?

2. **At** this point in your life, which of God's promises are you most longing for him to deliver on?

3. Have you seen God sovereignly at work now as he keeps his promise to:
 - a) make you someone who pleases him (ie. make you holy)?

 - b) transform our relationships with each other (ie. make us loving)?

 - c) re-establish his relationship with us (ie. make us his children)?



Prayer

- **Praise** God that he made his promises certain by giving his Son to die in our place. Thank him for his sovereign wisdom and love.
- **Ask** for a heart that longs for his promises and pursues them in the way you live. Confess the areas of our your life where you have lost sight of God's promises.
- **Pray together** about the encouragement and challenge raised by God's Word through this study. Note prayer points below for your partners in the gospel (Home Group members) and their contacts:

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