

\*Use this format as a family, a couple, or with a small group.

## Message Summary

We learned from the Great Flood that the strategy of wiping out humanity and starting over doesn't work. Sin still infects the human population. So God initiates a different plan: establish a nation—an outpost of grace—right in the midst of sinful humanity. Rather than revealing himself in a scattered way, God chooses to focus on one family and their offspring. But he is not being exclusive: God makes it clear from the beginning that he intends to show his love to all. Like a spotlight illumines an actor so the whole audience can follow the story, God lights up this “New Community” so the world can see the story of his love for them. Because their story shows his grace at work, it will demonstrate to the watching world who he is so they too can come to him. If all goes according to plan, God and humanity will get back what was lost in the Garden: true community. In typical fashion, God picks an unlikely candidate—showing that the strength of God's plans are never in people but in his power. From within a pagan setting, God calls a 75-year-old man, Abram (Abraham) and his childless wife, Sarai (Sarah) to be the parents of this new people. With God's guidance, they begin an odyssey that uproots them from their home, takes them to a distant region, and after a 25-year faith journey finally gives them the son of promise, Isaac. Strangers in a strange land, Abraham and Sarah become parents to a nation that is the rest of humanity's redemptive hope. They must learn to walk by faith and trust in what God says. The plan that began with them comes to fruition 18 centuries later when another child is born to unlikely parents—Jesus, the promised seed of Abraham, Savior of the world.

## Opening Question

What is the farthest you've ever traveled from your home? What was most unusual about that place or the people you met?

## Group Discussion

Note: All page numbers below are from *The Story*, 2008 edition. Additional group discussion questions for this chapter can be found on page 390 of that book.

### Have someone open the group meeting with prayer.

1. God destroyed the whole world with a flood, but sin didn't go away. Do you think God make a mistake in taking that action? Explain your answer.
2. When God gives his first promised blessing to Abram (page 11 or Genesis 12:1-9), who else does he say will ultimately be blessed? What do you think are both the advantages and dangers of God calling out one nation to represent him to the world?
3. Abram's trust in God's promise (page 13 or Genesis 15:1-6) was “credited to him as righteousness.” This was his conversion experience, where he went from a knower-about-God, to a knower-of-God. What comparisons can you make to how Abraham was saved and what saved you? (see also Romans 4:1-5, 9-25; Galatians 3:29)?
4. The apostle Paul uses this text about Abraham's trust in God in his letter to the Romans (page 358, lines 12-18). There, he makes a bold point about the kind of person God justifies (line 18). How is that completely different from the common view that God lets only “good people” into heaven? Does that mean God doesn't care about sin? Explain your answer.
5. Abraham had to wait 25 years for the promised son, Isaac (page 15 or Genesis 21:1-5). What is a long wait God has allowed, or is allowing, you to endure? What helps you keep your faith?
6. Faith (trust) is central to how Abraham and Sarah related to God, and also to how we must interact with him. It is also central to most meaningful human relationships—for example, husbands and wives must have a bond of trust or marriage doesn't work. Yet from time to time, we may wish we didn't have to have faith (trust) and that somehow our relationship with God could work without it. Comment on why you think faith is so important—in other words, as Hebrews 11:6 points out, why “without faith it is impossible to please God.”
7. Jesus Christ—the Seed of Abraham (see Galatians 3:16, 19)—is the ultimate fulfillment of God blessing the world through Abraham's offspring. That means we as Christ's followers have the obligation to relay that blessing to the whole world. What might that look like for you in your daily life?

As a final question, you can ask group members who did the personal reflection assignment if there is anything from that material they would like to share or ask the group about. Close in prayer.