

engage

Welcome to the second issue of **engage**, the brand new Bible notes that will be bursting into the world every three months, grabbing you by the eyeballs and plunging you straight into God's life-changing word. In this issue...

★ **DAILY READINGS** — each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you. And it encourages you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: follow Abraham's footsteps in **Genesis**; follow the signs to discover the real Jesus in **John**; follow the garbage trail with **Habakkuk**; follow the building plans in **Haggai** and follow Paul's brilliant advice in **1 Timothy**.

★ **TAKE IT FURTHER** — if you're left wanting more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the 'Take it further' section to dig deeper.

★ **STUFF** — articles on stuff relevant to young Christians. This time the topic is **money**.

★ **TRICKY** — tackling some of those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions that our friends bombard us with. This issue: **How do we know God exists?**



★ **ESSENTIAL** — articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This time we focus on **God the Father** — what makes Him a Dad?

★ **REAL LIVES** — amazing true stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — the trials of life in a non-Christian family.

★ **TOOLKIT** will give you the tools to help you wrestle with the Bible and understand it for yourself. This issue we ask: **What's the point?**

All of us who work on engage are passionate to see God's word at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage** taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you have read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say '**Read Haggai 2 v 8–10**', look up Haggai in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Haggai starts on. Find chapter 2 of Haggai, and then verse 8 of chapter 2 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading!

In this issue...

DAILY READINGS

Genesis: Promises promises

John: Identity parade

Haggai: Home truths

1 Timothy: Holy housework

Psalms: Stars in your eyes

Habakkuk: God and the
garbage

ARTICLES

REAL LIVES

Charlotte Fox talks to **engage** **14**

TRICKY

How do we know God exists? **38**

TOOL BOX

What's the point? **56**

ESSENTIAL

God is Dad **72**

STUFF

Cash values **80**

ENGAGE LINE-UP

Writers: Martin Cole Cassie Martin Jill Silverthorne Jim Overton
Tim Thornborough Helen Thorne

Editor: Martin Cole

Publishing bigwig: Tim Thornborough

Design dreamer: Steve Devane

Eagle eyes: Anne Woodcock

Genesis

Promises Promises

Lies, deception, war, daring rescues, surprising babies, angels in disguise, circumcision (ouch!), child sacrifice (almost!), incest, a woman turned into a salt stack, and evil cities destroyed by burning sulphur — it's all in Genesis 12–25.

NEW BEGINNINGS

There are some incredible stories here in Genesis, but at the heart of it all, we meet an awesome God in control. If Genesis 1–11 was about the beginning of the human race, then chapters 12–25 are about the beginning of the people of God. We meet Abraham — a man faithful to God — and his, er, *interesting* family. And we see how they fit into God's plans for a nation ruled by Him.

PROMISES PROMISES

In Genesis 12–25, God makes amazing promises to Abraham and his family (who would become

God's chosen people, the Israelites). The promises God makes here in Genesis are kept throughout the whole of the Bible. And they ultimately come true through Jesus. Even at the beginning of the Bible, we're pointed to Jesus Christ!

REVEALING STUFF

In the Bible, God reveals Himself to His people in stages, gradually showing them more about Himself, building on what He's already taught them. Through His promises to Abraham, we begin to see more of what God's like and His incredible plans for His people.

If you want great stories, you've come to the right place. But delve a little deeper, and you'll also see the incredible, powerful, loving God behind it all.

**OK, take it away, Abraham.
Or should that be Abram...?**



1

Get up and go

Some stories are slow to start, gradually building an atmosphere. Not so with Abram. We're thrown straight into the middle of things, with God giving Abram mind-boggling orders and promises straightaway...

Read Genesis 12 v 1–5

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶ *What did God command Abram to do?*
- ▶ *Why was it hard for Abram? (v1)*
- ▶ *But what amazing promises did God make?*

God suddenly told Abram to leave his home and his people and step into the unknown. Abram trusted God to guide him and took his family on this mysterious adventure (v4–5). And the Lord made some history-shaping promises to Abram...

Promise 1 — Children

Abram's family would grow into a great nation (v2). But look back at Genesis 11 v 29–30: Abram was 75 and his wife Sarai couldn't have kids. God's first promise looked unlikely.

Promise 2 — Blessing

Through Abram, God would bless everyone on the planet (v3). Again, it seems improbable. But the rest of

the Bible shows us that **Jesus** was a descendant of Abram. It was Jesus who would be a blessing to the whole world.

Read verses 6–9

- ▶ *What new promise did God make? (v7)*

Promise 3 — Land

The Lord promised to give the whole land of Canaan to Abram's descendants. Another unlikely promise, but Abram believed God.

Christians have the Bible and know Jesus. Abram had neither and yet was prepared to trust God and step into an unknown future.

- ▶ *How is he an example to you?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for His awesome promises. Pray that, like Abram, you'll trust and obey God.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Leave this behind for page 108.



2

Who do you trust?

You're in a tight spot. You fear for the worst and you don't know what to do. Do you trust your own instincts? Phone a friend? Or maybe even turn to God for help?

Read Genesis 12 v 10-16

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶ *What did Abram do when famine hit the land? (v10)*
- ▶ *What did he do when he feared for his safety? (v11-13)*
- ▶ *How many times is God mentioned in verses 10-16?*

Abram was living in Canaan, the place God led him to. But when famine struck, Abram didn't seek God's help — he ran off to Egypt. And when he feared the Egyptians might kill him and take Sarai, Abram told a half-truth (Sarai was his half-sister) to save his skin.

God isn't mentioned in these verses because Abram didn't turn to the Lord for help. He tried to sort his problems out by himself. It's always a big mistake to tackle a problem without asking God's help.

Read verses 17–20

Because of Abram's lies, Sarai became Pharaoh's wife, God gave Pharaoh serious diseases, and Abram and Sarai were thrown out of the country. Yet God was still with them!

It's so easy to take matters into our own hands. We sometimes trust ourselves more than we trust God. But because of Jesus, we can turn to God for help in living His way.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Tell God about difficult situations you're facing at the mo. Ask Him to help and guide you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Trust God, not yourself.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Trust me, if you want more, you should turn to page 108.



3

Time to split

Abram had made a mess of things in Egypt by not turning to God for guidance. But, amazingly, God was still with him and his family. So, would Abram learn from his mistakes?

👁️ Read Genesis 13 v 1–4

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▷ *What did Abram do this time? (v4)*

That’s a good pattern to follow: when you’ve done wrong, go quickly back to God. Talk to Him, ask Him to guide you.

Abram’s back trusting God, but how will he react when he’s tested again?

👁️ Read verses 5–13

▷ *What was the problem? (v7)*

▷ *How did Abram deal with it? (v8–9)*

▷ *How wise was Lot’s choice? (v12–13)*

Abram and his nephew Lot had become so rich that the land wasn’t big enough for both of them and their families and animals. Abram had the right to choose who farmed

where because he was top man in the family. But he showed great generosity by letting Lot choose. Lot chose perfect farming land, near the river Jordan. But it was near the sin-infested city of Sodom. Later on, we’ll see what a bad move this was.

GET ON WITH IT

▷ *How can you be more generous with people around you? List three specific things you can do:*

-
-
-

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask the Lord to remind you to do those things. And bring any problems or decisions you have to God, asking Him to guide you.

➔ TAKE IT FURTHER

Peace be with you... on page 108.



4

Showing promise

In the best thrillers, the plot is revealed slowly. Bit by bit, we're given new facts, until we can start to piece together what's happening. Things gradually start to make sense.

God made three great promises to Abram (Genesis 12 v 1–7). Gradually, the Lord reveals more and more about these incredible promises. And He also reveals more about Himself.

Read Genesis 13 v 14–18

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What does God reveal about His promise of land? (v14–15)*
- And what about the promise of children? (v16)*
- How does the Lord get Abram to appreciate His promises? (v17)*

God is so good to His people and treats them far better than they could imagine! God revealed to Abram just how amazing His promises were — Abram's family would become a huge nation (v16), and they would have this great land, as far as the eye could see (v15).

Throughout the Bible, we gradually begin to see how awesome, loving, forgiving and powerful our God is. He gives us far more than we could ever deserve or imagine. Sending His Son to die for us was the ultimate example of this.

GET ON WITH IT

Abram walked around the country, taking in all that God had promised to give him.

- What can you do to make sure you appreciate the great things God has given you?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for some of the specific things He's given you. Ask Him to reveal more and more of Himself to you as you read your Bible.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God is so good to His people!

TAKE IT FURTHER

For more of God's promises, wander over to page 108.



5

Lot of trouble

Remember how Abram let his nephew Lot have first choice of where to live? Lot chose great farming land, but it was near Sodom, where people sinned against God in disgusting ways.

Keep that at the back of your brain. But first, a big battle between loads of kings with crazy names...

Read Genesis 14 v 1–12**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

▷ *Where was Lot living before?*
(Genesis 13 v 12)

▷ *Where's he living now?*
(Genesis 14 v 12)

Four powerful kings attacked five cities (including Sodom) on the plain of Jordan. By now, Lot had moved into the evil city. What a bad move!

GET ON WITH IT

▷ *Is there anywhere you go or people you hang out with that tempt you away from living God's way?*

▷ *What will you do about it?*

Lot was kidnapped along with all his possessions. Time for Abram to come to the rescue...

Read verses 13–16

▷ *How was Abram able to rescue Lot so successfully? (see v20)*

With the help of his allies and some cunning night-time tactics, Abram made a successful attack and rescued Lot. Nice work. But it was God who was behind Abram's victory.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that He's in control. Spend time thanking God for specific things He's enabled you to do.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God's behind the good stuff.

TAKE IT FURTHER

For extra advice on right living, run to page 109.



6

Two for one offer

Know anyone who's got two jobs? Waiter and actor. Teacher and mother. Taxi driver and ballet dancer. Today, Abram meets a man who has two seriously important jobs...

Read Genesis 14 v 17-20

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *What two impressive roles did Melchizedek have? (v18)*
- ▷ *What did he recognise about Abram's victory? (v20)*

Not only did Melchizedek... Meldizzy... Milkyway... this king/priest have two great jobs and say some great things to Abram, he also reminds us of someone else.

- ▷ *Any ideas who?*

The book of Hebrews tells us that Melchizedek reminds us of Jesus. Jesus is king and priest. He's the **King over everything** and He was the **ultimate priest** because, when He died and rose again, He took away the sins of God's people. Stunning.

Read verses 21-24

- ▷ *How did the king of Sodom want to divide the people and things Abram had captured?*

- ▷ *What's Abram's surprising answer?*

Usually the reward for winning a battle was to keep everything (and everyone) you captured. But Abram refused to keep anything the king of Sodom gave him. He wanted people to know that everything he had came from God. And he gave a tenth of his possessions back to God too (v20).

GET ON WITH IT

- ▷ *What can you give back to Him? Time? Money? Possessions?*
- ▷ *How exactly will you do that?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

You must have loads to thank God for today, and a few things to ask Him.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Everything we have comes from God.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

For the lowdown on Melchizedek and Jesus, go to page 109.



7

Game of two halves

What promises had God made to Abram? Flick back through *engage* if your brain has frozen. Today, we'll see God confirm those promises in a spectacular way.

Read Genesis 15 v 1–6

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *What was Abram worried about? (v2–3)*
- ▷ *How did God answer Abram and encourage him? (v5, v1)*
- ▷ *What was Abram's response? (v6)*

The Lord said He would protect Abram. In fact, having God with him was Abram's greatest reward (v1). Yet Abram still doubted God's promise to give him a huge family. So God said *'Go count the stars — that's the number of offspring you'll have!'*

Abram believed and trusted God (v6). It's one of the brilliant moments in the Bible. For us, too — as we trust God to forgive us by what Jesus has done, He counts us right with God.

- ▷ *How does your life show that you trust God?*

Read verses 7–21

- ▷ *What would you say is happening here? Any ideas?*

Abram wanted to be sure that God would keep His promises. So the Lord reminded Abram of how He'd been faithful in the past (v7) and would be in the future (v14–16).

God made a covenant (agreement) with Abram. When making a covenant, two people would sacrifice animals and walk between the bodies. If you broke the agreement, you'd be cut to pieces too. Ouch. The fire pot and torch were a sign that God was there, making this promise.

PRAY ABOUT IT

God has promised to forgive His people and keep them safe forever. He always keeps His promises. Spend a while praising and thanking God.

TAKE IT FURTHER

For the second half, try page 109.