

GOD PROVIDES: INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS GOD PROVIDES?

Throughout history, people have wrestled with the concept of trusting God to meet their needs versus relying on the world. In the Bible, God reveals how He wants to be our ultimate Provider. We will see this unfold through six short films and a printed Companion Guide (one/family; unless otherwise noted, bold green text is from the CG).

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The learning experience is more than short films. Along with a printed Companion Guide, each step is carefully crafted to guide, support, and challenge along the way. We will engage these key areas:

- Our heads – as we view and discuss the films
- Our hearts – as we reflect on the personal implications of these stories
- Our hands – as we apply our discoveries through meaningful activities

THE FILMS

Through the films, timeless principles will leap off the pages of Scripture and into modern lives to teach how to live faithfully with trust in God—the ultimate Provider. **Deuteronomy 8:18a: And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth.**

THE SCHEDULE: GOD PROVIDES

We will meet each week to watch a film, discuss the ramifications, and talk through how we could wear those principles in our lives. Here is our schedule:

DATE	LESSON	TOPIC	PASSAGE	SPEAKER
January 6	Introduction	Who, What, When, Where, Why	Various	Jim Fleming
January 13	Widow and Oil	What Do You Have?	2 Kings 4:1-7	Jim Fleming
January 20	Jeremiah's Call	God's Design for Hope	Jeremiah 29:1-14	Terry Bolden
January 27	Abram's Reward	Making Major Life Choices	Genesis 12:1-15:6	Jim Fleming
February 3	Abraham and Isaac	Mine or His?	Genesis 22:1-18	Jim Fleming
February 10	Rich Man and Lazarus	My Heart Decisions Affect Eternity	Luke 16:19-31	Keith Chrisman
February 17	Lifted Up	My Hope for the Future	John 3:1-17	Jim Fleming

Let's watch the three-minute introductory film to get a feel for the style of the films.

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY

“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” – Lewis Carroll

WHO DOES WHAT AROUND HERE? (RESPONSIBILITIES)

1. Breakfast Coordinator (insures breakfast is present) (Lead: Trish Bolden, Backup: Trisha McGarvey)
2. Prayer Coordinator (distributes prayer requests) (Lead: Darla Skinner, Backup: TBD)
3. Inreach Leader (invites missing members) (Lead: Albert Whiting, Backup: TBD)
4. Party Planner (plans parties and organizes meals) (Lead: TBD, Backup: Bri Molloy)
5. Teacher (teaches/leads class) (Lead: Jim Fleming, Backup: Various)

WHAT ARE WE ABOUT? (PHILOSOPHY)

1. **1 Corinthians 14:40: Let all things be done decently** [properly, appropriately] **and in order** [place and time; a military term denoting the order and regularity that an army is drawn up (as our God is a God of order)].
2. Johari Window

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Arena	Blind Spot
Not Known to Others	Façade	Unknown

WHAT ARE WE EXPECTED TO DO? (EXPECTATIONS) MATTHEW 6:33A

1. Learner’s: **McDonald’s** (beef patty, salt, pepper, pickles, onions, ketchup, and mustard), vision, and prayer
2. Teacher’s: **Consistency**, discussion, and feedback

WHEN DO WE MEET?

9:07 am every Sunday morning (except March **31**, 2013, December 22, 2013, and December 29, 2013)

WHERE ARE WE GOING? (SCHEDULE)

January - February	God Provides
March	Doing a Great Work (Nehemiah)
April-August	Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians
September - October	<i>Everybody’s Normal ‘Till You Get to Know Them</i> (tentative)
November - December	Totally Saved (tentative)

WHY ARE WE HERE?

1. Substantive interaction with **truth**
2. Meaningful **connection** with Christians
3. Ministry training with **opportunities**

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR 2013

The Bible (NKJV), *The Purpose Driven Life* (Warren), *Living by the Book* (Hendricks), *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them* (Ortberg), all of the Star Wars and Star Trek movies, Duck Dynasty, The Big Bang Theory, and ACS

GOD PROVIDES: WIDOW AND OIL

INTRODUCTION: WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

We all experience difficult and often painful circumstances as a result of our actions, other people's actions, or things beyond our control. Major life issues—such as the death of a loved one, loss of employment, serious illness, financial pressures—can be overwhelming.

The God of the Bible, whose ways are far beyond what we can think or imagine, invites us to humble ourselves and turn to Him for help. When we do, He provides answers to our deepest needs. Although God cares about our immediate needs, He is even more concerned about our relationship with Him. He desires for each of us to put our faith and trust in Him and be attentive to His direction.

During this session, we'll learn about a woman who faced an agonizing dilemma. She had meager resources, a seemingly impossible situation and no good solutions. But she did the only thing she could think to do—and her obedient faith and willingness to follow godly counsel led to incredible blessing from God.

READ THE TEXT: 2 KINGS 4:1-7

ELISHA AND THE WIDOW'S OIL

1 A certain woman [Adam Clarke: This woman, according to the Chaldee, Jarchi, and the rabbins, was the wife of Obadiah] of the wives of the sons [generally understood to be disciples] of the prophets [if she was a wife of a prophet or the wife of a disciple of a prophet, Elisha (who succeeded Elijah) probably knew her, being that Elisha was the preeminent prophet of the day] cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves [Adam Clarke: Children, according to the laws of the Hebrews, were considered the property of their parents, who had a right to dispose of them for the payment of their debts. And in cases of poverty, the law permitted them, expressly, to sell both themselves and their children; Exodus 21:7, and Leviticus 25:39]."

2 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar [flask, small oil jug] of oil [Many of the commentators feel that this jar of oil was for her own funeral and burial. Coffman: Cooking oil does not appear at all in this narrative. Our modern equivalent of what is indicated is a very desirable and expensive type of perfume]."

3 Then he said, "Go, borrow [ask, borrow, enquire, consult, seek] vessels [receptacles] from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few [to make small, make few, diminish, to give less—imagine being so poor that you do not even have empty vessels]. **4** And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels [Pour in to how many? All—Elisha knew what was going to happen], and set aside the full ones."

5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her [Did Elisha tell her to engage her sons? No. I think she wanted to get all of the vessels she could]; and she poured it out. **6** Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel."

And he said to her, “There is not another vessel.” So the oil ceased [stood still, stopped moving, ceased, held its ground. **David Guzik: The oil did not pour out on the ground or simply flow about. It was intended for a prepared vessel. Each vessel had to be prepared by being gathered, by being assembled, by being emptied, by being put in the right position and by staying in the right position. When there was no more prepared vessel, the oil stopped.]. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay** [complete, finish, make safe, make whole/good, restore, pay] **your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest** [leftovers, remains, what was left behind].”

EXAMINE THE FILM

Before we watch the first DVD, a disclaimer. The Scriptures **win**. Every time. If there is the slightest variance between the text and the DVD, the Scriptures are right. I believe the DVDs align with the Scriptures, but if not, the Scriptures win.

DISCUSS

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your table time discussion

1. **Imagine that you are in the widow’s situation right now. The creditor has just told you the bad news, and you are paralyzed with fear. What might you do? Why?**
2. **How aware do you think the widow was of the God Elisha (and her late husband) served? When did she first demonstrate faith? What did she admit to Elisha right away?**
3. **If you were the widow, how might you have responded when Elisha wanted to know what she had in her little home? How much value did she place on what she had?**
4. **Why do you think God chose to have the widow participate in her own provision? Why was it important for her children and neighbors to play a part as well?**

REFLECT

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your homework

1. **How has God provided for your needs, and how have you responded to Him?**
2. **In what way(s) might the steps the widow took to actively participate in resolving her situation relate to you and situations you face?**
3. **In which area(s) might you need to admit your need for help, place your faith and trust in God, and seek—and follow—godly, Bible-based counsel? What may be keeping you from doing this?**

APPLICATION (WHAT IS THE POINT?)

1. **Maclaren: You have God in the measure in which you desire Him.**
2. God has the answer for any problem and often engages **us** in the solution
3. Extreme poverty or wealth does not wipe away my debts
4. God provides

PERSONALIZATION (WHAT DO I DO WITH THAT?)

1. Go to God's word (and God's people) for counsel and obey
2. Use what is in my **hand**
3. Pay my debts
4. Test Him

THE SCHEDULE: GOD PROVIDES

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January 20	Jeremiah's Call	God's Design for Hope	Jeremiah 29:1-14	Terry Bolden
January 27	Abram's Reward	Making Major Life Choices	Genesis 12:1-15:6	Jim Fleming
February 3	Abraham and Isaac	Mine or His?	Genesis 22:1-18	Jim Fleming
February 10	Rich Man and Lazarus	My Heart Decisions Affect Eternity	Luke 16:19-31	Keith Chrisman
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GOD PROVIDES: JEREMIAH'S CALL

INTRODUCTION: GOD'S DESIGN FOR HOPE

More than 2,500 years ago, exiled Jews from Judah were eking out an existence in Babylon. No doubt some remembered how King Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and carried some of Judah's gifted young men into exile. Later, more Babylonian troops transported additional Jews from Judah to Babylon and destroyed Jerusalem.

God caused these events because He loved His people too much to abandon them to their sinful ways. He used their hardships to discipline and teach them to obey Him. Only then, He knew, could they find true hope and purposeful living.

In Babylon, false prophets prophesied "*false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds*" (Jeremiah 14:14 NIV) and evidently told the exiles not to serve the king of Babylon and his people.

God, however, had other plans. As illustrated in this session's film, through the prophet Jeremiah God spoke encouraging and unusual words that required the exiles to exercise great faith in God and to do something unprecedented for exiles at that time in history to do.

READ THE TEXT: JEREMIAH 29:1-14

JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE CAPTIVES

1 Now these *are* the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. **2** (This happened after Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) **3** *The letter was sent* by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,

4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:

5 Build houses and dwell *in them*; plant gardens and eat their fruit. **6** Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. **7** And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. [What type of attitudes do you think were prevalent? Psalm 137; Isaiah 55:8-9] **8** For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. **9** For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD.

10 For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Their sorrow would be turned to joy ([2 Corinthians 7:9-10](#), [John 16:20](#), [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#), [Revelation 21:4](#)). Even though the Jews did not understand, they prospered 1,500+ years in this area. God preserved them and their way of life.

EXAMINE THE FILM

DISCUSS

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your table time discussion (specifically question #3)

1. **What lessons did you learn from this film?**
2. **Prior to the arrival of Jeremiah's message, the exiles must have been tempted to think that life would never return to "normal." How might their feelings compare with those of people who face difficult situations today?**
3. **Read [Jeremiah 29:11-13](#) aloud (see the shaded box). What is significant about the phrase, "I know . . ."? During difficult times, can we always recognize God's ongoing work in our lives and the world around us? Explain your answers. In these verses, what did God ask the exiles to do in order to realize His gift of hope and a future? What does this prophecy of Jeremiah reveal about the heart of God?**
4. **God told His people to settle where they were, build houses, marry, and plant gardens. He didn't rescue them from their problems immediately. What can we learn from this?**
5. **Imagine being the exiles who experienced the Babylonians' savagery. Now God has commanded them to put down roots in Babylon, seek its peace and prosperity, and even pray for it! What emotions do you think surfaced when they understood God's command? Why?**

REFLECT

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your homework

1. **How does a person "seek God with all of his or her heart"? (See [Jeremiah 29:13](#).) Are you doing this? Read these verses before answering: [Proverbs 3:5](#); [4:23-27](#); [Joshua 22:5](#); [Matthew 22:34-37](#); and [Colossians 3:23](#).**
2. **Do you believe that God hears your prayers, cares about your situation, and wants you to pray for your governmental leaders? What is He teaching you these days about listening to His voice?**
3. **When you feel trapped in difficult circumstances and are losing hope, how might you benefit from remembering God's promise to give the Jewish exiles hope and a future?**

APPLICATION (WHAT IS THE POINT?)

1. **Bad** things happen
2. Answers are always **available**
3. Prayer is always **appropriate**

PERSONALIZATION (WHAT DO I DO WITH THAT?)

1. Don't **give up** (this was not the end of their story)
2. Don't **give up** (we have more resources than we think we have)
3. Don't **give up** (we may never know the, 'why')

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GOD PROVIDES: ABRAM'S REWARD

INTRODUCTION: MAKING MAJOR LIFE CHOICES

Under God's command, Abram left his home and journeyed to a new land, Canaan, with all his goods, his family, and his nephew Lot. The contrasts between the wise choices of Abram and the foolish choices of Lot provide valuable lessons for us today—contentment with less versus wanting more; loving people versus loving things; and giving versus taking.

Abram illustrated a loving attitude through his care for his nephew Lot, a willingness to take less by allowing Lot to make first choice when dividing the land, and a generous spirit by giving a tenth of the goods he collects in battle to Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14:18).

Lot's superficial decision to choose the beautiful land near Sodom becomes his undoing. Yet Abram displays great trust in God, pursuing the armies of the invading kings with relatively few men in order to rescue Lot.

Like Abram, are you generous? Do you trust God, or is fear preventing you from releasing control of your life to Him? Are you willing to seek the counsel necessary in order to make wise decisions? Let the examples you see in this film encourage you to bring your giving, trust, and decision-making in line with the principles of God's Word.

READ THE TEXT: GENESIS 12:1-15:6

GENESIS 12

PROMISES TO ABRAM

1 Now the LORD had said to Abram:

"Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go

to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. **6** Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites *were* then in the land.

7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. **8** And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. **9** So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

ABRAM IN EGYPT

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land. **11** And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you *are* a woman of beautiful countenance. **12** Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This *is* his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. **13** Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

14 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she *was* very beautiful. **15** The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. **16** He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

17 But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. **18** And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife? **19** Why did you say, 'She *is* my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way." **20** So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

GENESIS 13

ABRAM INHERITS CANAAN

1 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. **2** Abram *was* very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. **3** And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, **4** to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. **6** Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together [first world problems]. **7** And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren. **9** *Is* not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If *you take* the left, then I will go to the right; or, if *you go* to the right, then I will go to the left."

10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. **11** Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom. **13** But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.

14 And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; **15** for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. **16** And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered. **17** Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

18 Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.

GENESIS 14

LOT'S CAPTIVITY AND RESCUE

1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, **2** *that* they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).**3** All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). **4** Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, **6** and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness. **7** Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

8 And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim **9** against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. **10** Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of* asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; *some* fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. **11** Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. **12** They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they *were* allies with Abram. **14** Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **15** He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of Damascus. **16** So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who *were* with him.

ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said:

**"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."**

And he gave him a tithe [tenth] of all.

21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself."

22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich' — 24 except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

GENESIS 15

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM

1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

2 But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

EXAMINE THE FILM

DISCUSS

We do not get the impression from the Scripture that Lot was ever interested in God. We only get the impression that he was interested in having the best for himself. **Who does that sound like?**

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your table time discussion

- 1. How was Abram's trust in God, love for people, and generosity demonstrated . . .
In his choice to leave his home country?
During his discussion with Lot about where to live?**

In his response to learning about Lot's capture?

In his dealings with Melchizedek?

2. What characteristics did Lot exhibit in decision-making? What consequences resulted? When we talk with God and seek His direction, how do our choices—and our underlying motivations—change?
3. What do you think God was emphasizing when He said to Abram, "I am your shield, your very great reward"? (See [Genesis 15:1 NIV](#)) In which area(s) of life do you need God to be your "shield"? Why? How highly do people you know value their relationship with God? Do they value Him more highly than any other reward? Why or why not?
4. What things tend to hinder us from expressing our deepest longing to God, just as elderly Abram asked God for a child of his own?

REFLECT

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your homework

1. Which of Abram's characteristics would you like to demonstrate more often? Why?
2. Consider this Scripture passage: "Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil" ([Ephesians 5:15-16 NASB](#)). Like Lot, could you be making unwise choices that hinder your opportunities to serve the Lord? What might they be?
3. Why is it hard to seek God's "reward" rather than the alluring things of this world?

APPLICATION (WHAT IS THE POINT?)

1. **Less** > more (cognitive surplus)
2. **People** > possessions (this is the way to make friends)
3. **Generosity** > hoarding (and it is more fun too)
4. God provides

PERSONALIZATION (WHAT DO I DO WITH THAT?)

1. Intentionally choose less
2. Intentionally choose people
3. Intentionally choose generosity
4. Trust Him (He will show up in some strange places—like Melchizedek did)

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February 3	Abraham and Isaac	Mine or His?	Genesis 22:1-18	Jim Fleming
February 10	Rich Man and Lazarus	My Heart Decisions Affect Eternity	Luke 16:19-31	Keith Chrisman
February 17	Lifted Up	My Hope for the Future	John 3:1-17	Jim Fleming

GOD PROVIDES: ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

INTRODUCTION: MINE OR HIS?

This session highlights the true story of Abraham and Isaac, his son. Often called “the Father of Faith,” Abraham faced a difficult test when God commanded him to make an unusual and—based on human standards—seemingly nonsensical and cruel sacrifice. God used this test of obedience to see whether or not Abraham trusted Him fully and would, in faith, obediently make everything he had available for God’s use.

Today we each have a choice. Will we listen to God’s voice—through the Bible, prayer, and the wisdom of godly people? Will we not only seek God’s will for our lives but obey Him faithfully—whether or not we know the final outcome? So much of our culture focuses on the “It’s-all-about-me” mentality and demands to know final outcomes ahead of time.

Before facing this hard test, Abraham had already experienced a dynamic relationship with the living God, who told him to move his family to a new land. During all circumstances, God always fulfilled His previous promises to Abraham—including giving Abraham and his wife, Sarah, their beloved son, Isaac.

Like Abraham, we have opportunities to believe God—and that includes having faith that He will keep His promises and allowing Him to carry out His will for our lives. As we trust and obey Him, we will experience His peace and contentment regardless of our outward circumstances.

READ THE TEXT: GENESIS 22:1-18

ABRAHAM’S FAITH CONFIRMED

1 Now it came to pass after these things [to help connect the dots from last week’s lesson and to provide context for this week’s lesson, read [Genesis 15-21](#)] **that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!”**

And he said, “Here I am.”

2 Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac [in man’s eyes, Abraham had a second son, Ishmael, but in God’s eyes, Abraham only had one son], **whom you love** [David Guzik: This is the first mention of love in the Bible], **and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering** [David Guzik: This was not an offering that was burned alive, but one first sacrificed and then completely burnt before the LORD. . . . Abraham had to learn the difference between trusting the promise and trusting the Promiser. We can put God’s promise before God Himself and feel it is our responsibility to bring the promise to pass, even if we have to disobey God to do it. Trust the Promiser no matter what, and the promise will be taken care of!] **on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”**

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place [Abraham is not walking by reason or by sight or by logic, but by faith] **of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day** [three days is a very long time to think about this upcoming action] **Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off** [If

this place was actually Mount Moriah, then this specific spot could easily have been the spot later called Golgotha]. **5 And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”** [Who will come back again? We]

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together [David Guzik: Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice up the hill]. **7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!”**

And he said, “Here I am, my son.”

Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” [This question illustrates that Isaac knew the basics about the sacrificial system and the elements contained in it]

8 And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” [Throughout history, God has always provided—both for us and for Himself. When we rebelled as a race in [Genesis 3](#), we tried to cover ourselves up with leaves from a tree. Four thousand years later, God provided the perfect once-for-all sacrificial Lamb on a tree (perhaps to remind us that we forgot an important element in [Genesis 3](#)).] **So the two of them went together.**

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the LORD [Jesus] **called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”**

So he said, “Here I am.”

12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns [had it been caught in the thicket by anything else, it would have been scratched up and not worthy to be sacrificed]. **So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”**

15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

David Guzik: When God asked Abraham for the ultimate demonstration of love and commitment, He asked for Abraham’s son. When the Father wanted to show us the ultimate demonstration of His love and commitment to us, He gave us His Son. We can say to the LORD, “Now I know that You love me, seeing You have not withheld Your Son, Your only Son from me.”

EXAMINE THE FILM

DISCUSS

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your table time discussion

1. **Why do you think God told Abraham to sacrifice his son?**
2. **Do you think God tests followers of Jesus today? Why or why not?**
3. **In what way(s) has your faith in God been tested? What did you learn about yourself and God as a result?**
4. **How has God provided for the needs in your life? Describe a time when God provided in an unusual way. Does God always provide what we need when we want it? Why or why not?**
5. **God challenged Abraham to trust Him with Isaac. When it comes to our possessions, and other gifts and blessings, why is it often difficult to recognize that they ultimately belong to God? Why do some people have a hard time trusting God with their job situations, family problems, health issues, and other things?**

REFLECT

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your homework

1. **In which particular area(s) might God be testing your willingness to obey Him fully and trust Him with your life and all that you have? How are you responding? What adjustments might you need to make?**
2. **Do you *really* believe that God will provide for your needs as He promises? How is this belief affecting the way you live? The lives of other people around you?**
3. **In the film, Abraham said that a sacrifice to God was an “act of worship.” How might this relate to a sacrifice He may want you to make?**

APPLICATION

1. **Tests** are coming (and they will not be convenient)
2. **God** may not appear to be rational
3. God **provides**

PERSONALIZATION

1. Build up **deposit** the habit of obedience now
2. **David Guzik: Trust the Promiser no matter what**
3. Look around for the **provision**

THE SCHEDULE: GOD PROVIDES

We will meet each week to watch a film, discuss the ramifications, and talk through how we could wear those principles in our lives.

DATE	LESSON	TOPIC	PASSAGE	SPEAKER
February 10	Rich Man and Lazarus	My Heart Decisions Affect Eternity	Luke 16:19-31	Keith Chrisman
February 17	Lifted Up	My Hope for the Future	John 3:1-17	Jim Fleming

GOD PROVIDES: RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

INTRODUCTION: MY HEART CHOICES AFFECT ETERNITY

Life after death is a hotly debated topic. “What happens after we die? How do our lives on earth affect how we spend eternity?”

This session is based on a parable Jesus told about a rich man and Lazarus, a beggar—and the afterlife. As the film portrays, there is an eternal heaven (Paradise) and a separate and eternal hell—a place of torment. The Bible emphasizes this. However, it also teaches that what we believe and place our faith in during our earthy lives determines our eternal destiny. If we place our faith in money and possessions, for example, we will be left with nothing and spend eternity in hell separated from God. But if we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we will spend eternity in His presence. That is a step of “saving” faith—leading to salvation; no one can earn eternity in heaven by good deeds. (See Ephesians 2:8-9.)

The other key theme of this session deals with riches and poverty. Poor people have coexisted with rich people since humankind’s earliest days. It is not wrong to be rich or poor. However, in the Bible—God’s Word for us today—God says that earthly wealth is temporary and provided to us in order to meet our needs and the needs of others. He commands his followers to lovingly, compassionately, and generously use their resources to help people in need.

READ THE TEXT: LUKE 16:19-31

Before we look at the parable in [Luke 16:19-31](#), we need to back up and take a look at some previous passages to understand this parable. Jesus was teaching about how earthly investments can reap eternal rewards when we are generous with money. In [Luke 16:13](#), Jesus tells the people that they cannot serve two masters (money and God). The Pharisees that were in the audience took offense to that, and so they began heckling Jesus. The amount of money we have is not as important as the way we use it for God’s kingdom. The Pharisees viewed wealth as a sign of righteousness. Jesus wants to really get their attention and does so by turning up the heat in His next lesson and begins this parable that talks about heaven and hell and how the decisions of the heart can affect eternity.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

19 “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. [The rich man was clothed extravagantly. Jesus refers to the purple garments as to priestly garments. **What comes to mind when you think of sumptuous?** His dinner table had the best food and the best fine dishes. He ate like this every day so he probably did not observe the periods of ritual fasting that he was supposed to be doing.]

20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, [Notice in these two verses that the rich man is not given a name by Jesus but that the beggar is named Lazarus. This tells me that Lazarus had a relationship with Jesus while the rich man did not. It is interesting to note here that the name Lazarus actually means assistance of God or God is my helper. [Luke 16:20](#) tells us that Lazarus is covered sores all over his flesh which means that he had some kind of disease. In addition, it says that he was lying at the rich man’s gate. The word laid in the Greek is *ballo* meaning that he is cast down as if he was lying on a bed. Talk about

Washington, D.C. and the homeless by the gates of the White House. Think about this. To me, the rich man had it easy to honor God. All he had to do was to grab some food from his kitchen and walk out to his front gate and give Lazarus some food. **How many of us would love that kind of opportunity to serve?** To be able to walk out our front door and be there to help someone in need.] **21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.** [In those times, the wealthy people did not have napkins so while eating they would wipe their hands on pieces of bread and throw the bread on the floor. Lazarus would be thankful for the small amount of food that fell from the rich man's lavish table. **Do you have a dog that is a licker?** One night Chandi and I were watching TV in the living room and our dog Maggie came up to Chandi and began licking her nonstop. Chandi had to push her away so that Maggie would quit licking her but that is one of the ways that Maggie likes to show love and comfort. So here, the dogs gave Lazarus more comfort than the rich man did.] **22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.** [Matthew Henry: **The sin of this rich man was not so much his dress or his diet, but his providing only for himself.** The rich man is now in hell and looks up in heaven and sees the beggar that he denied food to and that he knew by name. This tells me that the rich man knew who Lazarus was while on earth. Lazarus is now being comforted by Abraham. **What have we learned about Abraham in the last few weeks? What kind of man was he?** Abraham was a very rich, powerful, generous, and humble. Jesus uses Abraham in this parable. If the Pharisees were to pick a religious all-star team, Abraham would be one of their first picks. They considered Abraham as, "the man." They accepted the words of Abraham but now they are rejecting the words of Christ the Messiah.]

24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' [Lazarus laid quietly at the rich man's gate needing food, but now the rich man is in hell screaming in agony begging for some help from the beggar that on earth he denied food and water and comfort to.] **25 But Abraham said, 'Son [no longer is the rich man referred to as rich], remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'**

27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' [Here is another picture of the rich man wanting the beggar in heaven to serve him by sending him down to his brothers to testify. Obviously, his brothers know and recognize who Lazarus is. They probably had to step over him going through their brother's gate. The rich man finally realizes the sins he committed by neglecting the one in need and now wants to save his brothers from making the same mistake that he made.] **29 Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"**

Look at [Isaiah 58:7-10](#) while I read it aloud:

**7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?
8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;**

**The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'**

**"If you take away the yoke from your midst,
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
10 If you extend your soul to the hungry
And satisfy the afflicted soul,
Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,
And your darkness shall be as the noonday.**

The Pharisees that were sneering at Jesus would have had to memorize this passage. The Old Testament is full of scripture like this that tell us to help those in need. My point is this: they were not applying it to their lives. The scripture was in their head but not in their heart.

**Psalm 119:11: Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.**

Let the word of God perform heart surgery on you!

So what are we to do with this, how are we to apply this to our lives? Let me ask you a personal question. What kind of clothes are you wearing? Are you clothed in purple fine linens like the rich man and only looking out only for yourselves or are you clothed with **Colossians 3:12? Colossians 3:12: Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.**

Matthew Henry: Those that are not able to help the poor with their purses should help them with their pains those that cannot lend them a penny should lend them a hand.

EXAMINE THE FILM

DISCUSS

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your table time discussion

1. **What did you think about and feel as you watched the film? Why?**
2. **How might a person's use of money and other resources reflect his/her perspective on the afterlife?**
3. **In what ways does society favor wealthy people and discriminate against poor people? Why does this happen? Why don't more people help the poor?**
4. **In Jesus' parable, Abraham told the formerly rich man that if his brothers would not listen to Moses and the prophets they would not listen to someone raised from the dead. Do you agree? Why or why not?**
5. **What attitudes and beliefs can hinder us from helping people in need? How can we know when we are giving enough—of our time, money, other resources—to needy people?**

REFLECT

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your homework

1. **What is your “take-away” truth from this session?**
2. **Just as Lazarus lay at the rich man’s gate, people in need may be near your “gate.” How will you help one or more of them—in small or large ways?**
3. **In the same way that the rich man influenced his five brothers, you are influencing other people through your beliefs and use of resources. What kind of example are you setting for your friends, family, and coworkers?**

APPLICATION

1. The Word of God is not something you just read over and over, but it should be ingested and made a part of who we are

PERSONALIZATION

1. **Who is your Lazarus?**

THE SCHEDULE: GOD PROVIDES

We will meet each week to watch a film, discuss the ramifications, and talk through how we could wear those principles in our lives.

DATE	LESSON	TOPIC	PASSAGE	SPEAKER
February 17	Lifted Up	My Hope for the Future	John 3:1-17	Jim Fleming

GOD PROVIDES: LIFTED UP

INTRODUCTION: MY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

After God miraculously delivered the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt, they rebelled against Him and spent forty years wandering in the wilderness. Then, as the remaining Israelites neared the land God chose for them, they spoke against Him again—and against Moses, their leader.

As the film for this session portrays, God sent poisonous snakes to bite these rebellious people. Confessing that they were wrong, the people asked Moses to pray for God to remove the snakes. Following God's directions, Moses put a bronze snake on a pole, and anybody dying of snakebite who looked at the pole lived. God mercifully provided a way for those people to escape the consequences of their sin (wrongdoing).

Many years later, Jesus—the Son of God—came to earth to save us from our sins and give us spiritual life—salvation. One night, a religious leader named Nicodemus visited Jesus. Their conversation reveals that any person can be spiritually transformed and enjoy a personal relationship with the living God of the universe.

The Israelites looked at the bronze snake lifted up on a pole, believing in God's remedy for their condition. In the same way, people today can believe in Jesus, who was lifted up on a cross to bear the sins of humankind, died, and rose from the dead. Through Jesus' loving sacrifice, each of us can receive forgiveness for sin, a spiritual rebirth, a new life being transformed by God, and the certainty of eternal life in heaven.

READ THE TEXT: JOHN 3:1-17

This is the last week in this series, God Provides. We started by looking at how God provided for a widow and her sons' physical needs. We looked at how God provided protection for the nation of Israel for thousands of years. We looked at how God provided for Abram when Abram intentionally chose less. We looked at how God provided Abraham with the opportunity to build up Abraham's faith so that Abraham could come to the place of obedience. Last week we looked at how God provides opportunities for us to give and engage with our Lazaruses. This week, we finish by seeing how God provides Himself as the ultimate provision for our greatest need—salvation.

In this series, we saw how God provided food for a family, protection for a nation, prosperity for a man, faith for a father, opportunities for believers, and provision for our souls. God truly provides.

THE NEW BIRTH

1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

David Guzik: It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. In fact, some Rabbis taught that Abraham stood watch at the gate of hell, just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally wandered in there.

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God [God provides the start to the Gospel—He initiated the relationship] **so loved the world [God provides the motive for the Gospel—His love for us] **that He gave His only begotten Son** [God provides the greatest gift ever given], **that whoever** [God provides the broadest invitation] **believes in Him** [God provides a way that requires no work on our part] **should not perish** [God provides exemption from death] **but have everlasting life** [God provides initiation into life]. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

Some people think that asking questions of God is a bad thing—it is not. Without Nicodemus’ question, we would not have the simplicity of [John 3:16](#). Ask your hardest questions to God—He can handle them all.

Also, remember that we do not know how Nicodemus responded to this conversation, but [John 19](#) tells us that Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea prepare Jesus’ body and place Him in the tomb.

EXAMINE THE FILM

DISCUSS

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your table time discussion

- 1. God sent snakes among the ancient Israelites when they rebelled against God. What are some ways people rebel against God today? What are some of the consequences you’ve seen as a result?**
- 2. The people were healed when they confessed their sins and turned back to God. Have you ever confessed your sins to God? What issues keep people from doing that today?**
- 3. What did Nicodemus struggle to understand about Jesus and His teachings? In what way(s) did you identify with Nicodemus? Why?**
- 4. Jesus said that God loved and wanted to save the world, not condemn it. How did His being “lifted up” make this possible?**

REFLECT

See the questions in your Companion Guide for your homework

If you are not following Jesus . . .

Do you find it easy or hard to understand and receive God's love, which He demonstrated by sending Jesus to be lifted up on a cross for your sin? Why? Is there anything keeping you from responding to His invitation to be "born again"?

If you follow Jesus . . .

Think about your current walk with Jesus. What things might there be which keep you from going deeper with Him? How committed are you to knowing Jesus better—through fellowship with other followers of Jesus, Bible study, prayer, obedience?

APPLICATION

1. Tullian Tchividjian: The gospel doesn't offer a second chance to get things right. It offers a **substitute**.
2. God **provides**

PERSONALIZATION

1. Look to Jesus and **live** (and stop trying to do it on your own—you will fail)
2. Give **back**