

COMING TOGETHER

to FULFILL

GOD'S VISION

SPIRITUAL DESCENDANTS



Introduction

Perhaps the most satisfying experience in life is building up the next generation and seeing them carry their heritage forward! It gives us the chance to use our own painfully bought wisdom in a joyful pursuit. It opens a window for us to a future we will never see in this life. It forges a bond of gratitude and love and also pays a debt of love we happily pay in honor of previous generations. God who created the reproductive process also raises it to a spiritual significance through the gospel by entrusting parents with the task of discipling children and raising them on God's word. Those, too, who never have children, enjoy the richer, eternal satisfaction of multiplying spiritual descendants. Don't let opportunities slip by! Make it your business to invest in spiritual multiplication.



Study

Context: This is a topical study. The goal is to string together several scriptural beads that together display the nature of spiritual multiplication. The first three come from the Old Testament and primarily have literal physical descendants in view. But consider them in the context of God's age-long "mission" and calling to form a people for his love and glory. It is natural to read all of these passages with spiritual descendants in view.

Structure:

- I. Descendants and Creation (Genesis 1:26-28)
- II. Descendants and Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-5)
- III. Descendants and Israel (Deuteronomy 6:1-3)
- IV. Descendants and The Nations (Matthew 28:18-20)

APPLY → Abraham trusted God to empower him to multiply a godly heritage even though he himself lacked the natural abilities to do so (see Romans 4:18-22). If it pleases God, what are some ways that he might work above and beyond your own abilities to empower you to multiply a godly heritage?

APPLY → Is there some new, bolder request regarding your own spiritual multiplication that you can begin to pray for in light of God's command and promises?

Descendants and Israel (Deuteronomy 6:1-3)

5. In what ways will inattention to God's word hinder godly multiplication? What are some reasons Moses urges such careful and devoted attention to God's word?

APPLY → In what ways do you demonstrate trust and reliance upon God's word? How can your efforts at spiritual multiplication better honor God's word?

Descendants and the Nations (Matthew 28:18-20)

6. What connections can you find between this passage and those we studied above? What differences can you see?

APPLY → What are some ways this study has challenged you, encouraged you or deepened your resolve in your efforts to multiply spiritual descendants?



Connect

This section is for deeper study. It offers insights into the gospel of grace in our passage, identifies whole-Bible themes in our passage, and explores Christian doctrines that are taught in the passage. If you're a leader, take time to read through this before your Growth Group gathering!

Gospel Connections. The New Testament takes up the theme of descendants in surprising ways. Most obvious is the title of “children of God.” “To all who receive him. . . he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12-13 and 1 John 3:1-3. But it is striking how Paul takes the promise of many descendants for Abraham and claims it is fulfilled in us who believe—even Gentiles! Galatians 3:7 says, “It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.” Romans 4:11-12 says, “[Abraham] received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,…”

Whole-Bible Connections. The drama unfolding in the Book of Revelation is that of God calling and redeeming a vast people for himself from all the nations. This drama begins and collapses in Genesis, meanders through the accounts of Noah and Babel, develops through Abraham and Israel, climaxes under the David and Solomon and drives the narrative of return from Exile. But the most climactic moment of all the story is when Jesus sends his disciples to disciple all the nations.

Theological Connections. God uses means. He assigns his work to agents whom he assigns and enables to carry out his own work. On the first day God himself creates light as his first delight. Later, he creates the lights in the heavens to give light and to mark the day, the night and the seasons.

God alone has the power to create life, but he assigns this power to every living thing. First he “plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.” (Gen. 1:12) Then he created animals and man and woman telling each to “be fruitful and multiply.” God has not lost his power to create. In fact Jesus asserts that “from these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.” But God shows even greater power by perfectly guiding weak and rebellious agents which seem to operate without any guidance yet perfectly accomplish all his purposes. We should take heart that God uses the “weak things” (1 Cor. 1:26-31) rather than his own strong arm. Work, then, to make disciples knowing that God is pleased to work through us in our small efforts for eternal fruitfulness!