

# Act 3: A Covenant Kept

By David Wolf

I'm gonna get a stool, and the reason being, to let you in on a secret: if I don't sit, at least for part of when I teach or speak, I will go off the rails. I get really excited, and my words start making less sense to me and to you. My siblings call it a sign of my lack of intellect. My wife says that my brain just goes too fast for my mouth, and that's the way I prefer to think about it.

I'm really glad that you're here today. I am not Pastor Jake—my name is David. If we haven't met yet, I basically hang out in the back and do a bunch of behind-the-scenes things. Occasionally, Jake says, "Hey, you're preaching," and then that's what I do. I know I'm sitting now, but kids, I want you to notice how many times I stand up today. If you need something to distract yourself, count how many times I get off this stool because I'm really fired up this morning.

As I was preparing for today, I realized I actually prefer to speak last minute. Then I feel like I don't have a good excuse if it's bad. If Jake calls in sick on Friday, it's just what it is. But when I have more time, I put more pressure on myself: "You should have done better." But I'm not alone—Jake says I'm not alone, and that means I'm not alone.

I have some really, really good gospel to share with you this morning, but first I want to talk about where we've been. Two weeks ago, Pastor Jake began our journey through this sermon series called *The Long Game*. We've been looking at Abraham and the story of his life and how that relates to our journey here in this church.

As Greg and Caleb said, and as you've probably heard, we're in a season of transition—both in our leadership and in our mission and vision as a church. Normally, we like to review these things every couple of years. We haven't done that in a while, so we're coming back to it: asking why we exist as a community, what drives us, and what we may no longer need to do.

It's been really fun for me to be part of this, even from the sidelines, especially as we've visited different small groups and areas of ministry. Last weekend, we had an all-session meeting, and hearing all of you share your thoughts has been amazing. Jesus is moving, and you all are saying the same things, which makes my job easier when I have to collect all that data.

Two weeks ago, we talked about a prototype of faith—Abraham. The scripture says it was counted to him as righteousness. He believed, and it was counted to him. We discussed how Abraham answered the call and was thrust into a long journey filled with healing and success, even through challenges—both for himself, his family, and those he encountered. Genesis 12 shows us that God deeply desires for us to be whole, set apart, and in step with Him, simply because He loves us deeply.

In week two, we continued Abraham's story and explored the fact that even those called faithful and patterned after God's heart can make mistakes. We looked at one of Abraham's major mistakes and its impact on those around him. It's important for us as a church to remember that we will make mistakes too. No matter if it's a year of revisioning or a regular year, we're going to stumble—and that's okay. Abraham returned, repented, and said, "Jesus, your way is not mine. Make me completely whole. Continue."

Today, we pick up in Genesis 13:

*“So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abraham had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai, where his tent had been earlier, where he had first built an altar. There Abraham called on the name of the Lord.”*

Before this, there was a famine in the land. Abraham went to Egypt for food, and that’s where he lied to the king. Returning to Bethel, he and Lot had become very wealthy, but their combined possessions were too great for the land to support. Quarreling arose between their herders. Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right. If you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”

Even though Abram could have taken the better land for himself, he chose humility. He chose peace over power. He didn’t let human thinking dictate his decision. Church, there will be conflict anytime there is change. Abram’s example teaches us to choose relationship over control, even in challenging moments.

Immediately after Abram chose peace, God repeated His promise:

*“Look as far as you can in every direction—north, south, east, west. I am giving you all this land. To you and your descendants as a permanent possession. I will give you so many descendants that they cannot be counted.”*

The promise wasn’t tied to a specific piece of land—it was tied to God. Relationship comes first.

In Genesis 14, Lot chose Sodom, which led to his capture by invading kings. Abram gathered his 318 men and rescued Lot, leaving the captured goods with the king of Sodom, so it was clear that God, not Abraham, was the source of blessing. Then, he was met by Melchizedek, a priest, who blessed him. Again, Abraham was reminded of God’s promise.

Genesis 15 opens with God saying, *“Do not be afraid, Abram.”* Abram had just fought kings, rescued Lot, and amassed wealth, yet fear still came. God doesn’t rebuke him; instead, He assures Abram: *“I am your shield; you are a very great reward.”* Abram responds honestly, saying, “I still don’t have an heir.” Church, imagine if our community could be that honest with God about the unknowns in His plan.

God answers by showing Abram the stars: *“Try to count them if you can. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth.”* Even in doubt, Abraham believes. That is faith: believing when you can’t see how.

Then comes Genesis 15’s covenant. God asks Abraham to sacrifice animals, a ritual that in the ancient Near East symbolized accountability. Only God walks through the covenant alone while Abraham sleeps, showing that the promise depends on Him, not on human action. The covenant was guaranteed by God’s faithfulness.

Even culturally, this act resonates. Ancient Near Eastern texts reference grabbing the hem of a garment as a symbol of joining in covenant. In the New Testament, a woman grabbing the hem of Jesus’ robe demonstrates the same principle: trusting God and joining in His promise.

Genesis 15 reminds us that God repeats Himself not because He forgets, but because we do. God is not threatened by questions; He meets doubt with patience. If you’re tired, unsure, or standing between belief and fear, you’re in good company. The covenant still stands—it doesn’t depend on us walking through first.

From Abraham’s story, we learn:

1. Our future depends on God's promise, not our strategy. Abraham didn't forfeit blessing by letting Lot choose first.
2. God often waits to speak until we let go. Abraham released control and trusted God.
3. Faithful doesn't mean fearless. Abram questioned again and again, and God patiently revealed more about Himself.
4. God invites us to step into the bigger story. The covenant is maintained by Him, not us.

So maybe our prayer today doesn't need to be a bold declaration or a polished plan. Perhaps it's simply:  
*Jesus, we believe You. We believe You have good plans for us individually and as a church. Help us follow Your heart and trust Your promise.*

The covenant of God's love stands between Him and us, maintained by Him alone. All of God's people said, Amen.