

Character Study

ABRAHAM

The Friend of God



'The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.'" Genesis 12:1-3

The Bible documents that Abraham had a relationship with God which led to him embarking on a lifelong journey of faith. Abraham was a normal person, who just like any of us had his personal challenges and during this journey there were triumphs and tribulations. Yet in him many families were blessed, not because he was perfect, but because of the work God did in, with and through him.

This series we are embarking on a study on the life of this patriarch, trusting that the Holy Spirit will bring inspiration that we can gain from as we start a new year and season. Our prayer is that He will open our eyes to see how we can align with God's agenda so that this will be our best year yet as we press into a deeper walk with Him.

Day 1 Keep Moving

'One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there.' Genesis 11:31

We often start the story of Abraham from when he set out for Canaan, but his father Terah was actually the one that started the journey. The Bible isn't explicit as to what prompted Terah, but we see that he started a journey and for whatever reason chose to stop at Haran and settle there. We aren't told that there were any specific circumstances that hindered him from moving onwards to complete the journey.

'The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.' Psalms 32:8

We can presume the environment was comfortable and favourable as it's unlikely anyone would choose to settle in a negative environment. However as good as it looked and maybe felt, it wasn't God's best. The Lord says He will guide us along "the best" pathway, which means there are many pathways we can choose to take, however only He can guide us along the pathway that best aligns with His plans for us.

The same way Terah and family stopped and settled at Haran is the same way we may sense God has given us instructions to do several things, but we stop at the point we're comfortable with, not knowing that there's still so much more available for us. Even if where we are may appear to have the trappings of "success", it doesn't automatically mean that we have reached our full potential in God.

'The end of a thing is better than its beginning...' Ecclesiastes 7:8

'...and Terah died in Haran.' Genesis 11:32

Terah died in Haran, never making it to Canaan – he knew where he was headed, but he didn't get there. Question: Is where you where God wants you to be right now and have you asked Him what is next? Where have you stopped and settled rather than pressed forward to where God originally headed? Are you pressing in for more or comfortable where you are?

Prayer: Father give me the grace to finish what You start and not to truncate what you're doing in/with me

Day 2 A New Season

'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... 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.'" Genesis 12:1,4

At some point Abraham had to pick up from where his father Terah stopped in journeying to Canaan. We don't know when exactly God and Abraham engaged and for how long, but it's likely Terah was still alive when he left (Gen 11:26,32). We don't know if Terah encouraged or discouraged his son about leaving Haran, but regardless of the externals, Abraham left.

'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.' Genesis 12:5

The fact that Abraham had to leave Haran doesn't mean the place was bad, after all the Bible records that Abraham had quite a lot of possessions which he acquired there. This tells us that when God is doing a new thing, it doesn't necessarily mean the old is bad, it's just no longer part of His agenda. It would have been challenging for Abraham to leave all he knew and was comfortable with, but he recognized that there was a new season upon him, and he couldn't afford to remain where he was.

"But forget all that— it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?..." Isaiah 43:18-19

One of the things the Lord says we need to do to take hold of something new is to forget the past – no matter how good or bad it may be – because both can be weights that limit us from moving in the direction God wants. We need to ask God for the grace to travel light into the new, so we can see clearly and move freely in any direction the Holy Spirit leads us without being anchored to the successes or failure of the past.

Prayer: Lord thank you for a new year and new season. I ask that You help me to keep my focus only on what You are doing and saying to me now. Show me Lord what needs to go and what I need to welcome into my life this season.

Day 3

Unnecessary Baggage

'The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you.'" Genesis 12:1

When Abram responded to God's call, Lot went with him. It's not clear whether Abram asked Lot to come with him out of a sense of responsibility since Lot's father – his brother – had died, or if Lot just decided to go with him as they had probably lived together. By the time they had moved to the Negev, there wasn't enough space to contain both Abram and Lot's properties as they were both quite wealthy. Abram showed great unselfishness by asking Lot to choose where he'd like to move to, offering to go in the opposite direction so there wouldn't be any quarrel.

'After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession.'" Genesis 13:14-15

God did something interesting after Lot left for the land to the east that seemed more beautiful. He made a declaration to Abraham, giving him And his descendants all the land he could see from north to south, east to west (Genesis 13:14-17). Notice two critical things:

- The declaration came After Lot had separated from Abram
- The land God gave Abram included the parts Lot had chosen

"Regardless of the plans of man, it is the Lord's counsel that stands forever" Psalm 33:11

Lot was blessed by his association with Abraham, but Abraham was the carrier of the blessing (Genesis 12:2-3). From the start of the journey, Abram built altars to the Lord when he first set out and several times through his journeys. But there's no record of Lot doing the same. God knew there had to be a separation from Lot before Abraham could come into the fullness of all God had for him.

Sometimes we take some things we're meant to disconnect from on our journey to get closer to God – relationships, mindsets, habits, etc which may lead us to fighting unnecessary battles and hindering out intimacy with God. Until there's a total separation from these things, we won't experience the fullness of what God has planned for us.

Prayer: Lord help me to obey Your instructions fully and grant me grace to disconnect from the things that may hold me back.

Day 4 Faith In Spite Of

'Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great." But Abram replied, "O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth.' Genesis 15:1-2

Even though the Lord spoke to him about being the father of many nations, Abraham still worried about what would happen regarding his heir as he was getting older and was still childless. God had made Abram a promise that he would have a child, through whom his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, but the time between the promise and the manifestation had started telling on him.

'For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.' Ecclesiastes 3:1

"Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be.'" Genesis 15:4-5 NIV

There were heavy promises over Abraham's life, though nothing in the natural suggested it would come to pass. Many times, we may receive a specific word for our life yet the reality looks nothing like the promised outcome. This is where faith comes in – our ability to hold on to what we have read/heard in spite of what our natural eyes see. This faith doesn't operate in a vacuum, there's a basis in the word of God which we can place a demand on. 'This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare' I Timothy 1:18

That it was promised doesn't mean it will automatically manifest. In fact Paul advised Timothy on fighting well using the prophecies spoken concerning him. This tells us that prophecy is meant to encourage us to keep standing because we know we're not standing in vain. Is there something you're looking to God for this year? Have you received a prophetic word concerning it and found confirmation in the Bible? Don't get discouraged, keep standing in faith because at the right time there will be a performance.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for the promises I have for this year. Show me how to stand in faith and wage a good warfare so I see them manifest



Day 5 Walking in Assumption

'So Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal.' Genesis 16:2

After living in Canaan for 10 years without a child, Sarah and Abram decided to create their own plan where Sarah's maid Hagar would have a child for Abram and Sarah would raise the child. This seemed like a good plan except for the fact that neither Abram nor Sarah took the time to confirm from God if this was His plan, after all He's the one that promised Abram he would have an heir.

'The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.' Proverbs 10:22

There are times we decide for ourselves how we believe things should work out based on our expectations, rather than based on God's agenda. There may be opportunities that we choose to take or not, without really knowing what lies ahead of our choice. Unfortunately some of our choices may lead to sorrow because we simply do not have the full picture of the past, present and future, while God does. Sarah and Abraham thought they had a good plan, but didn't foresee the friction that it would bring, which caused Hagar to run away and without Hagar, there wouldn't be any baby and the entire plan would have been a waste.

'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.' Jeremiah 29:11

'The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.'" Psalms 32:8-9

Let's not assume we know better than God. He wants us to work, but the work to be according to His plan for our own good. When we choose our own paths instead of clarifying what God wants, we open ourselves up to many issues. When God has a plan, He prepares the grace, the protection and all the resources needed to execute the plan, because it's His plan. When we create our own plans, without clarifying from God, then we're responsible for putting in all the effort required to make the plan work – which is beyond our human ability.

Prayer: Lord reveal the blueprint for this year to me so I can work according to the pattern You have designed for me.

Day 6

Obedience Before Revelation

'Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born....When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.' Genesis 16:16; 17:1

The most expensive thing we can ever lose is the presence of God in our lives. After deciding to birth his heir through Hagar, it was 13 years before the Bible records that the Lord appeared to Abraham again and when He did it was first to affirm His lordship. We can only imagine how Abraham fared during the period of silence, but it is fair to believe that it wouldn't have been a pleasant experience as being separated from a loved one never is. We also see that after that period, there was no record of Abraham delaying in obeying God.

'At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him.. 'But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.' ' Genesis 17:3,21

Notice also that Abraham didn't try to justify himself or his actions, he simply bowed before the Lord, we may surmise in acknowledgement and repentance. It was after this that God spoke to Abraham, changing his name and reinforcing the terms of His covenant and also for the first time telling Abraham specifically when Isaac would be born. Let's imagine what would have happened if Abraham had argued with God, would he have had to wait a few more years?

'But the Lord said to Samuel... People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' 1 Samuel 16:7

'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.' Psalms 139:23-24

One thing we know for sure about God is that He is more interested in the content of our hearts than anything else. He knows when we're being sincere and when we're not. Notice that an act of obedience on Abraham's part always preceded a revelation from God. In looking at our lives, let's ask the Holy Spirit to point out to us where our hearts are hardened so we can make the necessary adjustments. Let's ask for grace to remain tenderhearted towards God so the channels of communication between us flow smoothly.

Prayer: Holy Spirit please search me and show me the areas in my heart that need to be addressed so nothing hinders my walk with You this year.

Day 7 Faithful God

'Then one of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!" Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent... Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.'" Genesis 18:10,13-14

When Sarah heard the promises all she could do was laugh to herself because nothing in her circumstances suggested that what was promised was even possible. But the Lord's response summed it all – is anything too hard for Him?

He replied, "What is impossible for people is possible with God." Luke 18:27

Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible." Matthew 19:26

A woman who was known as barren gave birth to a child at 90, for a 100 year old man. Only God could do this. There will be times in our lives when we face seemingly impossible situations. Maybe like Sarah, the situation could be long drawn and has been an area of consistent anxiety and perhaps even public ridicule. But as Jesus Himself said with God everything is possible. This is the God who created everything seen and unseen, who parted the red sea, raised the dead, opened dead wombs, turned lives around and so much more.

'If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.' 2 Timothy 2:13

God is faithful – it's His nature – and He will do what He has said He will do, regardless of what the natural circumstances, reports appear to be. Everything we read in the Bible tells us that what He did before He can do again.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for reminding me of Your faithfulness so I can face the future with joy, boldness and peace.

Day 8 Influence

“Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the Lord asked. Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don’t be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?” And the Lord replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.” Genesis 18:17,32

Most of us are familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and how the city was destroyed because of the level of wickedness there (Genesis 19). But before the destruction of the city, God had alerted Abraham about what was going to happen. Abraham then began an interesting series of negotiations with God, because he knew God wouldn’t destroy the righteous with the wicked. Abraham already knew Lot had moved into the city and so his negotiations settled on how many people he probably believed Lot would have influenced in his household (Genesis 18:16-33).

'So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.' Genesis 17:23

'I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just...' Genesis 18:19

We don’t know how long Lot had lived in Sodom, but we know he was quite wealthy as the reason he and Abraham separated was their abundance of livestock. Interestingly in spite of Lot’s wealth he wasn’t able to influence up to 10 people to righteousness so Sodom would be destroyed. Contrastingly we see that Abraham was quite intentional about influencing those in his household in the ways of God.

'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen.' Matthew 28:19-20

One thing we can learn from Abraham is being intentional about influencing others. Influence isn’t necessarily about material wealth or status as we can see Lot had these, yet he didn’t know what was going to happen to Sodom. It’s about knowing what is in the mind of God and being intentional about sharing this with and discipling others. We should be intentional about sharing inspirations, insights, etc whatever the Lord lays on our hearts as this is how we partner with Him to spread the news of His kingdom.

Prayer: Lord help me become a person of influence where it really matters.

Day 9

Closeness to God

“Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.” Genesis 24:1

“This is the sum of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.” Genesis 25:7

Abraham began his journey as a tent dweller 75 years old and childless. 100 years passed from that point to when he died, experiencing many challenges, errors, moments of doubt and tests. Yet through it all Abraham trusted God. By the time he died Abraham was closer in his relationship with God, his previously barren wife had given birth to the promised child, he lived in peace with the residents of neighbouring towns, he had good health, sound mind and was also materially wealthy. Abraham didn’t know he would have all these when he started on what must have seemed an illogical journey.

‘Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’” Isaiah 46:10

Difficult as it may be, we must try to remember that God functions from the perspective of eternity. He sees the end from the beginning and deals with us based on that perspective. Humanly speaking we can only see now, so when God asks us to take a step of faith, we may struggle with obedience and consistency if we don’t have an understanding that whatever He asks of us is for our good from the perspective of eternity - even if it doesn’t feel or look good right now. That’s where trust comes in.

‘Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.’ James 4:8

Abraham, an old man from a pagan nation decided to make the journey to come close to God, showing us that we’re the ones who determine how close we get to God. We have choice to invest in having a relationship with Him, get to know Him and His plans for us. The journey may not be easy, but it will certainly be worth it.

Prayer: Lord help me as I choose to make drawing near to you a priority.

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