

Series: Beginnings, Betrayal, Blessings

Title: Three Lessons from the Life of Abraham

Text: Genesis 11:27-32; 12:10-20; 13 - 14a

The Point of Genesis

- God keeps giving us a chance
- We live in a good world made bad
- God gives us hope for a wounded victor that will defeat evil

Chapters 1-11 – God and the World

Genesis 12-50 – God and Abraham’s family

- God has a plan to rescue and bless His rebellious world through Abraham’s family

Israel would be a kingdom of priests to show other nations what God is like

Exodus 19: 5-6 – ⁵ *“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

All would be fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom

Isaiah 11:2– *from the root of Jesse and the SPIRIT of the Lord shall rest upon Him. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

Psalm 72 – ¹¹ *May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!* ¹² *For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. ¹³He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. ¹⁴From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.*

Genesis 12- 25a – Abram / Abraham

Genesis 25b-36 – Isaac and Jacob

Genesis 37-50 – Jacob’s sons

I am going to give a couple of messages on a few of the events in Abraham's life but today I want to tell his story to you.

The family moves – 11b

Abram follows God's call – 12

- Famine takes them to Egypt – 12a
- Out of fear fools Pharaoh – gives wife. Plague – 12b

Abram and Lot are rich and they separate – chap. 13

- God affirms Abrams land and that his offspring cover the earth

Battle of five kings and four kings – 14

- Lot captured and Abram and his men rescue him - 14b
- King of Salem – Melchizedek – blesses him – 14c
 - Hebrews 7:1-10

God's covenant with Abram - 15

- about an heir
- and affirms the land that will be his
- about four hundred years of affliction

Abram and Sarai take things into their own hands - 16

- Hagar
- Jealousy
- Escape
- Promise of care by God
- Ismael born

A covenant with Abram for the PEOPLE of GOD – 17

- Change of name 17a
- Covenant for all generations – 17b
- Circumcision – 17 c
- Isaac promised – 17d
- Ishmael blessed

- 12 princes from him
- Abraham consecrates his family – 17e

Angels approach Abraham and Sarah

- Announcement of a son -18a
- Sarah laughs – 18b
- Sodom and Gomorrah condemned – 18c
- Abraham intercedes – 18d

God spares Lot and family and destroys Sodom - 19

- Evil -19c
- Lot and family leaves – wife dies – 19b
- Lots daughters do wrong – 19d

Abraham is still stupid - 20

- Fear – gives wife to Abimelech
- Women become barren
- He calls on God
- He confronts Abraham
- Abimelech gives gifts and tell him to leave
- People healed

Tale of two sons - 21

- Isaac – is born – 21a
- Ishmael is cared for – 21b
- Treaty with Abimelech 21c

Abraham passes a test - 22

- A call to sacrifice -22a
- Obedience – 22b
- The ram provided -22c

Sarah dies - 23

Abraham finds his son a wife - 24

Abraham dies - 25

What we can see about the entire tale of Abraham is found in the key covenant God made with him.

Through Abraham, All Families are blessed

Genesis 12:1-3 - ¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, **and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**

The promise of God was to carry through Abraham's lineage all the way to you and me

Galatians 3:6-9 – ⁶... just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? ⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Three overall lessons from Abraham

1. LIVE BY FAITH AND NOT BY CONTROL

Hebrews 11:8-10

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Abraham is known as the father of our faith (Galatians 3:7).

Why?

- Abraham set the course of his life by faith, setting an example for us to follow.
- God asked Abraham to go on a journey with him.

- A journey that would lead him to his destiny, promising Abraham he would make him into a great nation, make his name great, and bless all the peoples on earth through him (Genesis 12:2-3).
- Nevertheless, Abraham did not get to know where he was going, what he would experience, how he would get there, how long it would take, or what his life would be like when he arrived.
 - Having nothing but the promise of God, Abraham stepped out on faith.

What is faith?

It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen.

- It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.
- It's hard to live by faith.
 - Faith is the certainty of something we don't yet have. By definition, this assaults my sense of logic.

Instead of charting my course by faith, I'd rather use my human experience, wisdom, and effort to control my life in order to protect me from failure, discomfort, or looking bad.

- I spend a lot of mental and emotional effort preparing for everything I could possibly experience.
- This is why I inevitably overpack when I travel or spend too much mental energy thinking through possible scenarios for events or conversations I need to have.

My dominant focus is on control.

How do I get control?

- To maintain control, what things do I need to avoid?
- Unfortunately, the belief that we can control our lives or circumstances is an illusion and a losing proposition that more often leads to anxiety and insecurity – the very thing we are trying to control.

How important is being in control for you?

Can you identify ways you take control?

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do you avoid conversations with people that have a different view than you?
2. Do you allow your emotions to shut people down in conversations?

Setting a course of faith can help us learn to allow influence in our life without being afraid. Trusting in God is a decision that will never fail us.

What anxiety and insecurity have taught me is that they don't promote relationship building.

First, it is very difficult to think of others when I'm insecure and anxious – my mind is gripped with self-consumed thoughts.

Secondly, anxiety and insecurity drive unhealthy emotion-driven decision making, and third, anxiety and insecurity make others anxious and insecure, making them want to avoid me.

A life chartered by faith is not controlled by anxiety and insecurity.

- Do you make yourself available to God to pray in spite of your anxiety and insecurity?
- Are you willing to consider that you have chartered the course of your life on something other than faith?

The second lesson we learn from Abraham is:

2. IT'S THE JOURNEY THAT SHAPES US

- He lived by faith as an immigrant in his promised land as though it belonged to someone else.
- He journeyed through the land living in tents with Isaac and Jacob who were persuaded that they were also co-heirs of the same promise.
- His eyes of faith were set on the city with unshakable foundations, whose architect and builder is God himself.

“Life is a journey, not a destination” is a quote often credited to Ralph Waldo Emerson but one that illustrates an important part of Abraham's life.

- He journeyed many years on his way to his inheritance. Although God was capable of fulfilling his destiny at any location, God allowed Abraham to journey. Why?
- It was during the journey that Abraham forged his relationship with God, guaranteeing that Abraham would have the heart, character, and spirituality to appreciate and hold on to his inheritance.

Amos 3:3 ESV

“Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?”

- The “journey” is the avenue in which we discover and work out our differences with God.
- It’s the time we become aware of the convictions we need to develop. It will expose any lack of trust and help us clarify any wrong view of God.

These are important experiences for developing a healthy relationship with God.

Our relationship with God keeps us going while we wait for God to reveal our destiny and to appreciate our destiny when God reveals it.

Are there Biblical convictions that you struggle to embrace?

Here are a few I have had to wrestle with to embrace:

1. Life is not always fair
 1. (1 Peter 2:19-24 NIV)
2. God’s way can make me happier than my way
 1. (Hebrews 11:24-26 NIV)
3. God won’t let me experience more than I can handle
 1. (1 Corinthians 10:11-13 NIV)

The Third lesson we can learn from Abraham is:

3. FOCUS ON THE PROMISES

- He never stopped believing God’s promise, for he was made strong in his faith to father a child.
- And because he was mighty in faith and convinced that God had all the power needed to fulfill his promises, Abraham glorified God!

Romans 4:20-21 ESV

²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

- We are living in extraordinary times.
- The future has never looked so uncertain.
- The job market has never looked so fragile, the political climate has never been more divided and our calendar has never felt so unpredictable.

Abraham experienced many of these same challenges on his journey.

- What we can learn from Abraham is that his focus was on God’s power to fulfill his promises and not on the circumstances he was facing.
- Abraham knew that God was willing and able to keep every promise he made to Abraham.

What are some of God’s promises we need to hold on to?

Promises to consider

1. **Isaiah 40:29 NIV** – He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
2. **Isaiah 43:2 NIV** – When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
3. **Mark 11:24 NIV** – Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.
4. **Philippians 4:6-7 NIV** – Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [7] And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What can we learn from the life of Abraham?

LIVE BY FAITH AND NOT BY CONTROL

IT’S THE JOURNEY THAT SHAPES US

FOCUS ON THE PROMISES

He charted his course by faith.

At the end of his life, it was clear that he had made the right choice.

How about your life?

Are things clearly beyond your control?

Are you lost in the sorrow of your journey and not learning the lessons that shape you?

Have you forgotten the promises? Or chosen to not believe in the promises? Or are you focusing on and holding onto the promises of God?