

# WHEN GOD INTERRUPTS YOUR LIFE

Leader pages on pp. 130-133

**THE POINT:**  
THE BEST  
INTERRUPTIONS  
COME FROM GOD.

## HEBREWS 11:8-19

<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and set out for a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, even though he did not know where he was going.

<sup>9</sup> By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents as did Isaac and Jacob, coheirs of the same promise.

<sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup> By faith even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the one who had promised was faithful.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, from one man—in fact, from one as good as dead—came offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and as innumerable as the grains of sand along the seashore.

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<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, although they had not received the things that were promised. But they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth.

<sup>14</sup> Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

<sup>15</sup> If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return.

<sup>16</sup> **But they now desire a better place — a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.**

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<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and yet he was offering his one and only son,

<sup>18</sup> the one to whom it had been said, Your offspring will be traced through Isaac.

<sup>19</sup> He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking.

### MEMORY VERSE

### KEYWORDS

**Obedied (v. 8)**—The Greek term for *obey* means to listen attentively with the implication of heeding the command.

**Died in faith (v. 13)**—All died not having received the promised inheritance of the land. Yet they lived and died trusting that God would one day fulfill His promise.

**A better place . . . (v. 16)**—In contrast to the land of Canaan this better place was a heavenly homeland where they would live forever in the presence of God.

**Offered up Isaac (v. 17)**—This was a test of Abraham's loyalty and obedience to God. Did Abraham love God more than his son Isaac?

# WHAT SHOULD BELIEVERS DO IN SEASONS OF WAITING?

History is full of major shifts caused by small interruptions which unleashed a series of consequences no one could have imagined.

- What if Rosa Parks had not been one of the few who were tired of segregation and its inequalities, and did not say no to giving up her seat on the bus, enacting the Montgomery Bus Boycotts which launched the Civil Rights movement?
- What if an uncovered Petri dish of staphylococcal bacteria in Alexander Fleming's lab had not been contaminated with penicillin mold, a life-saving discovery?
- If it were not for the infamous terrorist attack on American soil on 9/11, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) would not have been formed in 2001 to secure greater safety for travelers.

The Bible has many stories whose outcomes were dramatically transformed by an unavoidable turn of events, divine appointments, or God's calling. Abraham's day started out like any other, with everyday routines running their course. Then, God interrupted. How Abraham responded would put in play a series of outcomes that were bigger than he

could have ever dreamed. How we can learn from him how to handle less challenging circumstances in our own lives.

## God Will Interrupt Our Plans //

Hebrews 11:8-12

By every worldly standard, Abraham had it made. He was "very rich in livestock, silver, and gold" (Gen. 13:2), with hundreds of servants (Gen. 14). Living in the popping city of Ur (Gen. 12), Abraham was living the good life. "Ur" might sound like what we say when we can't find the right word, but back in its day, Ur was a place of status; classy, rich, spiritual, and safe. Abraham was happily married to Sarah, and at 70, life was very comfortable, like having a posh home on Easy Street.

But Abraham did not know God. Joshua 24:2 tells us that Abraham grew up in a family of idol worshipers. In no way was his mind on God. And he was a pagan through and through, serving gods of his own making, with no thought of the God who made him. Sound like anyone you may know today?

Then, it happened! God interrupted his life, big time! Acts 7:2 says, "the God of glory appeared to our father, Abraham." His words filled everything



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for Abraham, "Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). God's orders came with promises, guaranteeing to give Abraham the land he was going to, to bless him and his family, and this: "all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3).

Put yourself in Abraham's shoes. Life in Ur was very comfortable. But God was standing in front of him, calling him to leave his old life behind and go with Him into an unknown future, armed with promises that were amazing, but not very detailed. Abraham faced the question in life's interruptions: "Can I trust God? Will God do what He said?"

Hebrews 11:8 tells us what happened: "By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed." Just like that. Even with Abraham having no history of belief, when God said go, he went. He didn't cringe at the sacrifice he was called to make. He didn't wait for more information. Abraham believed that this God who cared enough to interrupt his life must be up to something bigger than he could imagine. "And He's inviting me into it!"

What helps you respond in faith when God changes directions in a way you didn't expect?

God's interruptions may not make sense. And you'll know they're by God's doing because they'll always stretch you, putting your faith to the test. But you can count on this: God is weaving Romans 8:28 into your life. He's taking you deeper into His purposes. He's shaping your character. He's stretching your faith. Let's look at a couple of ways God tested Abraham's faith.

When Abraham arrived in the land God promised to him, only to find people were already living there. Verse 9 tells us Abraham remained "a foreigner in the land of promise," living in tents for the rest of his life.

So, what do you do when things don't go the way you imagined? You do what Abraham did. By faith, he figured that God's promises must not be limited to the present. Something bigger, better, and longer lasting is coming (v. 10). Abraham looked past his temporary life on earth to his forever home in heaven. He couldn't wait to trade his flimsy tent for the eternal city God was building. That future-looking faith kept him going.

Then there was the problem of infertility. God promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son (Gen. 12:7; 17:5-6), but they faced serious challenges:

1. Sarah couldn't have children.
2. Twenty-five childless years passed after God's promise (Gen. 21:5).



### DIGGING DEEPER NAME CHANGE

When God first made His covenant with Abraham, he hadn't yet changed his name from Abram. Namesakes are extremely important in the Bible as they personified who and what the person was or would represent in their lives. The name Abram means exalted father, but twenty-five years after God told him he would have offspring, he renamed him Abraham which means the father of a multitude. Though God originally promised Abram he would make him into a nation, naturally the assumption might be through the birth of many children. God changed Abram's name to display the magnitude of His God-sized promise.

Look at other verses where names were changed for a greater purpose:

- Genesis 17:15-16
- Genesis 32:27-28
- Matthew 16:13-19
- Acts 13:9

**Even if it isn't your name, what change do you desire God to make in you for your good and His glory?**

3. Abraham and Sarah are now past their childbearing years. But they held onto God's trustworthiness, and, by God's power, Sarah gave birth to a son . . . at age 90 (v. 11).

In verse 12, the Holy Spirit shows us the world-influencing product of Abraham's faith. It's an amazing thing when God calls us into His plans. And often, interruptions are His invitation! It makes me wonder if I'm really willing to go with Him when He interrupts my life, believing that He wants to work in and through me in ways bigger than I could imagine.

## God Has a Greater Purpose //

Hebrews 11:13-16

The Book of Hebrews calls a time out in Abraham's story to help us answer this question: How did Abraham do it? Verse 13 fast-forwards to the end of three generations in Abraham's family. They all had the same eulogy: "He didn't receive all that God promised, but he never lost his confidence in the Lord."

What's the secret to this kind of overcoming faith? Verses 13-16 show us what happens inside the person who trusts in the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Three motivating conditions are at work.

**Keep It Moving!** The fathers of our faith saw themselves as "foreigners and temporary residents on the earth" (v. 13). Abraham introduced himself to Canaanite locals as "an alien residing among you" (Gen. 23:4). This family "made it clear that they are seeking a homeland" that wasn't on this planet (v. 14). We're foreigners here, waiting to go home. We don't fit in and shouldn't feel we need to.

**Keep Eternity in Mind.** Hebrews 11:1 tells us that "faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen." Faith is a rock-solid trust that is so convinced God will keep His promises that it becomes a preview of the fulfillment right now! Faith helps us see and embrace what is coming as real and wonderful.

The patriarchs so believed God's promises that "they saw them from a distance," and "greeted

them" as though they were near (v. 13). They desired "a better place" than this world offers, "a heavenly one" (v. 16). The same heavenly mindedness will strengthen us. "Every one of God's promises is 'Yes' in [Christ]" (2 Cor. 1:20). That moves us to "seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).

**Don't Go Back!** Every hero of Hebrews 11 had the chance to return to his or her old life. "If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return" (v. 15). The living conditions for Abraham were certainly better in Ur.



His family and friends would welcome him back. If he wanted an easier earthly life, it was within reach.

The patriarchs didn't know 1 John 2:17, but they believed it: "The world with its lust is passing away, but he who does the will of God remains forever." Their faith and ours is rocket-fueled by a visitor's mindset that longs for heaven and refuses the world's temptations.

## HOW DOES HAVING FAITH IN GOD'S GREATER PLAN HELP US IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS?

## Trust God in Every Test //

Hebrews 11:17-19

When God interrupted Abraham's life and called him to trust regarding things that weren't visible yet, Abraham took God at His word. Even when it defied common sense and biological ability, Abraham remained convinced that the one true God was committed to his good and up to amazing

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things in this world. This interruption in verse 17 challenged all that. Would Abraham find the faith to lay his son, Isaac, on the altar? Though we're never told Abraham's inner thoughts, I suspect he struggled with the same questions we ask when we're hit hard.

Abraham's unwavering confidence in God's faithfulness led him to prepare to sacrifice his son—on the integrity of the Lord. Now, Abraham had seen God do the impossible, but he had never seen or heard of anyone being raised from the dead! Even so, when he and his son arrived at Moriah, he gave these instructions to his servants: "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you" (v. 5). What Abraham hinted at in Genesis is made clear in Hebrews: "He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking" (v. 19).

God interrupted Abraham on more, this time in the split second before he plunged the knife into his son. Abraham's story of faith reminds us that no one gets through life without tests. Even when we don't understand what God is doing, we can count everything we have on our faithful God, who always keeps His Word.

### WHAT THINGS DO YOU TREASURE THAT GOD MIGHT ASK YOU TO SACRIFICE?

### DID YOU KNOW?

During Abraham's lifetime, He had many encounters with God stretching him out of his comfort zone, what was familiar, and his own self-sufficiency. In Genesis 12, though Abraham chose to initially respond in obedience when God said go to Canaan, there were also times that he walked in fear as he detoured from God's instructions. Instead of remaining in the land God had promised, people already occupying the land and famine drove Abraham to Egypt which was never in God's instructions. Because Abraham was walking in his own power and not God's, he was fearful when entering Egypt and seemed to forget about the promises God made when he asked Sarah to lie and say she was his sister because he feared for his life (vv. 10-20). As Abraham stepped outside of God's plans, he stepped into an unknown of his own doing and a lack of confidence.

**Biblical Truth:** "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

**Why is it important to embrace what God is doing in our lives despite the challenges we may face?**

## LIVE IT

### How can you respond to unexpected interruptions in a God-glorifying way this week?

Have you ever planned your week and it's thrown off by unexpected interruptions? As you try to recover time and productivity, interruptions impact you requiring changing your plans. This can be stressful and frustrating, so what can we do to manage areas of life that are out of control? Abraham shows us how to respond well.

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- **Shift your focus.** Meditate on Scriptures about heaven (John 14:1-4; Matt. 6:19-21). Read Tony Evans book, "Eternity: Understanding Life After Death." Sing songs about being home with Him, like "Going Up Yonder," or "Take Me to The King."
- **Follow God's leading.** Train yourself to obey God immediately. When He presses you to pray with someone, help another financially, or share the gospel — don't ignore Him. Obeying God leads to experiencing Him in new, reviving ways.
- **Learn to reason by faith.** When challenges came, Abraham considered what was unchanging and true about God before deciding what to do. God's Word, prayer, and wise counsel set godly boundaries when life's confusing.



# DAILY READINGS

## 1. FAITH IN THE UNKNOWN // HEBREWS 11:8-12

When designing airports, every detail is planned to ensure the runways, taxiways, and surrounding areas are safe for takeoffs and landings. Trees are cleared so no obstacles are in the flight path, and tall buildings are lit to warn the pilots of hazards. Air traffic controllers assist in guiding the planes to move carefully through the air. Passengers trust that airports are safe and have faith that the pilot knows the way to the destination. Hebrews 11:8 challenges us to have faith to obey and move into the unknown. Just like we trust airplanes, pilots, and air traffic controllers, we can have faith that God knows the path He is leading us on.

**Lord, teach me to have faith and to obey when you guide me. In Jesus's name. Amen.**

## 2. GOD'S TIMING IS PERFECT // HEBREWS 11:13-16

Hebrews is called the "Hall of Faith, for it lists people who had exceptional faith. Yet, they did not see their promises fulfilled. Look at Abraham and Sarah; God promised them a child but did not say when it would happen. They waited year after year until Sarah decided to fulfill the promise herself. Abraham received the promise at 75 years old, but he was 100, and Sarah was 90 when Isaac, the promise, was born. They waited 25 years. What we think of as a delay is God working in His perfect divine timing. Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the LORD's declaration."

**Father, remind me that your promises are forever true. In Jesus's name. Amen.**

## 3. WHO DO YOU WANT ME TO SACRIFICE? // HEBREWS 11:17-19

Imagine God commanding you to sacrifice your only son, Isaac, as an offering to him. The promise of the descendants was to come through Isaac. How can the promise be fulfilled if Isaac dies? Abraham's unwavering faith is why he is in the "Hall of Faith." He did not understand as he prepared Isaac for

sacrifice; however, Abraham fully believed in God's power over life and death. Even though he had not seen anyone raised from the dead, the possibility of Isaac being raised to fulfill God's promise to him demonstrates Abraham's obedience and trust. Who or what are we willing to sacrifice to honor God? Would we pass the test?

**Hymn: Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.<sup>13</sup>**

## 4. NEVER ABANDONED // DEUTERONOMY 31:8

The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), founded by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and his wife Sabina after their imprisonment, shares inspiring stories of persecuted Christians. Hassan, a Christian leader at a pastor's conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was imprisoned for his faith. As he moved to different prisons, he preached to 300 inmates. The prison said they had never seen such hunger for God's Word. He felt blessed to share the gospel.<sup>14</sup> Genesis 39 tells of Joseph's unjust imprisonment, but he was not alone. The Scripture states, "The LORD was with Joseph." God did not abandon Joseph, Hassan, or us; he will use us in any situation for his kingdom.

**Lord, help me trust that I am in the right place to draw others closer to you. In Jesus's name. Amen.**

## 5. GOD SEES, AND GOD KNOWS // 1 PETER 5:6

In life, we may find ourselves on the fringes of society, unseen and overlooked. It could be an unfortunate circumstance or our personal struggles, and we wonder why God is silent. Our situation may appear hopeless, but knowing God leaves room for supernatural blessings. 1 Peter 5:6 tells us to "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time." In Genesis 39, Joseph used his gifts, and God exalted him to a higher position at the proper time. God was not unaware of Joseph's situation, He saw and He knew and had a plan for his life. The same can be said for believers today.

**Father, remind me I am seen, and like Joseph, I believe you are working in your divine time. In Jesus's name. Amen.**

## Week 7 – Prophets and Exile

**Scripture Readings:** Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 37; Daniel 7:13–14

When Israel strayed, God sent prophets to call them back. They warned of judgment, pointed to God's faithfulness, and announced hope. The prophets declared that God would make a New Covenant written on hearts and that a coming Messiah would bring salvation. The exile of Israel and Judah revealed the consequences of sin but also set the stage for longing—a longing fulfilled in Christ, who brings forgiveness, Spirit-empowered life, and an eternal kingdom.