

Genesis/Blessing of God, Walk of Faith/12:1-9/Week 5-16

MAIN POINT

The radical faith of Abraham led to the obedience that would bless the whole world



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What have you had to give up before to do something big? What was that like?

To take a big step in any area of life typically takes big sacrifice. If we want to get a specific job in a certain career that takes many years of training and most likely going to school to further learn that trade. Today, as we look at the life of Abraham in Genesis, we will consider how willing we are to take God at His Word and surrender to His plan.

God told Abraham some very specific things about how He would bless him, and it took quite a bit of sacrifice and commitment first. First, God promised to make Abraham into a great nation, meaning that he would represent an entire line of people. Then He promised to give Abraham a great name and a new land. Finally, God told Abraham that all of the peoples on the earth were going to be blessed through him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What insight, lesson, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
2. **Why do you think that God chose Abraham to be the father of His nation?**

The Bible never tells us why God chose Abraham. We know that Abraham was a sinner like everyone else, and that he needed grace just like everyone else. For reasons known only to God Himself, God not only extended grace to Abraham, but decided to make him and his family a people through whom grace would come to the entire world. The beauty of this mystery is that we see that grace is not dependent upon Abraham's personal worthiness. If God had given Abraham this gift based on Abraham's performance, attitude, or faithfulness, then Abraham could have lost this gift when he didn't continue to perform.

This serves as an example for us to delight in. God's grace to us is not given because of how well we perform or how faithful we are. God's grace is given to us because he loves us and is determined to bless us despite our own sinfulness and the times where we fall short.

3. **What sacrifices did Abram have to make to follow God's calling?**

We started to look at the sacrifices that Abram had to make last week, and this week we get even more of a glimpse of what it took to follow God's calling. Abram had to give us his homeland, his family, security, and identity to follow God's call. He basically had to give up everything he knew in his life for this call. Kent Hughes stated this idea well in his commentary on Genesis and referenced the similar calling from Jesus in the Gospels:

"This call to forsake all is very much like the call of the gospel. Jesus said "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37a), and "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35). The Gospel calls us to rest all our hope on the word of Christ, and nothing else!"

4. **In our culture today, is it easy or difficult to respond to the kind of call Abram received from God? Why?**

The faith Abram needed to succeed in the future was the same faith he needed to trust God with the changes he faced in the present. Abraham responded in a big way and he was also the only one who was following God at this time so it must have been very difficult in that culture. When we find ourselves in new seasons of life, apprehension, uncertainty, and fear can fill our minds. Only faith in God's promise enables us to survive and to thrive. Abraham believed in the call and the promise and was willing to go against what everyone else around him in his culture was doing. Kent Hughes provided a good explanation on what it took for Abraham to respond like he did:

"Abram's clear vision of God's call and the future detached him from the world, just as it will always detach God's people from grounding their lives too deeply in the present. That idea is radical because it challenges "the dominant ideologies of our time which yearn for settlement, security, and placement" (Brueggemann). Everything around us tells us to hunker down, save everything hedge ourselves about with every protection. Our natural desires are for more comforts. Our culture celebrates great homes and dynastic families. But God's Word says otherwise, instructing us to "seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4)"

Hebrews 11:13-16 also referenced this idea:

¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

5. Why is it often difficult for us to believe God's promises that are made in His Word? What does our unbelief say about our view of God?

To Abram these promises must have seemed extravagant and unlikely. His wife was barren. How could he be the father of a great nation if he could not produce one son? How could his name be great on the earth if there was no son to carry it on after he died? Up to this point in his life, Abram had never owned a piece of land. How could he come to have this promised land that God spoke of?

Since God promised to show Abram the land, God would go with and ahead of Abram on his journey of faith. Abram's faith and trust were in God's words, presence, and leadership, not in his own knowledge. Though Abram didn't know where he was going, he knew who was leading him.

6. What blessings would Abram have missed if he had refused to follow God? What blessings would you have missed if you had refused to respond to God's call in the past?

If Abram would not have followed the call of God, he would have missed out on all of the promises and blessings mentioned in vs. 2-3. He would not have been made into a great nation, his name would not have been made great, and He would not have been able to be part of the lineage that Christ would come from and bless the whole world. Abram was already able to bless other people by following God because he told other people about his faith in the true God and brought them along on his journey. Kent Hughes explained this his commentary:

"Abram's migrant entourage included "the people that they had acquired in Haran," who were not slaves, as we might naturally suppose. Cassuto translates the phrase as "the souls that they had won in Hara." Arguing that this translation is better exegetically and in line with rabbinic interpretation. Therefore, the text likely refers to making proselytes. Abram had been actively sharing his story and faith in the Lord."

Challenge the group to think through their own life like they just did for Abram and what blessings from God would not have happened had they not followed God.

7. Abram built altars along his route and not wait until his final destination. How might we practically express the worship of God like Abram in our own lives?

Abram's life modeled worship of God and we see that as he went all through Canaan and made altars to the Lord. Kent Hughes put this idea into perspective:

“Again, how beautiful this life of faith was. The Lord had promised to make Abram's name great, and Abram responded by proclaiming the name of the Lord! How far he had come from Babel—the tower builders who wanted to make their name great. Abram spent his time making God famous in Canaan. The brief itinerary of Abram has taken him from the north to the southern border of the land. He not only saw what had been promised to his offspring—he had walked through it and lived and worshiped in it. Symbolically he has taken possession of it...How beautiful—the only architecture that remained from Abram's life were altars...Faithful Abram worshiped wherever he went. All of his life became worship. The artifacts of his worship stood in the land. And as a man of faith, he proclaimed the name of the Lord.”

It's incredible to think about Abram's life as he traveled all through Canaan and built altars to worship God. He also did it while there were Canaanites still living in the land and I am sure experienced opposition to praising a different God from their culture. Kent Hughes provided a picture of this idea in his commentary as well:

“The presence of Canaanites indicated opposition that was going to be a reality as Abram continued in his life of faith. A godly life must always be lived out in the middle of misunderstanding and temptation and even persecution.”

8. How might we practically encourage one another to believe God, and follow His call on our life this week and in the weeks ahead?

We see all sorts of responses in scripture to God's call and every one of them looked a little different. God's call on your life most likely looks completely different than Abram's but God is calling us each of us to give up our own land and go out of our land to follow God to wherever He is calling us. Abram's story is a great reminder and encouragement for us all that God will keep His promises and we can be a part of the blessing of Christ to the whole world if we follow God.

Conclusion

Abram responded to God's promise with an act that would become a trademark of his life—he built an altar where God had appeared to him in Shechem and a second altar in Bethel to worship Him. Abram was aware of God's guidance in his life and responded with due reverence and respect.

A call that went out to Abram leads today to your calling and mine. The church is the family we are invited into through the call of God on our lives. The faith required is our response to His call, and that faith is sustained by our promise-keeping God. Through this family we are distinctly blessed by God and given the important responsibility of proclaiming the blessing of salvation to the rest of the world. Because our Father keeps His promises and does not change, we can rest assured that this family will be ours for all eternity, no matter what the seasons of life on earth bring our way. Every promise will finally be fulfilled, and the gap will finally and fully be closed.

PRAYER

Close in prayer. Pray that as a church body, we would be open to listening and following when God speaks. Pray that we would be driven by our relationship with Him and take seriously the responsibility He has given us to proclaim Christ to our community and to our world.



FURTHER STUDY



Galatians 3:7–9 NIV

⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Galatians 3:16 NIV

¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

Galatians 3:26–29 NIV

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.



“In the same way the sun never grows weary of shining, nor a stream of flowing, it is God's nature to keep His promises. Therefore, go immediately to His throne and say, 'Do as You promised.' “

-Charles Spurgeon

“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”

-Saint Augustine

Additional Resources

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/call-abram/>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/abraham-went-out/>

Articles –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/missionaries-focus-unreached-people-groups/>

Sermon-

<https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/real-security-and-the-call-of-god-5229/>

<https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-cost-of-mission-2/>