

# Genesis/Abram's Starting and Stumbling/12:10-20

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## MAIN POINT

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The Lord is faithful to keep His promises to His children, even amidst their stumbling.

## INTRODUCTION

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

**ICE BREAKER QUESTION: Who were some of your favorite superheroes growing up? What were some of the weaknesses of your favorite superheroes?**

It's fun to read comics or watch a good superhero movie. We love Superman because he always does the right thing. We love Batman because he always goes after the villain to keep Gotham safe. Spiderman is witty, and he catches bad guys with flair. But superheroes all have their weaknesses. Superman has kryptonite. Batman is just a plain human being. Spiderman's powers often serve to alienate him from others because of his secret identity.

Our heroes in the Bible are much the same. We admire them because of their faith and commitment to God. We tend to put them on pedestals and feel like we can never attain the level of godliness they reach. However, every hero of the Bible, except Jesus, sins. If it weren't for the faithfulness of God, every last hero of the Bible would have failed. God is faithful, and He shows unconditional grace and kindness to His people. Today we will see how that is true in the life of one of the greatest Bible characters: Abraham.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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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. Read James 1:2-4. What should be a Christian's attitude when facing trials? How often is this your attitude in your own hard times?

**James 1:2-4 (NIV)**

Trials and Temptations

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,[\[a\]](#) whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3

because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James advised those facing trials to approach them with joy. When trials are rightly faced, they are avenues to spiritual growth. When faced wrongly, they become temptations to evil. James did not say trials should make us happy or that we should look forward to them. Rather, James wrote with a deep realization that life's pressures have a way of strengthening our character and faith. In other words, they help us develop perseverance.

Perseverance or "endurance" is not the goal, but the means of reaching the goal. The goal is to become mature and complete. A physically mature adult who behaves at the level of a young child is not a mature adult. Likewise, a Christian who is mature in the knowledge of the Scriptures but whose behavior does not match his or her profession of faith is not a mature Christian.

**3. Read Romans 5:3-5. How can a believer's Christlike endurance of suffering offer a testimony of hope to others?**

**Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we<sup>[a]</sup> also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Christian joy runs deep and endures because its source is the ever-flowing stream of God's grace. This is why both Paul and James could state that we as believers also rejoice in our afflictions. Paul's statement doesn't imply that we somehow enjoy suffering. Rather, it means that we have confidence God will use even our afflictions to bring about His good purposes in our lives. For this confidence, we need look no further than the example of Jesus. He willingly bore the most horrendous pain and suffering with a view that His death and resurrection would open the way to our salvation which we see in:

**Hebrews 2:10 (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

**4. Why do you think this story of Abram's deception follows the section where God makes Abram such a great promise?**

Right after Abraham's great call to leave his home and everything familiar, right after we see him begin his great journey of faith, we see him fail miserably. Abraham schemes with

Sarah to save his own neck in case anyone should notice how beautiful Sarah is. Not only does Abraham fear for his life, is willing to forfeit his marriage and allow Sarah to endure this shame just to save himself. Not a very righteous or bold move to say the least!

As we learned during the message on Sunday faith is always tested and trials are part of God's plan. God is continuing to test Abram's faith even after he gets to the promise land to teach Abram and all others reading this story a lesson. We're reminded that Abram is human just like us and sins. He still believes in God, but we see doubts but as we will discuss more later God is still faithful even when we are not.

**5. What do you think about Abram's scheme to stay alive? How has your lack of trust in God led to you trying to make your own plans without God?**

We learn as Ross in his commentary stated "it is foolish to try to deliver oneself from threatening situations by means of deceptive schemes. To put it another way, sinful acts cannot save God's people from threatening situations. Evil cannot bring about good." This principle is also seen in the following verses:

**Hebrews 3:12-13 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

**Romans 14:23 (NIV)**

<sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.<sup>[a]</sup>

Our lack faith leads to sin and scheming will only make our situations worse. Challenge the group to think through situations where they responded the same way as Abram and the results of those decisions.

**6. How can Abram be considered the "hero of the faith" and have this passage be part of his story? How might we gain confidence in our faith through God's faithfulness to Abram?**

You might expect Abraham, as a hero, to have a change of heart and rescue his wife. But he doesn't. The reason he doesn't is because Abraham isn't actually the hero of faithfulness in this story; God is. God rescues Sarah. The promise that God made to Abraham was not based on Abraham's boldness, faithfulness, or heroism. The promise was by grace. God rescued Abraham. God rescued Sarah. God gives us this example so that we can be confident that He has always, and will always, rescue His children. The faith of Abram was given to him to believe.

God's faithfulness to Abram should give us more confidence and encouragement when we are up against our own trials and test. We know we can have confidence because we know who it is that our confidence and faith is in, God. We can be encouraged that God still has a plan as he did with Abram and that he never abandoned him even though it may appear like he is not in control or there is no plan. We see this laid out in the following passages as well:

### **Romans 3:3-4 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup> What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? <sup>4</sup> Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

"So that you may be proved right when you speak  
and prevail when you judge."<sup>[a]</sup>

### **2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV)**

<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless,  
he remains faithful,  
for he cannot disown himself.

## **7. How can Abram's failures encourage us when we fall short of what God would have us do?**

How God treated Abram in this story is such a great example of God's love and faithfulness for his children. God knows we are not perfect, and his mercy and grace is sufficient in those circumstances. His love for us does not change and God is also faithful to complete his purposes despite our failings. At times God even intervenes in our lives to complete his purposes in our life and this idea was stated well by Allen Ross in his commentary:

"God graciously protects his plan through divine intervention when his people complicate it with deception"

We are also reminded of this fact in the following verses:

### **Romans 8:28-30 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who<sup>[a]</sup> have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

### **Philippians 1:4-6 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

## 8. How can you use your personal experience with God's faithfulness to help those currently facing hardship?

Personal experiences are a great way to encourage your fellow brothers and sisters in the faith. Knowing you're not the only one who has gone through a specific hardship and struggle and there is someone who can provide advice and encouragement that God is faithful is how God has designed His church to operate according to scripture. That is why our life groups and having community is so important for a believer. It's so valuable to have those around us who can remind us of God's faithfulness based on their own experiences of God's faithfulness is their own life and God's word.

### Hebrews 10:24-25(NIV)

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

We can also be reminded that God is ultimately sovereign and all powerful and that we can each take heart in the midst of trouble in our own lives as John says below:

### John 16:33 (NIV)

<sup>33</sup> "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

## Conclusion

As described in Genesis 12, God made a gracious covenant with Abraham, and he, too, immediately disobeyed the Lord. God promised Abraham a land and a seed (Gen. 12:1–3). But to test his faith, God brought Abraham into a land that was barren, having also given him a wife that was barren. Egypt, the land that was fertile, and the Egyptian handmaid Hagar, who was likewise fertile, would tempt Abraham to the disobedience of seeking God's promise through his own means apart from faith in the covenant-keeping God.

God likewise promised Abraham, through the same covenant, that he would be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:3). But Abraham's disobedience in venturing the purity of Sarah and deceiving the pharaoh into believing that his wife was actually his sister brought severe plagues instead of blessing upon the Egyptians. However, in spite of the flagrant disobedience of Abraham, God faithfully worked out His program to give Abraham's seed a land and, through them, to bring the blessing of salvation to the nations of the earth. The pattern of Abraham's failure in Egypt is instructive, for in spite of Abraham's sin God was demonstrating His covenant favor to this family.

# PRAYER

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In a time of group prayer, thank the Father for His abundant grace to us. Ask the Father to forgive us of our sins, and pray that He will help us to live lives pleasing to Him because of the great love He has shown us. Finally, ask the Lord to encourage those who are struggling with sin and unanswered prayers.



## FURTHER STUDY



### James 1:12-15 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

<sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

### 1 Peter 1:6-9 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.



“Suffering is unbearable if you aren’t certain that God is for you and with you.”

-Tim Keller

“The glory of God's faithfulness is that no sin of ours has ever made Him unfaithful”

- Charles Spurgeon

### **Additional Resources**

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/god-of-abraham/>

Articles –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/8-ways-trials-help-us/>

Sermon-

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/who-was-abraham/>

<https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/sermons/trials-temptations/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/whatever-is-not-from-faith-is-sin>