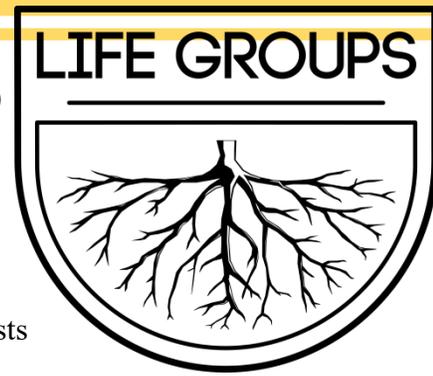


Genesis/Pagan to Patriarch/Chapter 11:10-32/Week of 5-9



MAIN POINT

When we have faith in God, we respond by moving towards him no matter the costs

INTRODUCTION

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

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: Who is the best leader you have ever followed? What made their leadership special?

In this chapter we're introduced to the family line from Shem all the way down to Abram, who would later become Abraham. We see in this narrative is the divine calling to Abram to leave his homeland and found a new nation that would bring blessing to the world. Abram's response to God's call demonstrates wise seasonal living by trusting God and following His lead.

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 is God's tone different in this genealogy compared to Chapter 5 in Genesis? Do you see that same tone from God in your own life?**

As we learned from Sunday's message, God is refocusing us from the death we face because of our sin to the promise he has of overcoming sin and death. God is responding to man's sin with grace, instead of wrath. This idea is also stated by Pastor John MacArthur on a sermon on Genesis 11:

"But this is a genealogy of life. It says, 'He lived this many years; he lived this many years; he lived this many years; he lived; he lived; he lived; he lived; he lived; he lived.' And it really points up the different mode. Prior to the flood, everything was moving toward this disastrous death. After the flood, God said He would never do that again. Everything was marked out by life. It indicates that what was prevailing before the flood was death, judgment. What was prevailing after the flood was promise, promise, promise"

3. How do you think Abram was able to step out in faith and convince his family to move? Have you ever had to step out in faith like that, when no one else was responding in faith around you?

If you read the passage from Genesis 11 all by itself then it may get confusing when you try to understand when God spoke to Abraham and whether it was because of Abraham's faith that his whole family left their homeland. When Abram was in Ur was actually when God called him. Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7 confirmed these cases as well as Stephen when he makes his defense before the Sanhedrin.

Genesis 15:7-21 (NIV)

⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

Nehemiah 9:7 (NIV)

⁷ "You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.

For Abraham to step out in faith as the only one who God spoke to and convince his family to move to another country must have been a very difficult task. This idea was stated well from Kent Hughes in his commentary on Genesis:

"The point here is that it was in darkest Ur that Abram saw the glory of God and hear the call to depart and to a land that God would show him. And he convinced Terah to leave with him. But when they got to Haran (another center of moon worship), Terah would not budge. So dutiful Abram bid his time until Terah's death, after which he was off again to the promised land"

4. Why was Abram's response to leave his country a big step of faith?

To understand the answer to this question even better we can learn a lot from the insight from Kent Hughes on this topic in his commentary:

"We say all of this to underline that Abram's obedience was a monumental act of faith. He was a pagan. He was advanced in years. He was prosperous and settled in his pagan world. He was the only one in his culture who heard God's word. But on the basis of hearing alone, he risked everything to follow God. None of us has ever done anything comparable to this. We trivialize it if we imagine that we have"

If we try to put ourselves in to the shoes and picture what Kent Hughes mentioned above, then Abram's response can look like quite a big step of faith. This is also stated in other parts of scripture such as Hebrews 11:8-9:

⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise."

5. Why is obedience important when it comes to faith?

Our faith is seen most clearly when it is followed by action because we have confidence and trust in who is the one who we placed our faith in. This spiritual truth is seen in the following passages of scriptures:

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

James 2:14-24 (NIV)

Faith and Deeds

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless^[a]? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,"^[b] and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

Kent Hughes also stated this idea well with the following quote:

"Faith steps out. Faith and obedience are inseparable in man's relation to God. We must never imagine that we have faith if we do not obey" (K. Hughes)

6. Is there a big step of faith that God has called you to, but you have hesitated to take action?

Challenge the group to think whether there is a big step of faith that God is calling them to take action on, similar to how God was calling out Abram. Maybe God is calling you to leave a specific area in your life and follow his guidance for your life. Maybe you need to change jobs, a relationship, a certain habit, lifestyle choice, and follow God to wherever He wants to take you.

7. How have you tried to earn righteousness in your own life instead of just receiving it by faith in Jesus Christ?

Some of us may have been taught some false teaching growing up depending on the type of churches and pastors that we have sat under. Unfortunately, a works-based righteousness is taught by many different types of “Christian” churches around the world but the Bible calls that out as being false doctrine and states that our salvation is by faith in the one and only Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV)

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

This idea is also stated well by Kent Hughes in his commentary

“And the way Abram’s faith began in Ur is the way it continued. Later it was the same faith by which he received his righteousness. Faith does not earn righteousness; it receives righteousness. Faith is the instrument by which we receive the righteousness that God gives”

Genesis 15:6 “He believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness”

Challenge the group to think through how at times they still have tried to earn their righteousness.

8. Who in your life is currently on the path of unbelief that God wants to use you to reach into their life to save?

Some of us may be the only believer in our families or have some relatives who are not believers. Maybe you have family who call themselves believers, but their actions seem like they are not following God’s calling on their life. God used Abram to impact the faith of his immediate family as well as the families of many other nations. Challenge the group to think through whether they are being open and praying for God to use them to be used by

God to bring salvations to those that are around them. Be encouraged by this statement by Kent Hughes:

“Thus we see that both men were used to effect salvation for others by their faith. Noah’s faith wrought salvation for his family and preserved the promise of the seed of Eve. Abram’s faith created a people through whom the promise would be fulfilled”

Conclusion

We can always follow God’s lead and trust that He has us right where He wants us. Abram obeyed the commandment of the Lord to forsake his homeland for the promise of a new land, a new nation, and personal greatness, by journeying to the land of Canaan, and to be a blessing, by making proclamation of his new-found faith through worship.

PRAYER

Pray that the people in your group would choose to follow God’s plans for their lives and experience the blessings of obedience. Ask God specifically for the Holy Spirit’s strength to resist temptation in the days ahead.



FURTHER STUDY

Romans 10:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Romans 4:3 (NIV)

³ What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”^[a]



Romans 4:18-25 (NIV)

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”^[a] ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Additional Resources

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/ur-haran/>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/generations-shem/>

Articles –

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/promise-gods-presence/>

Sermon-

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-269/paganism-and-promise>

<https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/sermons/what-faith-does/>