

## Abraham: The Father of a Multitude

*And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord declared him righteous because of his faith.*

~Genesis 15:6

*Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.*

~Genesis 22:18



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| <b>Read His Story:</b>                                 | Genesis 12-23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Questions to ask yourself as you do this study:</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Just what did God see in Abraham that led to calling him to be father to a great nation? (20)</li> <li>2. Was there a better solution that Abraham could have come up with to settle the conflicts between Sarah and Hagar?</li> <li>3. Could Isaac and Ishmael coexisted together?</li> </ol> |

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| <b>His name</b>                  | Originally named Abram. God changed his name to Abraham.<br>His name "Abram" means "exalted father". (3)<br>His name "Abraham" means "father of a multitude". (20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>His Time in History</b>       | 2100 B.C. (3)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Found In Scripture</b>        | Romans 4, Galatians 3, Exodus 2:24, Matthew 1:1,2; Luke 3:34; Acts 7:2-8; Hebrews 2, 6, 7, 11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>His Promises In Scripture</b> | Genesis 12:2-3, Genesis 17:7, Genesis 22:18                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Did You Know</b>              | <b>Abraham's Bosom:</b> This is a synonym for the life hereafter. According to the Old Testament, when a person died he went to "be with his fathers" (Gen 15:15; 47:30; Deut. 31:16; Judge 2:10). The patriarch Abraham was regarded as the "father" of the Jews. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the beggar is described as being "carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom". (10) |

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| <b>Can You Fill In The Blanks?</b>      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The life of Abraham is a study in _____, _____, and sometimes _____.</li> <li>2. The life of Abraham is also the story of a God who keeps his _____.</li> <li>3. _____ enables us to act as if the "not yet" were "now," in full assurance that it soon will be!</li> <li>4. "_____" is a political term for an agreement that binds two parties together with each having certain responsibilities and obligations. Covenants are usually initiated by a _____ to elicit loyalty from a _____.</li> </ol> |
| <i>Answers at the end of the study.</i> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### His Background, Work, Life and Times

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| <p><b>Background:</b> He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, of parents who were heathen. Little is known of him until he was seventy years old, a striking proof that he had yielded himself to God before he left his heathen home for the far-off land of Canaan. (3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Abram's Lineage:</b> Abram's lineage is traced all the way back to Adam through Enoch and Noah. Abram's father, Terah, had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran died and the two remaining sons married – Abram to Sari (later renamed Sarah) and Nahor to Milcah. Terah takes Haran's orphan son, Lot, along with Abram and Sarai and heads for Canaan. Abram's penchant for adventure and relocating is instilled in him by own his own father's example. We sometimes assume that Abram's willingness to move comes from an unquestioned faith and trust in God, and that might be true. But adventure is part of his family history (Genesis 11:31). They settle in a place called Haran (the same name as Terah's dead son), where Terah dies. (20)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Canaan:</b> The ancient name of Palestine, it means <i>land of purple</i> (4).<br/> <b>Ur:</b> Abram, whose name God later changed to Abraham, was born in one of the fabled cities of the ancient world, Ur. In Abram's day, 4,100 years ago, Ur was center of a rich Sumerian culture; a city lying along the Euphrates that boasted monumental architecture, vast wealth, comfortable homes, music, and art. There Abram "worshipped other gods" (Josh. 24:2). But when God spoke to him, Abram left his civilization, traveled to Canaan, and there lived a nomadic life in tents for nearly a hundred years! (4)<br/> <b>Sodom and Gomorrah:</b> Many believe that these "cities of the plain" lie beneath the southern end of the Dead Sea. The area had great deposits of highly flammable bitumen. This and geologically unstable land mass were doubtless agencies God used to cause the fiery holocaust of Genesis 19. (4)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p><b>Wayward Humanity:</b> These are post-Garden and post-flood times. Humanity has distorted the life God intended; this life is now marked by disobedience, arrogance, violence, murder, and wickedness. God is so stricken by this turn of events that the only recourse is to wipe out everything and to start over. In the midst of divine despair, God remembers Noah, whose very name signifies hope for a lost creation. Noah, a righteous and blameless person who walks with God, is the only one to redeem creation through his exile on an ark. Now and only now is a new start possible. God calls Abram to be part of this new thing God is doing. (20)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p><b>Work:</b> A tender of livestock. (1)<br/> <b>Occupation:</b> Wealthy livestock owner. (18)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>Sarah:</b> Ultimately, Abraham's relationship with Sarah can only be described as flawed but fruitful. We cannot doubt that a true love existed between these two saints, or that their love enabled each to overlook flaws in the other. However, we cannot explain away Abraham's cowardly sacrifice of Sarah to his fears. Yet, Sarah out of love was willing to risk herself to protect her husband. Concern for his childless wife as well as his own desire for offspring led Abraham to have sex with Hagar. Sarah had desperately wanted a son; Abraham was willing to take this means to give her one. Yet Abraham was wrong not to share more openly with Sarah about his meetings with God. As in most marriages, each spouse hurt the other, not intentionally, but nevertheless painful. And as in most marriages, each forgave, and Abraham and Sarah continued to build a life together. Perhaps this is the most basic message for us from Abraham's relationship with Sarah. Their marriage wasn't perfect, but they remained committed to each other. The life they shared was a fruitful one indeed. (3)<br/> <b>Did the Pharaoh have sex with Sarai?:</b> No. A period of purification that might last for months was typical when a bride entered a ruler's harem. God protected Sarai from Abram's lack of faith. (4)<br/> <b>Sarah:</b> was intensely loyal to her own child, became the mother of a nation and an ancestor of Jesus, was a woman of faith, the first woman listed in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11. (18)</p> |
| <p><b>Hagar:</b> The relationship of Sarai, Hagar, and Abram seems strange to us. But by ancient custom it was lawful for a barren wife to give a slave to her husband. Any children born were considered the wife's rather than the servant's (Gen. 16:2). Documents of the era also show that Abram quoted a point of law in Gen. 16:6: the wife did have a legal right in that era to mistreat her slave, though there were limits to</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

what she could do. The story illustrates the wisdom of God's marital ideal. Even when it was "legal" to have a woman other than one's wife, the practice created strife. (4)

**Lot:** Genesis makes it clear that Abraham was intensely loyal to Lot and remained loyal to the end. Even when Lot behaved selfishly, Abraham was committed to his nephew. Loyalty is an admirable trait in any man, but in this case, Abraham's loyalty to Lot had moved him to disobey God's command. In the end, Abraham's loyalty did Lot far more harm than good. (3)

**Ishmael:** Our insight into Abraham's relationship with Ishmael comes first from chapter 21 of Genesis. Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born (Gen.16:16) and had 14 years to bond with his boy before Isaac's birth. And bond Abraham did! Many fathers share Abraham's pain in this day of easy divorce and broken homes. Many must wonder whether their children will ever understand or forgive. In such cases one can only follow Abraham's course and trust the children into God's loving hands. (3)

**Ishmael:** God did not forget Ishmael. Although he was not to be Abraham's heir, he would also be the father of a great nation. (18)

**Isaac:** When God told Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah (Zion) and sacrifice him there we can find many lessons in this brief story. Abraham had shown himself willing to surrender what he loved most should God require it. Isaac also demonstrated a remarkable trust in Abraham. Isaac knew his father loved him. A healthy father-son relationship marked by love and trust makes the son's transition to trust in God a natural and easy one. (3)

**Covenant:** "Covenant" is a political term for an agreement that binds two parties together with each having certain responsibilities and obligations. Covenants are usually initiated by a greater power to elicit loyalty from a lesser one. The stronger party promises protection in exchange for loyalty. Israel understands the covenant in the context of its understanding of God; that is, Israel takes a political concept and reframes it theologically. Israel's God is so personal that the divine enters into covenant, a binding agreement, with God's people. There is no higher assurance of God's purpose than this. (20)

**God's Promises and Fulfillments: (3)**

| Promises                                                | Fulfillment                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Make you a great nation                                 | Millions (both Arabs and Jews) have descended from Abraham                                                                            |
| Bless you                                               | Throughout Abraham's long life God protected and cared for him.                                                                       |
| Make your name great                                    | Millions in three world religions – Islam, Judaism, and Christianity – revere Abraham as founder of their faith.                      |
| You shall be a blessing                                 | Abraham's faith-response to God revealed the key to personal relationship with God (Gen. 15:6)                                        |
| Bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you | Ancient and modern history shows that nations that have persecuted the Jewish people have paid a terrible price.                      |
| In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.  | Ancient and modern history shows that nations that have persecuted the Jewish people have paid a terrible price.                      |
| In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.  | Both the Scriptures and the Savior have been given to humanity through Abraham's descendants.                                         |
| And to your descendants I will give this land.          | The promise was partially fulfilled in Israel's history, and according to Bible prophecy will be entirely fulfilled at history's end. |

**Circumcision:** The most substantial account of the covenant between Abraham and God is given in Genesis 17 – a covenant that extended the promise of the land and descendants to further generations. This covenant required Abraham and the male members of his household to be circumcised as the sign of the agreement (Gen. 17:10-14). The practice of circumcision instituted at this time is not unique to the ancient Hebrews, but its emphasis as a religious requirement is a unique feature of God’s Covenant People. It became a visible symbol of the covenant between Abraham and his descendants and their redeemer God. (10)

**Circumcision:** The surgical removal of the foreskin of the male sex organ. Circumcision was widely practiced in the ancient world, including the Egyptian and Canaanite cultures. But among these people the rite was performed at the beginning of puberty, or about 12 years of age, as a sort of initiation ceremony into manhood. In contrast, the Hebrew people performed circumcision on infants. This rite had an important ethical meaning to them. It signified their responsibility to serve as the holy people whom God had called as His special servants in the midst of a pagan world. (10)

**Hospitality:** Abraham was eager to show hospitality to the three visitors (Genesis 18:2-5) as was his nephew, Lot (Genesis 19:2). In Abraham’s day, a person’s reputation was largely connected to his hospitality – the sharing of home and food. Even strangers were to be treated as highly honored guests. Meeting another’s need for food or shelter was and still is one of the most immediate and practical ways to obey God. It is also a time honored relationship builder. Hebrews 13:2 suggests that we, like Abraham, might actually entertain angels. This thought should be on our minds the next time we have the opportunity to meet a stranger’s needs. (18)

#### His Character

**Man of Faith:** Abraham was a man of faith who followed God even in the most challenging of circumstances. (1)

**Faithful:** Abram means “father,” while Abraham means “father of a multitude.” What faith it must have taken for the aged Abram, parent of a single child, to announce that change of name! Faith is like this. It enables us to act as if the “not yet” were “now,” in full assurance that it soon will be! (4)

**Faithful:** God’s command for Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac was the crucial test of his faith. He was willing to give up his son in obedience to God, although at the last moment the Lord intervened to save Isaac (Gen. 22:1-13). The Lord’s promise of descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens was once again reaffirmed as a result of Abraham’s unquestioning obedience (Gen. 22:16-18). (10)

**Trusted God:** It’s hard to imagine how shocking God’s orders were to Abraham. And when Sarah heard Abraham’s report of what God had said, she must have been overwhelmed. “Leave our home? Go on a journey to nowhere? Have children even though we are barren?” But Sarah trusted Abraham, just as Abraham trusted God. Time and time again, throughout his life, God tested Abraham’s resolve to obey him. And, time and again, God reconfirmed his promise to Abraham – a land, a nation, and a blessing. (1)

**Revered:** Abraham is the most revered of the patriarchs. His name and God’s promise of a nation were even recalled as Mary accepted her call to be the mother of Jesus. “God has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever even as he promised.” But Abraham’s place in history is not only well established because of the millions who count themselves as his offspring. Nor is Abraham honored because he was a perfect man. He wasn’t. Abraham is the most significant patriarch because of God’s call and covenant with him and Abraham’s remarkable courage to be obedient. (1)

**Patriarch of the Hebrews:** (20)

**God’s Call:** Abram is called by God to leave this new homeland to go to a place to be revealed later. God makes incredible promises to Abram: the forming of a great nation, the blessing of a great name, and the

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| assurance of a great relationship with God. Abraham is seventy-five years old when he receives his call. (20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Human:</b> Abraham's story is a mixture of good and bad: he is human in every way. While he exhibits exemplary faithfulness and obedience, he also shows a selfish, self-serving side. While he engages God in deep theological discussion, he also stands passive and mute in the face of his wife's fury. While he exhibits great compassion for innocent folk caught in the web of a wicked city, he summarily casts out from his household his older son and his mother. While he exhibits enormous courage in negotiating the release of his nephew from Canaanite bondage, he also prepares to slaughter his second son. (20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Doubted God:</b> How could Abraham doubt God? It seemed incredible that he and Sarah in their advanced years could have a child. Abraham, the man God considered righteous because of his faith, had trouble believing God's promise to him. Despite his doubts, however, he followed God's commands (Gen. 17:22-27). Even people of great faith may have doubts. When God seems to want the impossible and you begin to doubt his leading, be like Abraham. Focus on God's commitment to fulfill his promised to you, and then continue to obey. (18)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Not the World's Best Husband:</b> In reading Genesis 12:1-20, Abram decides that in order to save his own life, he needs Sarai to be his sister rather than his wife. Technically, she is, in fact, his half-sister; but her primary role in the narrative is as his wife. Sarai is so beautiful and irresistible that Pharaoh adds her to his household. Pharaoh's dowry for Sarai includes cattle, slaves, and camels (Gen. 12:16). Abram accepts the gifts and still does not confess the real relationship between Sarai and himself. The assumption is that if Abram is to be the father of a great nation, then he needs to remain alive. There is no assumption, at this point anyway, that Sarai must be involved simple because she is his legal wife. Further, we are informed that she is barren; thus her role in the creation of offspring is already in question. The basic unite in ancient culture is the family headed by a male. Family lineage is traced through males, as we have seen in the genealogical lists earlier in Genesis. Privileges of divorce and multiple marriages are conferred upon husbands only. Before Pharaoh violates Arai, God afflicts Pharaoh and his entire household with a series of devastating plagues. Pharaoh knows that Abram has withheld pertinent information and holds him accountable. The focus is on God's action to rescue Sarai from harm; no censure is placed on Abram. IN fact, Abram does not speak in this episode. Abram neither confesses nor apologizes. And poor Sarai does not speak either. Abram is released with his wife and his possessions. Since we are not told otherwise, we assume that Abram is allowed to keep the gifts presented to him by Pharaoh. Instead of losing everything including his life, Abram makes out like a bandit – richer than before despite his disregard for his wife. Abram's concern is for himself, and h is lie is not even dealt with from a moral or theological standpoint. The great father of the faith is willing to sacrifice his life's partner for the sake of his own safety and well-being. This same scenario is repeated with the King of Gerar, Abimelech in Genesis 20. (20) |
| <b>Not the World's Best Father:</b> In ancient times, a barren wife had the prerogative of supplying one of her maids as a surrogate to her husband. If a child was produced, that child was a legal heir of the wife and therefore of the husband. The birth mother had no rights and usually no say in whether she was used in this way. Sarai makes Hagar available, Abram consents to have sex with her, Hagar conceives and develops a negative attitude toward Sarai, Sarai complains to Abram, who washes his hands of the matter. Abram does nothing to protect Hagar or his unborn child. He watches silently and passively as Sarai mentally and physically abuses the pregnant Hagar. Neither Sarai nor Abram display any regard or compassion for the Egyptian servant who m they have exploited. ( <i>Please see a different view of this in His Sorrows section – Ishmael.. McG</i> ) Again, the fulfillment of God's promise is in jeopardy. The father of the faith ignores the ill treatment of the woman who is bearing his first child. (20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Quintessential Pioneer:</b> (20)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Courageous:</b> Was respected by others and was courageous in defending his family at any cost. (18)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Father:</b> Abraham was the father of several children:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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| <p>By Hagar: Ishmael<br/> By Sarah: Isaac<br/> By Keturah (whom he married after Sarah's death): at least six sons (22)</p> |
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| His Sorrow                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <p><b>Compromised God's Instructions:</b> At times Abraham compromised God's instructions. (1)</p> <p><b>Ishmael:</b> When Sarah demanded that Abraham send the then 19 year old Ishmael away, Abraham was distressed "because of his son" (Gen. 21:11). When God confirmed Sarah's demand and told Abraham to send Ishmael away, Abraham must have been heartbroken. Yet, he did as God said. And God promised that He Himself would watch over Ishmael and make him a great people for Abraham's sake. (3)</p> <p><b>Ishmael sent away:</b> Well-established custom in the Patriarchal Age protected the rights of any child born to a man by a slave woman. Though the son of the wife was a man's legal heir, his child by a concubine was guaranteed an inheritance. Sarah's demand that Abraham send Ishmael away was doubly distressing. Abraham loved Ishmael. And he believed that sending Ishmael away was morally wrong. Only God's direct intervention, and God's promise to guarantee Ishmael's future, finally moved Abraham to banish Hagar and his son. Abraham would surely understand the pain of those who lose their children through divorce. How desperately we need to remember that God cares for our loved ones, even when we cannot. (4)</p> |

| His Joy and Triumph                                                                              |
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| <p><b>Blessed By God:</b> Abraham obeyed God, and God blessed him with a son in his old age.</p> |

| His Promises, His Lessons, His Legacy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p><b>Abraham's Life:</b> The life of Abraham is a study in faithfulness, obedience, and sometimes blind trust. It's also the story of a God who keeps his covenant promises. (1)</p> <p><b>Promises of God:</b> More than any other in the Old Testament, Abraham's story is linked with the promises of God. He leaves his homeland because God promises to give him another. He is amazed when God promises him a son at the age of one hundred, especially since his wife, Sarah, will be ninety when she gives birth! He leads his son up a mountain to be sacrificed even though this child is the living embodiment of God's promise. As a result of his faith, he sees the incredible provision of God. As a result of his obedience, Abraham becomes the father, not just of one child or even one nation, but of a multitude of people across time and space, as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. (1)</p> <p><b>Faith has always trials:</b> Being a Christian does not mean that trial is impossible or unnecessary. The greater the faith, the greater the trial. (2)</p> <p><b>Faith shines through the cloud:</b> How the patience and meekness of Jesus are manifest through His trials! Take away Abraham's trials and where is his faith? Faith must be tried, in order that faith may live. (2)</p> <p><b>Faith in spite of trial glorifies God:</b> Abraham's story is written in tears and blood, but how God was glorified by his trials of faith! Abraham's obedience of faith earned him the honor, "Abraham My friend!" Truly, there is no greater rank or greater honor than to be described thus. Yet such is our privilege if ours is the obedience of faith, for did not Jesus say, "I have called you friends"? He also said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." (2)</p> <p><b>Growing Faith:</b> The message for us is a wonderful one. Our young faith may falter as Abram's did. But as the years pass and we experience more and more of God's goodness, our faith, like Abram's, will grow. The doubts that trouble us will dissipate, to be replaced by an unshakable confidence in the Lord. (3)</p> <p><b>Abraham's Example of Challenges to a Mature Faith:</b></p> |

- **The challenge of awaiting God** – Gen. 16 – Even those whose faith is great need to learn to wait on God. Sensing His timing, and resisting the temptation to run ahead of Him, is a challenge indeed.
- **The challenge of testifying to the impossible** – Gen. 17:1-9 – Today, we live in a world that laughs at the most basic truths taught in Scripture and at Christians’ moral commitments. Like Abraham we are called to testify boldly to what seems impossible to most, in the sure and settled belief that God will vindicate us too, in His own time.
- **The challenge of maintaining unity** – Gen. 17:9-27 – Abraham’s challenge and that of his offspring was to see himself as a member in a community of faith. Relationship with God, while personal, is not merely individual.
- **The challenge of appropriate prayers** – Gen. 18 – We’re reminded that our prayers are to be driven by a desire to see God glorified. And we’re reminded that our prayers for others are welcome. God has a far deeper love for them than we do.
- **The challenge of continuing temptation to sin** – Gen. 20 – How easy it is for us to look away from God for a moment and be overwhelmed by circumstances. Had Abraham taken a moment to consider, he would have realized that whether or not the people he feared respected God, God was present there. We are not to be confident because others believe in God but because we know God is ever present with us.
- **The challenge of personal heartbreak** – Gen. 21:1-14 – When events beyond our control shatter a precious relationship, we need to remember that we may not be able to be with our loved one, but God is with him or her. If for no other reason that that the loved one is ours, God will care for him or her.
- **The challenge of surrendering all** – Gen. 22 – At times when we are called to surrender what is nearest and dearest to us, faith reminds us that, no matter how great the loss may seem, God will never take away more than he gives.
- **The challenge of the death of loved ones** – Gen. 23 – Of all the ills human beings are subject to, the loss of loved ones may be the most painful. Yet faith looks beyond the loss to a grand reunion in God’s future, dawning day.
- **The challenge of relying on others** – Gen. 24 – We need to be wise in who we select to take on responsibilities for us, and careful to prepare them. But then we need to trust God to work through them.
- **The challenge of aging and death** – Gen 25:1-11 – It’s hard for men of action to come to grips with inactivity. It’s hard for those who have done great things to realized that nothing remains for them to do. As life draws near its end, each of us must focus anew on our relationship with God, and realize afresh that knowing Him is the most significant thing of all. (3)

**Remain Aware:** We need to remain aware of our fallibility, and live humbly in the sight of others and of God. (3)

**Invest in Long-Term Relationships** – Like Abraham, we need to invest in our long-term relationships with spouse, family, and friends. We must set aside time and energy to nurture our relationships with those who are important in our lives. (3)

**God’s Desires:** God desires dependence, trust, and faith in him – not faith in our ability to please him. (18)

**God’s Plans:** From the beginning, God’s plan has been to make himself known to all people. (18)

**Trust in God:** God and His promises is the only sure foundation on which a person can build his/her life. (3)

**Rely on God:** As we meet each new challenged, we need consciously to rely on God for guidance and for strength. (3)

**Human:** Abraham’s story provides a realistic picture of a person struggling to be faithful. Abraham is a person of strength, yet he is imperfect in motive, behavior, and thought. He remains connected to God

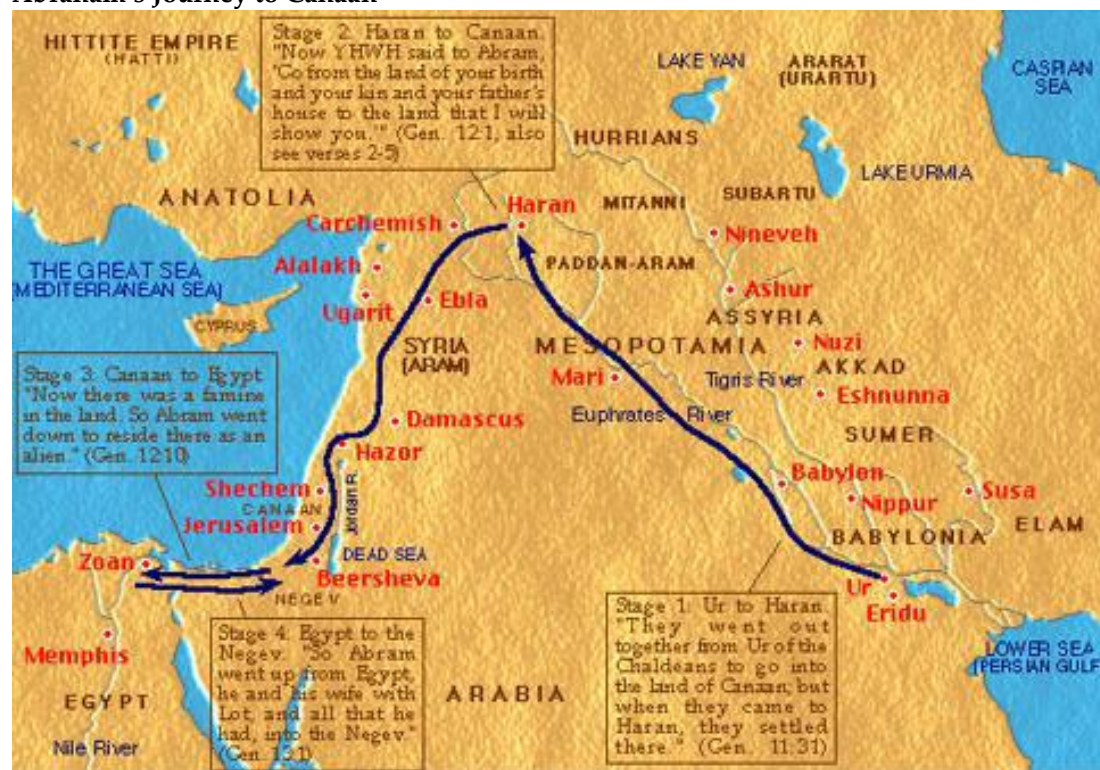
and seeks to walk in God's ways. Yet he is a deadbeat dad and casts his children out of his home. He extends gracious hospitality to strangers, yet stands by as Sarah abuses and exploits Hagar. He negotiates justice with God, yet places Pharaoh and King Abimelech and their people in danger by telling lies. He consistently marches toward God's promise, and his lies and deceit are rewarded with riches. He lives his life as an alien on the land of others, yet insists that Isaac marry within the clan. Abraham is so human it hurts at times. We want something nobler for the ancestor of the faith. We want him to be exemplary in every way. Time and time again, he disappoints us. We want him to be so much better than we are. But he is not. He is as vulnerable to the ills of ego and selfishness as we are. He is as ambitious and ruthless, as stubborn and defensive as we are. Yet God chose him for a special purpose. God chose an imperfect vessel to set in motion the divine plan of redemption for all of creation. When the test was at its most crucial, Abraham rose to the occasion. On this point, he did not fail. May all be as fortunate, strong, and courageous as he. (20)

**The Relationships God desires for Fathers and Children:** Abraham and Isaac illustrate the relationship God desires for fathers and children. God wants to be first in the father's life, and He wants fathers to assume responsibility by fulfilling various roles, such as source of identity, covering authority, priest, protector, provider, teacher, trainer, disciplinarian, and mentor/role model. Fatherlessness is increasing today due to divorce, drugs, violence, pornography, abuse, and abandonment. But God can be, and wants to be, a father to the fatherless. His desire is for all children – including fathers – to recognize Him as their Heavenly Father! (22)

|                       | <b>His Legacy of Prayer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <b>From <i>Men of the Bible</i> (1)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Reflect On</b>     | Genesis 12:10-20                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Praise God</b>     | For not hiding his plans but revealing his intentions through the promises he has made.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Offer Thanks</b>   | For the way you have benefited from this one man's obedience.                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Confess</b>        | Your failure at times to believe God's promises.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Ask God</b>        | To enable you to make faith visible through your obedience.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>A Final Prayer</b> | Lord, you blessed Abraham with land and children and wealth. You used him in ways he could not imagine. But the best promise of all was that you would be his shield and his very great reward. Lord, be my shield too, as well as my very great reward. |

|                        | <b>Final Thoughts</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                        | <b>From <i>Men of the Bible</i> (1)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Lift Your Heart</b> | The story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah is one of the most moving in the Bible. But Abraham's story begins well before that, revealing a man who sometimes displayed very little faith. His failures and compromises are key to his story because they show us we are dealing with a human being rather than a cardboard cutout. His responses convince us that faith grows not in the absence of struggle but in the midst of it. Like Abraham, we too face setbacks and successes in our life with God. The key to growing more mature in faith is not to focus on our failures but to focus on God's patient, enabling grace. |

### Abraham's Journey to Canaan



Source: <http://www.israelmybeloved.com/land/maps/maps2.htm>

### Abraham's Journeys In Canaan:



Source: <http://www.israelmybeloved.com/land/maps/maps2.htm>

**Answers:**

1. faithfulness, obedience, blind trust.
2. covenant promises
3. Faith,
4. Covenant, greater power, lesser one

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Please note that NO information contained in this study is original work of Susan McGeown, unless otherwise noted.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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