

Abraham's Journey of Faith Through Grace

Overcomers with God

Today as we explore grace together, I invite you to venture out with me in the pages of the ESV to follow Abraham on his journey of [faith through grace](#). Abraham's journey started at age 75 and continued to age 175, a full century of believing God in the latter part of his life.

Often the focus in a person's latter years is on trying to preserve what they've spent a lifetime building: home, family, friends, name and legacy. Our friend Abraham chose not to do that. In fact, following God's lead, he did just the opposite.

Imagine what it would have been like for him to have pulled up stakes and set out into the unknown so late in life. Although childless, he had much to be thankful for where he was: health, strength, wealth, reputation and family. Why would he leave it all behind? Because, as Galatians tells us, he was a [man of faith](#).

Galatians 3:9:

So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with [Abraham, the man of faith](#).

This "[man of faith](#)" was called the "[father of all who believe](#)" because at each step along the way, [he relied on God's grace](#) to figure out where to go and what to do next in fulfillment of God's will.

Abraham's journey started with a promise from the Lord.

Genesis 12:1-3:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you [literally, "that I will cause you to see"].

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

God later calls him “[Abram the Hebrew](#)”, making him the first person so called in the Bible. [What is a Hebrew?](#) The term “Hebrew” comes from the Hebrew word *abar* which means “to pass over” (not the same word as the Passover). A Hebrew is literally [a passer-over or an overcomer](#). How do they overcome? [By faith, through God’s grace](#). That is what Abraham did: he believed God and overcame by grace.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is about just such [Hebrews](#) — men and women who, like Abraham, [believed God and overcame by grace](#).

Hebrews 11:1,6,13,14:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

[verse 6] And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

[verse 13] These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

Abraham grew strong in faith, overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Romans 4:20-22:

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

He was able to do so because of his [reliance on the grace of God](#).

Romans 4:16,17:

That is why it [depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace](#) and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations” —in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

God gave life to the dead numerous times in realizing His promise to Abraham and his offspring.

- Abraham was twice called by God “as good as dead” before he fathered Isaac
- Sarai’s womb was called dead before she bore Isaac.
- Isaac’s wife Rebekah was barren for 20 years until he prayed for her, the Lord healed her, and she bore Jacob and Esau.
- Jacob’s wife Rachel was barren until God opened her womb and she bore Joseph.

These and so many other obstacles were not insurmountable for Abraham and his offspring as they believed the God who “calls into existence the things that do not exist.” In each case, [grace put them over the top so that they could be overcomers with God](#).

Grace in the Life of Abraham

Let’s take a look at some [instances of grace in the life of Abraham](#).

As we consider each instance, we’ll also take the time to extrapolate life lessons we can apply personally, which I have called [Grace Notes](#).

Genesis 12: Encampment in the Land

God Shows Where to Camp

- Abram passed over Canaan en route to the land that God would cause him to see.
- God appeared to him at Shechem and promised him that land.
- Abram built Him an altar — first, at Shechem; then, between Bethel and Ai.

Grace Note, ch. 12: When to Leave and Where to Call Home

- One of life's decisions with the greatest ramifications is deciding when it's time to make a fresh start. You can't be afraid to see what's on the other side; and with God, you don't have to. Have confidence that if it's time for big changes, the Great Pilot will cause you to see clearly and graciously help you to steer your course.

Genesis 13: Division of the Land

God Shows Which Land to Claim

- Following his sojourn in Egypt during the famine, Abram returned to the last place he had built an altar — between Bethel and Ai.
- Abram made the inspired decision to separate from Lot's herdsmen, offering to take whatever land Lot didn't want.
- Lot chose the Jordan valley while Abram remained in the hill country of Canaan.
- The LORD revealed to Abram He would give his offspring all the land to the north, south, east and west of that point.
- Abram then departed to the south in the direction of Hebron, where he again built an altar to the Lord.

Grace Note, ch. 13: When to Stay Put

- Sometimes the best decision about where to settle in life is to make no changes to your current situation. How can you know you made the right decision? Ask God to show you.

Genesis 14: Expulsion of the Interlopers

God Routs the Enemy and Blesses Abram

- When Lot and his family were captured and carried away, Abram understood that this attack on God's people was an affront to God. As a Hebrew, he would take on the enemy with God's help.
- Abram organized his force of trained men and chased the invaders out of the promised land, pushing them back where they came from and retrieving Lot, his family and their possessions.
- Returning from the war, he met Melchizedek king of Salem in the vicinity of what would later become Jerusalem. Recognizing that Melchizedek was the priest of the most high God, he gave him a tenth of all the spoils, and received the blessing of God.

Grace Note, ch. 14: Taking Ownership

- A truly pivotal moment in our life is when we resolve to go "all in" on what we are convinced God is leading us to do. God first called Abram a Hebrew when he demonstrated by his actions that he saw beyond a doubt that the land the Almighty God had led him to was in fulfillment of His promises and was to be defended at all costs. Blessings beyond compare would result.

Genesis 15: The LORD God's Covenant with Abram

Ever since Adam and Eve, the hope of all mankind had been tied up in the expectation of the promised seed. Abram knew that for the Messiah to come, there would have to be progeny.

Genesis 15:1-6:

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."

And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

How did Abram show his faith? By believing, "hope against hope" as it says in Romans 4, that God would bring to pass His promise of seed to Abram, despite all odds. *Abram believed God that He would provide the promised seed.*

The Lord God Promises Seed and a Land to Abram

- After the blessing of Melchizedek, God promised childless Abram that his son and not his servant would be his heir, and that his posterity would be without number
- Abram believed God's promise of seed, and God counted it to him for righteousness. (The promised seed would come, not by works, but by grace.)
- At God's request, Abram provided five sacrificial animals.
- God ignited them with the fire of God, thus sealing His covenant with Abram.

- The land Abram would inherit would extend from Egypt to the Euphrates.

Grace Note, ch. 15: Faith is Conviction in Things Not Seen

- The invisible God has things in store for us that simply are not yet in view. Creation itself teaches us that “what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” We will be the first to see things in life when we direct our gaze to Him.

Genesis 16: Angelic Confirmation of Posterity

God Shows Favor to Ishmael, the Child Born of Works

- At age 86, Abram finally had the joy of becoming a father — but by works, not by promise
- When the child’s desperate pregnant mother Hagar escaped into the wilderness, the angel of the Lord encouraged her, assuring her that the Lord had heard her in her affliction and that her son would indeed be born and would live on to father many.
- The spot where this vision occurred, the well of "The Living One Who Sees Me", would stand as a continuing testimony in future years to God’s promised blessing

Grace Note, ch. 16: Grace Covers All Our Actions

- As we journey through life, not all decisions we make are inspired. Sometimes, we try to bring God’s will to pass in life by our own works. God doesn’t hold us at fault for that; but by His mercy, He extends His blessing to cover even our lesser moments. Just look at how God blessed Abram, even by promising him a posterity from his child born of works!

Genesis 17: God Almighty's Covenant with Abraham

By Grace, God Promises Abraham a Son and Heir in the Land

- At age 99, God Almighty told Abram to walk before Him and be blameless so He could make His covenant with him,

multiply him greatly, and give him and his offspring the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession

- God renamed him Abraham, or "father of a multitude"
- The new practice of circumcision was to be the sign of this everlasting covenant, underscoring to Abraham daily the fact that the promise would come, not by man's potency, but by God's agency
- Circumcision would serve as a continual signpost of God's grace in bringing to pass His will — His promised seed
- Abraham's male offspring and household were to be circumcised
 - Thirteen-year-old Ishmael was circumcised, and God promised to bless him so he would go on to father 12 princes
 - By God's grace, Sarah would shortly bear Abraham a second son, Isaac, with whom God would establish an everlasting covenant

Grace Note, ch. 17: Grace is So Much Bigger Than You Think

- Sometimes we're just not ready to receive the sheer magnitude of God's grace — and that's OK with Him, He's got "all the time in the world." Once we get to the place of no longer wavering, He's ready to provide us with all the reminders we need that "He's got this" until we actually receive what He promised. *We're in this thing together with God.*

Genesis 18: Angelic Confirmation of Promised Seed

To make things crystal clear, God sent angels to confirm that the promise would indeed come to pass. After that mission was accomplished, God even included Abraham in the conversation with the angels, exhorting him as to how he would fulfill his role as both a father and the head of a household:

Genesis 18:19:

For I have chosen him [Abraham], that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

How many children would Abraham eventually have? Not just two, but eight! — as we will see later. How many were in his household? He took 318 of his trained men when he expelled the invading kings. *Abraham was to model keeping the way of the LORD for every one of his children and servants.*

The LORD to Bless Abraham and Sarah with a Son

- Angels brought the news of a son to be born to Abraham and Sarah
- Abraham was to command his entire household to keep the way of the LORD
- Abraham interceded for the people of Sodom; Lot escaped

Grace Note, ch. 18: Leading and Parenting is Modeling “God First”

- God is the One Who has chosen us and blessed us. If we are to lead the ones in our charge, we must live our daily lives *acknowledging Him as the Source of our blessing, so that God’s grace continues on display to future generations.*

Genesis 21: Birth of Isaac

God had made sure that both Abraham and his wife Sarah knew and understood that the promised seed would come from their physical union. In the time since Ishmael had been born, Abraham in his advanced years had become impotent. Scripture underscores this point by twice calling him “as good as dead.”

Hebrews 11:11,12:

By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

If it “takes two to tango” and neither partner were physically capable, *the only way the seed could be delivered as promised was by grace* — a miracle of God on both sides.

The LORD Does to Sarah As He Promised

- Isaac born to impotent Abraham (age 100) and barren Sarah (age 90)
- Isaac circumcised the eighth day
- Weaned Isaac mocked by Ishmael
- Hagar and Ishmael cast out at Sarah's word
- Angel reconfirmed blessing of Ishmael's posterity to Hagar

God blessed Sarah by honoring her as he did Abraham.

1 Peter 3:5-7:

For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,

as *Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children*, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are *heirs with you of the grace of life*, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The words “heirs with you” can also be rendered “joint heirs.” Sarah was heir with Abraham of the grace of life, God’s promised seed, standing with him at the head of the Christ line.

Grace Note, ch. 21: Faith Through Grace is a Family Affair

- God clearly wanted Christ’s line to be founded in family. *If we are to live a life of faith through grace, families will need to do it together.* Both husband and wife are heirs, so God plays no favorites. There will be great power in a couple’s prayers when there is no impediment of unbelief. *We are all headed in the same direction: homeward.*

Genesis 22: Relinquishment of Promised Son

Abraham Trusts the LORD to Provide for the Offering

- From Beersheba, traveled with Isaac to Moriah as instructed
- Prepared a sacrifice without disputing
- Stopped in his tracks when angel intervened
- Opened his eyes and saw ram caught in thicket
- Named the mount of the LORD "The LORD will provide"

When Abraham offered up Isaac, no one had ever yet been raised from the dead. That didn’t stop Abraham from acting.

Hebrews 11:17-19:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,

of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Abraham believed that God in His justice was always right. He had no problem believing that God would even go so far as to raise his promised son from the dead, if that's what was required. He had a John 3:16 attitude, even before that ever happened!

Grace Note, ch. 22: God Can Do What's Never Been Done

- When God asks us to do something, we don't need to second-guess Him. He wouldn't have asked you if He didn't have the entire plan in hand. If it seems like an element of the plan is missing, trust Him to cover by His grace. He is perfectly capable of seeing to it, for He is the faithful God.

Genesis 23: Death and Burial of Sarah

Abraham never actually did get to found a nation in the promised land. He and his sons were always on the move.

Hebrews 11:9:

By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

Nevertheless, when Sarah died, God did give Abraham the opportunity to purchase a property as her burial ground. Later, Abraham himself as well as his son Isaac, his daughter-in-law Rebekah, his grandson Jacob and his wife Leah were buried there. Today, the spot is known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs located in Hebron.

Abraham Acquires Property in the Promised Land

- Sarah died (age 127)
- Abraham buried Sarah in cave of Machpelah purchased from the Hittites
- Abraham lived another 38 years, fathering more children and seeing his grandchildren and great-grandchildren

Grace Note, ch. 23: Stake Your Claim While It is Today

- Not everything about your life may be fulfilled in your lifetime, and that's OK because God knows all and God sees all. Simply concern yourself with what God has in store for you for the day, and all future elements associated with the project at hand will be resolved when the time comes.

Genesis 24: Isaac's Posterity Established

God Blesses Abraham with Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren

- Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to find his son a wife from among his people, asking Isaac to stay behind in the promised land
- On journey to Haran, the LORD led Eliezer to the eligible kin
- Rebekah, Abraham's grandniece, returned with Eliezer to marry Isaac (age 40)
- Later, at age 60, Isaac prayed for his barren wife to conceive and fathered Abraham's grandsons Jacob and Esau 15 years before his father's death

Grace Note, ch. 24: Give It Time

- As the years pass, don't get anxious about parts of the plan that may seem overdue to be fulfilled. Seek God's help in figuring out what needs to happen in order to keep things moving forward, and get out of the way when it's up to someone else to step up and believe God. (He's at work in them too.) Your prayers will be answered in due time.

Genesis 25: Multiplied Blessings of a Good Old Age

God Blesses Abraham with More Children Late in Life

- After Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah and fathered six sons
- Sons in turn fathered seven grandchildren

- Before his death, Abraham sent all his sons but Isaac eastward across the Jordan Rift Valley, including Ishmael and Midian (in whose land Moses would later take refuge and find a wife after escaping from Egypt)
- Abraham died (age 175), and was buried by Isaac and Ishmael with Sarah in the cave he had purchased in the promised land

Grace Note, ch. 25: It's Not Over Until It's Over

- Don't count God out. There may be yet another chapter ahead in your life. [Continue to move on past premises until God sets you on another course. Your actions near the end may have just as resounding an impact as your actions at the outset.](#)

How could Abraham have guessed when receiving God's commission at age 75 that he would go on to live another century?

He didn't stop 11 years later when he fathered Ishmael at age 86. He didn't stop another 13 years later when he received the promise of Isaac's upcoming birth at age 99, or another year later when he actually fathered Isaac at age 100.

He didn't give up when God asked him to offer up his promised son Isaac, but persevered until the Lord did indeed provide an animal for the sacrifice.

He didn't figure his life was over when his beloved Sarah died, but instead went on to marry his concubine Keturah and fathered another six children with her! After all, God had told him he was to father a multitude and he figured the job wasn't finished yet.

He believed God to find a believing wife for Isaac after Sarah died. He waited another twenty years until Isaac's wife Rebekah was healed of her barrenness and bore children in fulfillment of God's promise that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." He then continued believing to live until he got to spend a full 15 years with his grandchildren Esau and Jacob, the future father of the children of Israel.

Even when he died at age 175, his sons Isaac and Ishmael were able to bury him in the property he had purchased in the promised land.

I'd say that's following things through by God's grace, all the way to the end! May we be so blessed in all seasons of life as we walk in the steps of our believing forefather Abraham on this journey of [faith through grace](#).