

A Gift Given...A Gift Delayed

The Amazing Story of Abraham

Lesson 6

Becoming a generous church

January 15, 2012

How does a man who comes from a family of idol worshippers become a friend of God (James 2.23) and the father of faith (Rom. 4.11)? The Bible doesn't chose to give us the answer to this question but it tells us a lot about this extraordinary man of faith. As we walk alongside him we learn a great deal about faith and what it means to walk by faith.

We are first introduced to Abraham in Genesis 12.1-3 in a passage that is often called the Abrahamic Covenant:

“Now the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make 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.’”

We find four distinct elements of separation in God’s call to Abraham in Genesis 12.1-3. God told Abraham to:

1. Leave his country
 2. Leave his kindred (family)
 3. Leave his father’s house
 4. Go to a land I will show you
- **Question:** How would you respond if God gave you a command of his nature? Would you find it difficult or easy to leave your county and your family to go to a completely strange place...and God didn't tell you where this place was going to be? Why?
 - **Note:** God was asking Abraham to live by perpetual faith with no family or friends upon whom he could depend in a time of crisis. How would you feel about this? Would you be obedient to God?
 - **Note:** God was placing Abraham in a situation in which he had to choose between an earthly lifestyle of comfort, ease and stability contrasted to a lifestyle of uncertainty, and complete dependence upon God. Would you find this easy or challenging?

GOING GENEROUS!

a Sermon Series by Dr. Jay Dennis & Connect Group Study by Pastor Terryl Delaney

❖ **Abraham had to walk by faith and obedience. The Bible defines faith for us in Hebrews 11.1. It tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11.6) and finally, it tells us that faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 Jn. 5.4-5).**

- Faith is trustful reliance upon God
- Faith is exclusive dependence on God
- Faith is taking God at His Word...and doing what He says
- Faith is resting on the promises of God

❖ **As great as Abraham was, we see that Abraham, like us, had a developing faith**

- Abraham failed on a number of occasions: 1. He did not leave his family behind when he left the Ur of Chaldees (Gen. 11); He settled in Haran for 15 years instead of going on to the land of Canaan (Acts 7.4); He did not remain in the Promise Land trusting God to provide for him during a severe drought, going to Egypt instead (Gen. 12); He did not trust God to protect him so he allowed Pharaoh to marry his wife, Sarah, until God intervened (Gen 12); He failed to trust God when he agreed to impregnate Hagar in an attempt to gain a son through whom the promise of God could be fulfilled (Gen. 16).
- In spite of these failures of faith, we also see some amazing displays of Abraham's faith. He never tried to return home, for example. He rescued his nephew, Lot, when he could have easily let him be taken away as a slave (Gen. 14). He was ready to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, confident that God could raise him from the dead, if necessary (Heb. 11.17-19).

❖ **We also see that even though Abraham was wealthy he didn't depend on his riches. Abraham, our model of faith, was a generous man.**

- Abraham risked his life, the lives of his servants and his wealth in rescuing his nephew, Lot when he did not have to do so (Genesis 14).
- Abraham gave a tithe (10%) of what he had won through the battle to a priestly king named Melchizedek when there was no law that told him he had to do this (Gen. 14).
- Abraham refused to take a what was no doubt a vast reward from the king of Sodom for rescuing him and the other cities from the invading raiders because he did not want the king to claim that he, rather than God, had made blessed Abraham with wealth (Gen. 14).