

The Story of **ABRAHAM** - Faith for Life's Problems



"6 And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith." Genesis 15:6 NLT. "19 And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb. 20 Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises." Romans 4:19-21 NLT

Problems. We all have them. Some are small, some severe. The story of Abraham teaches us several lessons about facing life's problems with faith in God.

Abraham was known as a **man of faith**. Faith is essential in several ways. Faith is the only basis for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is necessary for pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is essential to receiving *"anything"* from God (James 1:6-7).

Faith in God should be our way of life. The Apostle Paul said: *"...the righteous will live by faith (NIV)"* (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; also see 2 Cor.5:7; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 10:38). *Have you learned the difference in occasionally having faith in God versus living by faith?*

The Central Lesson:

A life of faith is not developed overnight, but is a life-long growing process.

The story of Abraham not only illustrates the importance of faith in life, but that it is a life-long growing process. It is not developed overnight.

1. Find God's **PROMISES** and Act on Them (Genesis 12:1-9).

God appeared to Abram and gave him several **promises** and a **command**. This is known as the **Abrahamic Covenant**. God **promised** that a *"great nation"* [the **nation of Israel**] would descend from Abraham (v.2). God **promised** to bless him and make him famous. God **promised** to bless those who bless Abraham. Also, God **promised** through Abraham *"all families on earth"* would be blessed (v.3). This implied that the Savior of Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman - the Messiah, would come through Abraham's lineage.

Along with the promise was the **command** - leave your country and family and go to a land that God would reveal while in route (12:1). **This would require an act of faith**. Abram stepped out on faith and obeyed God (12:4-9). *Do you want to develop your ability to "live by faith"?* **Find God's promises and act on them.**

2. Expect a **LAPSE** in Your Faith (Genesis 12:10-20; Ch. 20).

Abraham was not perfect. He had times of doubt. He experienced a lapse in faith. His wife, Sarai, was very beautiful and on two occasions he lied about her being his wife. He claimed she was his sister. He feared that others would

kill him to get Sarai. He lied to both Pharaoh (12:10-20) and King Abimelech (Gen. 20). Where was Abram's faith? God's covenant could not be fulfilled if Abram was killed. He should have told the truth and trusted God for protection. We, too, will have a lapse of faith. Expect it. Learn from it. Ask God to forgive it. Grow in faith after it.

3. Make Decisions That **HONOR** God and Trust Him for the Results (Genesis 13).

Conflict developed between Abram and his nephew, Lot (13:5-7). Their flocks and herds grew so large that there was not enough room for both. Abram suggested they part company to make more room. Abram wanted to honor God and do right with his nephew. He gave Lot first choice on the direction they would go and the land they would settle (13:8-9). Lot chose the land that appeared the best. Unfortunately, later it turned for the worst. It was the area of Sodom that God eventually destroyed (13:10-13). However, God blessed Abram's unselfish decision (see 13:14-18).

4. Be **PATIENT** with God's Timing (Genesis 16).

God had promised Abram and Sarai a son in their old age. However, years passed and there was no son. Sarai took matters in her own hands. She gave her servant, Hagar, to Abram as a substitute wife, to give birth to a son. Ishmael was born as a result (the father of the Arabs and the conflict of the middle-east). Unfortunately, this was another example of a lapse of faith. Eventually Sarai gave birth to Isaac. **God had His own time table**. Abram and Sarai **should have been patient and continued to trust God**.

5. Watch for God's **REAFFIRMATION** (Genesis 17).

God helped Abram's faith grow by **reaffirming His promise** several times (12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-7, 18-21; 17:1-8; 22:15-18). God will also help our faith grow by **reaffirming** His promises and purposes for us. **Watch for it**.

6. Pass the Faith **TESTS** (Genesis 22).

God tested Abraham's faith to stretch it and grow it. He told Abraham to go up on the mountain and sacrifice his son Isaac (22:2). Abraham by this time had grown in faith. He knew God would fulfill the covenant of a great nation and the coming of the Messiah through Isaac. Apparently he believed that God would raise Isaac back to life if he was sacrificed (see Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham's comments to his servants (22:5) and his son (22:7-8) indicated that he believed Isaac would come back down the mountain with him alive. Abraham passed God's test and told him not to touch his boy (22:9-14). God will stretch and grow our faith through times of testing. Pass the test.

The Central Lesson

A life of faith is not developed overnight, but is a life-long growing process.

Suggested Prayer: *"Heavenly Father, I recognize that you want me to do more than have faith in You occasionally, but you want me to live a life of faith in You continually. Forgive me when I have a lapse of faith. Help me to take the steps that will grow my faith. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen."*

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.