

# introduction

## TO VALIANT WARRIORS

In the Old Testament, certain groups of men were noted as “valiant warriors” or “men of valor.” These men displayed courage and determination in battle. King David had his “mighty men.” These men proved themselves to be trustworthy in battlefield situations. These brave warriors were not limited to one tribe or people group. They were only limited by their courage and determination.

Valiant means possessing or showing courage or determination. Obviously, a warrior is one who is engaged in a war. A war has been underway since the Garden of Eden. The kingdom of God has been under assault by the kingdom of darkness. Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve that led to their sin resulting in the Fall of all mankind was the declaration of war against God’s kingdom.

Biblical manhood and masculinity was also attacked in the garden on that day. Adam had been created first, given dominion over the earth and even named his wife. Satan did not initially go to Adam but to his wife, Eve with the temptation. It is understood that Adam was most certainly right there while his wife was being tempted. Adam abdicated his leadership responsibility in protecting his wife. He then followed her into the same sin that she had committed. Since then, God’s people have battled against the kingdom of sin and darkness. But also, men have battled for biblical manhood and masculinity.

Men are at their best when they are valiant warriors, battling for the kingdom of God and rescuing the disadvantaged in the name of the King. Robert Lewis subtitled “Men’s Fraternity,” A Quest for Authentic Manhood. Valiant Warriors hopes to be another leg in the race or step in the journey in this quest. David challenged his son, Solomon in 2 Kings 2:2-4, “I am going the way of



all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

We hope to show men how to be men, valiant warriors through this study. We believe that the key to men being transformed is first by the Word of God. Another key is men in small groups for discussion, prayer, accountability and encouragement. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. It is out of that desire and vision that we have embraced the following guidestones.

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### Valiant Warrior Mission

To disciple men to follow Christ and to live and lead in their homes, churches, and communities for God’s glory.

### Valiant Warrior Vision

To see an army of men devoted to Christ leading their families and this church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

### Valiant Warrior Strategy

To disciple men in small groups to lead their families and their church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

### Valiant Warrior Promise

Judges 6:12 “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.”

### Valiant Warrior Code of Honor

To grow in Christlikeness personally. To be committed to my family and Christ’s church. To intentionally encourage other men in Christlikeness and commitment to the church.

## Valiant Warrior Scripture References

2 Chronicles 14:8 "Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors."

Deuteronomy 3:18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.'"

Joshua 1:14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them."

Joshua 8:3 "So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night."

Joshua 10:7 "So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors."

Judges 6:12 "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.'"

Judges 11:1 "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior..."

Judges 18:2 "So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it;"

1 Samuel 10:26 "Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him."

1 Samuel 14:52 "Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff."

1 Samuel 18:17 "Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles.'"

1 Samuel 31:12 "All the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there."

2 Samuel 2:7 "Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

2 Samuel 17:10 "And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men."

1 Chronicles 28:1 "Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds, and the overseers of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, with the officials and the mighty men, even all the valiant men."

2 Chronicles 13:3 "Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men who were valiant warriors."

# VALIANT WARRIOR

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SPIRITUAL ARMOR

My first Valiant Warrior study was on the spiritual armor found in Ephesians 6. After 10 semesters of Valiant Warrior after that initial study, I have decided to cover this material one more time.

Valiant Warriors are engaged in a war. We battle in a spiritual battle.

The Apostle Paul describes for us the nature of that battle. He also gives us the necessary instructions for success in that battle. As we look at the spiritual armor found in Ephesians 6:10-20, we find the basics to the Christian life. The spiritual armor is basic discipleship strategy. Like most sporting competition, the competition is won by those who do the basics the best. So, what the essentials are for spiritual battle are the same essentials for everyday spiritual life.

Read what Paul wrote to those believers in Ephesus in the first century. Remember, he instructed them on great doctrinal truth in chapters 1-3 so they would know what to believe. Then, in chapters 4-6, he gives them practical ways to apply this doctrine to their every day lives. These verses on the spiritual armor serve as the conclusion of this book.

Ephesians 6:10-20 (NASB) Spiritual Warfare

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."*

Each lesson will be focused on one piece of the spiritual armor. It is important to note prayer is a major part of this passage of Scripture. Our battle is spiritual and not fleshly, so we must use spiritual armor as opposed to physical armor. Our aim in rediscovering biblical manhood is unveiling the spiritual realm where our victories are won and lost in prayer and by spiritual means. We know we sometimes lose battles along the way, but our goal is to ultimately win the war. Be encouraged to stay in the battle. Fight to the end. Do not quit.

Winston Churchill said, "If you're going through hell, keep going."

The order Paul covers the different pieces of spiritual armor is different than the order I use in this study. Paul's order is first inspired by God. Paul's order is also logical in what a soldier would put on in its most likely order.

The biblical order is belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword. The biblical descriptions of truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, salvation, and Word/Spirit can also be considered as an order to the process.

I actually put on the full armor of God in prayer from head down to help me remember: helmet of salvation, breastplate of righteousness, belt of truth, shoes of the Gospel, shield of faith, and sword of the Spirit.

Our Valiant Warrior study is different. My basic order is a theological order. The Word of God is first because everything we know about anything spiritually comes from the Word of God. Salvation comes from the imperishable seed of God's Word. Salvation is the birth of the believer spiritually. It is the beginning of spiritual life. Righteousness is obtained at salvation through faith. We are justified by faith. We walk by faith. We please God by faith. We take up the shield of faith. The belt of truth is a practical righteousness of telling the truth, believing the truth, and obeying the truth. Lastly, we put on the shoes of the gospel in going and sharing the gospel. It is a process of discipleship that begins and is rooted and supported throughout by God's Word that leads to salvation and imputed righteousness. Our salvation leads to a life of faith fueled by the truth of God's Word that results in making new disciples.

All of the armor is for the front of the soldier. The Valiant Warrior is on the offensive. He is charging the gates of Hell with the promise they will not prevail against him. This is the picture of a soldier taking the battle to the enemy. This is not a defense system for men waiting around to be attacked and just playing defense. The reality is we have already been attacked. We must take up this armor and deploy an all-out attack on the enemy.



## Lesson 1: The Calling of Faith | Genesis 11:26-12:1; Hebrews 11:8-10

God has chosen to use a man when He wants to start something new or do something big. God created the heavens and the earth. Then, He created a man named Adam, to name and have dominion over the earth. God used Noah to build an ark to save the world from the impending flood of judgment. God used Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and give the Law to him to give to the people. God used Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. God used David as the king to point toward a future coming king. God used Paul to be a missionary to the Gentiles (the nations) to spread the message of the Gospel.

God also chose Abraham who went by Abram for the first 99 years of his life. It was out of a wicked culture that worshiped false gods. Abraham, like Noah, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. For no good reason we know of, God chose Abraham to be the father of a great nation. Abraham would answer the call of God, albeit not perfectly, to go to a place he had never been. Even more remarkable, he did not know of the location or what it was called. This obedience to God was a step of faith. Abraham has been called a man of faith and a father of faith.

**Our study will show the good, the bad, and the ugly of Abraham just like the Bible does. That's another one of the reasons we can trust the Bible. God has chosen to record His men in faith and failure. These open and honest words serve as an encouragement to the rest of us knowing our faith and obedience is often flawed, delayed, and partial. It has yet to be perfect.**

Abraham is revered by the majority of the world as the "father of faith." Abraham is an important figure in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He is most noted among Christians as a man of great faith. In looking at Abraham, we see a common pattern God has established with His Valiant Warriors that preceded Abraham. With Adam and Noah, God showed favor or grace towards them. God made a covenant of promises with them.

Abraham is mentioned around 300 times in scripture. The historical account of his life is found in chapters 11-25 of Genesis. Many biblical references are made of him beyond the first book of the Bible.

These lessons will explore this man of faith in light of God's calling, covenant, and promise in the context of redemption history. Abraham also struggled with fear and taking matters into his own hands. Abraham's flawed faith did not thwart the plans of God in redemption history. Abraham's lack of trust, on occasions, did not remove the impact of God's amazing grace in his life. When Abraham was not faithful to God, God remained faithful to Abraham and His promises to him.

Abram's name is changed to Abraham in chapter 17, at the age of 99. So, the name Abram and Abraham will be used interchangeably as commentators and scholars have done so throughout the years. Let's begin our study with the biblical introduction to Abram, his family, and his calling.

Genesis 11:26-12:3

*"Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. Sarai was*

*barren; she had no child. Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.*

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

## **The Call of Abraham**

This section of scripture is one of the most important in all of the Bible. The calling of Abraham was in essence a covenant of promise to Abraham. The rest of the Pentateuch follows the theme laid out in these brief verses. It is the birth of a nation. It is the promise of blessing. It is the promise of a coming Messiah. It all begins with the calling of one man, Abram.

For time's sake, we will consider the calling of Abraham and the covenant of Abraham in two separate lessons. It would be impossible not to look ahead and bleed over into next week's lesson in this lesson. The calling of Abraham was a calling to step out in faith and realize the reward of the covenant.

Abraham's father was Terah, and his brothers were Nahor and Haran. Haran died and had a son named Lot. Lot would play a prominent role in Abraham's life. It is noteworthy to see that in Genesis 11:31, Terah actually left the Ur of the Chaldees to go to land of Canaan. He did not take his son Nahor and his family. He did take Lot, Abraham, and Abraham's wife Sarai. He did not make it to the land of Canaan. He settled in Haran.

Genesis 11:31-32

*"Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran."*

There are more questions than clear biblical answers pertaining to Terah going to Haran on the way to Canaan. Terah certainly took a route "out of the way" if he was planning on getting to Canaan. At the very least, there was some talk or understanding that Canaan was a desirable place to go.

I think we can see how God positioned Abraham, through the influence of his father Terah, for obedience and faith.

**Discuss how your past set you up for following God in faith. For some you had Godly parents who pointed you in the right direction. For some, you didn't have intentional, from a human perspective influence, but you can now see the providential hand of God working to get you where you are today. How did you get here at this moment at Valiant Warrior?**

Chapter 12 begins what is known as the call and covenant with Abraham.

*"Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;"*

This covenant begins with a command to leave. The Lord said, *"Go forth from..."* The command called for a change. God placed a requirement of a change of venue, location, or scenery. The covenant expected the obedience of Abraham to the command of God to experience the promises of God.

This calling was the birth of a nation, not just any nation, but the nation of Israel. This nation would be the people of God. As we will see, the covenant with Abram and the establishment of a great nation was not for Israel to be in isolation from all other nations. God would establish His nation to be a blessing to all the nations.

God chose to work through a man, Abram. God chose to work through a people, a nation, Israel. Many promises and prophecies pertain to Israel as a nation and Jerusalem as a city. It all begins here with the calling of Abram.

The calling of Abram was personal to him. God spoke directly to Abram. The scripture does not mention the Lord speaking to anyone else. This personal call would certainly have implications on others. Abram had to hear the call and get it right in his response. The future of others was depending on the obedience of Abram.

The calling was also pointed in that God said to, *"leave."* This was not a calling to stay, but to leave. It is typically easier to stay than leave. The calling of God is most often a calling into the more difficult. God's calling usually is away from comfort and convenience. That was certainly the call on Abram. It could be said that this calling was painful in many ways.

Abraham was called to leave his country. These were his roots. After leaving Ur, he had settled with his family in Haran (coincidentally or not the same name as his brother like Dallas, Austin, Festus J). He was also called to leave his family. Many think he did not fully obey this command because he did take Lot with him. Lot would be a source of distraction and heartache.

Abram was the first to leave his country. In leaving his country, for the most part, he would be leaving the other things listed following. While we might be tempted to see this as a missionary call to leave our country, it certainly could be argued, this calling was more of a calling to separate from the pagan influences of the Ur of the Chaldees and Haran.

The call of Abram at Haran was preceded by the migration of the Terah clan from Ur (11:31–32), but the content of the message received at Ur is not reported in 15:7, where the passage only recounts that the Lord *"brought [Abram] out of Ur."* Stephen's sermon reports that God *"appeared"* to Abraham before he lived in Haran, showing that the Lord supervised the journey of Abraham, from the beginning at Ur to his final destination in Canaan (Acts 7:2–4). Abraham fulfilled his calling in two stages.

The call required submission and separation. Separation from the wicked and ungodly is not a call to isolation. It was the purpose of this calling and covenant to make a way for the nations, which Abram was to separate himself for them, to come into a relationship with God.



Abram had to leave the old life and look ahead to a new life. This new life included a new place. This promise was centered in land and place. God is not bound by geography or specific location, but we are. God is omnipresent, but God chose to come into the world in a specific location, and He has promised He will return to that location. This is the location God was calling Abram to.

**Discuss the call of God for men to leave the world to follow Christ. What does it mean to leave the world or be separate from the world? Why and when do men leave the entanglements of this world (2 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 2:20)?**

In leaving his country, he would be leaving a lot of customs and practices and familiarity. Sometimes God calls us to leave behind things, traditions, and ideas that might prevent us from moving forward. Some of these things are overtly sinful and pagan. Sometimes things do not seem so bad to us, but they do hold us back, occupy valuable time and attention, and distract us from pursuing God with a whole heart. Anything that distracts us from the priority is something to leave behind. Our missionary families leave the familiar customs, traditions, stores, conveniences, and more to embrace new culture and ways that can often feel awkward and foreign. I have been amazed in seeing how God touches peoples' hearts to help them to begin to love and appreciate the people and their way of life for the sake of reaching them with the Gospel.

God's call becomes even more personal when He instructs Abraham to leave his relatives and his father's house.

The solace of country and family must give way to a higher allegiance. This is the requirement of those who enter the kingdom, as Jesus taught, *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"* (Matt 10:37). All is placed in the Lord's hands who will "show" him the land of destiny, Canaan. The land *"I will show you"* (12:1b) is the only road map that Abram can follow. Abram can depart and cohabit with his wife, but it is the Lord who will make of this alien and childless couple a *"great nation."* If the nations are to enjoy the promised blessing (1:28; 9:1) through the founding of a new nation (Israel), there must be the possession of a land and the birth of a people. In the Abraham story the land is obtained in part, although possession is tentative, but it is especially the promise of offspring that proves most elusive.

**Discuss why it was necessary for Abraham to leave his family. Have you or do you know someone who had to leave the family business so they could follow Christ wholeheartedly?**

The calling was not just from his homeland and relatives. The calling was to this new land. This is vision. Valiant Warriors are not just against things, but we are also for things. We are not just leaving behind our past, but we are reaching ahead to our better future.

This season of redemption history is focused on land. It is called the promised land. It is Canaan land which is controlled through much of biblical history by the Canaanites, the cursed children of Ham. Abraham's promise at this point, is this land.

This promise of land would be the pursuit of God's people all the way from Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and to Joshua. This land would become the illustration of an eternal promised land, Heaven. But make no mistake, this is a real piece of property where Jesus would come to through His incarnation. This would be the land where He would live His sinless, miracle working life. This would be the land where

Jesus would shed His blood for all sin, of all time, for the redemption of all who would believe in Him. This is land where Jesus would conquer death and be raised from the dead. This is land where believers would gather in an upper room until the Holy Spirit would come with great power. This is the very land where Jesus will return one day, placing His foot on the Mount of Olives and splitting that mountain into a valley.

This is land Abram was promised and that Abram would live his entire life looking for.

The author of Hebrews gives us insight into Abram's response. Abram's response was *"By faith."* Hebrews 11:6 explains that *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God."* Abram risked his entire future on the singular Word of God. Abram did not have someone to call and get advice from. He did not have a three-step plan for leaving everything to go to somewhere you have never been, or even heard of, or know where it is.

Hebrews 11:8

*"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."*

Abraham *"obeyed by going out to a place."* The first step of obedience was to leave. God said leave. Abraham left. No negotiating was done. He did not have the luxury of working from home or remotely. While he was called to a promised land, he did not know where it was. What if you told your family we are leaving, but you do not know where you are going? Abraham had no explanation for his family and acquaintances that would accompany him on the journey. Are you ready to go? Sure, where are we going? I don't know.

There are some things that were key to Abram's obedience. The difference for Abram, was God was the One calling. Abram knew it was God speaking. Abram knew what God was telling him to do. The only question was, *"Will he do it?"* When it comes to your step of faith, you must answer these questions. Are you sure it is God who is calling? Are you sure what God is telling you to do? Are you going to do it?

The first calling that requires your faith is the call to salvation. Abram had to leave a wicked land. It was his homeland and all he knew, but it was wicked. He was worshiping false gods. God's first calling is a heart call to leave sin. The Bible teaches that *"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have everyone turned to his own way..."* (Isaiah 53:6) It further states that *"the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9) It requires faith to leave or change your mind about sin. It is not good works that make up for your past sin, it is faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross to pay for and cover your sins.

**Discuss what it was like when God called you to salvation. Be aware some in your group may not have been saved yet. What led up to your salvation? What caused you to take the step of faith in trusting Christ as your Savior?**

While a calling to faith in Jesus for salvation is your first calling, it is certainly not your only calling. As followers of Jesus, He is constantly calling and inviting us to join Him by faith in what He is doing. God is definitely calling all of us to be engaged and involved in some kind of ministry. Just like following Jesus in faith in our salvation, we must follow Him in faith in our sanctification and ministry. Sanctification is the process by which God makes us more like Jesus. Sanctification is accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God in particular. Jesus states in John 17:17, *"Sanctify them in truth, Your Word is truth."*

So, God calls us to salvation. He calls us to sanctification. God also calls us to ministry engagement and involvement. He may call you to teach a class. He may call you to go on a mission trip. He may call you to volunteer at the food pantry. He may call you to a prayer ministry. He may call you to the mission field. He may call you to be a pastor. He may call you to teach young boys or teenagers. As you can see, there is no limit on how God might call you to join Him in ministry.

**Consider how your step of faith in salvation helps you to take additional steps of faith in obedience, following God, and in your sanctification.**

**Discuss when God has led you to make significant changes. How did you make the decision?**

**How do you know when God is calling? How do you know what God is calling you to do?**

**Consider how to live by faith while not yet seeing the fulfillment of the promise.**

Hebrews 11:8-17

*"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

*All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them."*





## **Lesson 2: The Covenant | Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 15:1-6; 15-18; 17; 22: 15-18**

The calling of Abraham was to a covenant with God. Abraham was called to leave and go to a land not yet revealed. While this leaving and going was very important, the bigger picture in redemption history is the covenant God was establishing with Abraham. This covenant has far-reaching implications. It is even called “permanent.” This covenant is referenced numerous times in scripture. In Genesis, we see the promise of the covenant (Genesis 12), the formal making of the covenant (Genesis 15), the sign of the covenant (Genesis 17), and the confirmation of the covenant (Genesis 22). The inception of this covenant is found in Genesis 12 with the call to Abram and the promise of God to him. The latter three passages are placed at the end of the study for your convenience.

In scripture, we find conditional and unconditional covenants. In some places, God says if you will do something, then He will do this. In some places, God promises to do something regardless of what someone else does. In its simplest definition, a covenant is an agreement or a binding promise. Biblically, a covenant involves a deep, personal, relational, and spiritual commitment. The Noahic Covenant is God’s promise to not destroy the world by water again, but to preserve the earth. The rainbow is the reminder of this covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant is God’s promise to set apart His people to bring about blessing to all the families of the earth. We will discuss in more detail this covenant in this lesson. The Mosaic Covenant is that God would bless Israel as they obeyed the Law He had given them. The Davidic Covenant is someone from David’s line will always sit on the throne of Israel. The New Covenant is that God will write His law on the heart of His people. This New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant or the Mosaic Covenant. The New Covenant is promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34, it anticipates the fulfillment of the Law by Jesus.

Jesus is the fulfillment of each of these covenants.

**What is a covenant? What does it mean that this is a “permanent covenant?”**

**Briefly discuss the four covenants besides the Abrahamic Covenant.**

Our primary focus will be on the promise of the covenant found in Genesis 12.

Kenneth Matthews points out the importance of this call to covenant in his Genesis commentary.

The divine call of Abram (vv. 1–3) is central to the patriarchal narratives, for it entails the triad of divine promises that explain the thematic development of the remainder of the book and the whole of the Pentateuch (see commentary Introduction and vol. 1A, pp. 54–60). Recurring thematic forms and motifs in chaps. 1–11 are bunched together in the promissory call: land/country, bless/curse, seed, nation/family, and name. All that had preceded in the panorama of creation and divine grace toward human life take their place as prelude to this first divine word announced to Abram. Although the promises are repeated elsewhere in the patriarchal narratives, they are only offered in whole at 12:1–3. The many promises of the passage cohere into three strands: land, seed, and blessing. The divine oath is like an avalanche of blessing cascading in wave after wave on the patriarch and his children yet to come.

Genesis 12:1-3

*"Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

His first promise was the land in verse 1. We dealt with the land as a part of Abram's calling to leave his homeland to go to this unknown promised land. While originally undefined and unknown to Abraham, it is specific in God's mind and later revealed to Abraham and to everyone else.

The emphasis on the promised land cannot be overstated. Much of the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and Joshua are devoted to this promise of land. The political and military issues of the Middle East are closely connected to this biblical covenant pertaining to the land.

Genesis 15:18-21

*"On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."*

Consider the significance of this land. This land was unoccupied by Abraham at the birth of the nation of Israel. We might wonder why God didn't make Ur of the Chaldees or Haran the promised land? That way no one would have to leave, and no one would have to run out of where they were living. God has a better plan than the human mind can comprehend.

Consider the disposition of the land throughout biblical history. Israel possessed the land during the time of Joshua's conquest and leadership. Through the Judges, the United Kingdom, and even the Divided Kingdom, the land was occupied by the Hebrews. But then came the Assyrian Captivity, then the Babylonian Captivity, then the Medo-Persian Empire that allowed the return to the land by many Hebrews. The Greek Empire was followed by the Roman Empire. The Medieval and Early Modern Periods saw the land of Israel under various foreign empires, including the Macedonians and the Ottoman Turks. The land was inhabited by Jews and Arabs throughout much of history. In 1948, modern Israel was established in the special place on the planet. It continues and will continue, according to scripture, to be a place of hostile conflict. The land is not just significant as a place promised to Israel by God, but it is also prophesied in scripture that it is the place where Jesus will return and set up His kingdom.

**Discuss the significance of the promised land in biblical, prophetic, and eschatological history (Zechariah 14).**

**In light of Romans 9:6-8 and Romans 11, how should a Jesus follower view unbelieving Jews and the nation of Israel today? These verses state that all Israel is not Israel, yet also affirms the anticipation of Israel coming to faith in Christ. Consider a significant number of Arab believers in Jesus that live in Israel and surrounding areas in your view of Israel today.**

His next promise in this covenant is being a great nation. Each of these following promises are totally out of Abraham's control. He could have possibly worked hard and cleverly to obtain and occupy some land. These others can only be accomplished by the grace and promises of God.

After the promise of a land, the second promise is a numerous population base, a “nation” (gôy). A nation is generally characterized as a political unit with common land, language, and government. This is the most startling promise, for Abram at seventy-five years has no children, and Sarai is “barren” (v. 30). It is God alone who “opens” and “closes” the womb (e.g., 20:18; 29:31; 30:22; 1 Sam 1:5–6; cp. 15:3; 16:2; 17:16; 18:14; 21:1). Abram’s industry could have obtained for himself a land, wealth, and fame, but in the acquisition of children by Sarai he was helpless without God. The couple’s vain attempts at a substitute successor (15:2–3; 16:2) admit their impotence to achieve the promise.

Understanding the age of Abraham and Sara at this point makes having children an impossibility outside divine intervention. God was promising to do the impossible. How can an elderly barren couple become a nation? The promise was not a nation by ideas, but rather a nation by biological multiplication. God was promising to do the impossible. The pain and disappointment of infertility had plagued the marriage of Abram and Sara in the culture of their day. As we see, this promise is met with doubt, and question, and even laughter by Sara in unbelief. But obviously, their weak faith or unbelief was overcome by God’s grace, to where they are both mentioned in the Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith.

While Abram and Sara did not see with their own eyes this great multitude of a nation, they did set the table for future generations to realize God’s promise. You can only imagine the joy one baby brought into their home was enough to serve as a primer for the future nation. This promise along with all the covenants were reiterated to God’s people as a continual reminder of God’s covenant (Genesis 15:5-6, 12-21; 46:3-4.)

**In what ways did God make Israel a great nation? (Consider the Canaanites view of Israel as Joshua led them into the promised land) Consider the numerical multiplication that is highlighted in the Exodus account of Hebrew people.**

God promises to bless Abram’s nation in general with “*I will bless you.*” Abram would ultimately be a man of great wealth. Scripture records how God blessed and prospered Abraham. He follows with more specific blessings.

God promised to “*make your name great.*” Certainly, only God could do this. His name would be great among Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Chapter 11 points to the folly of attempting to have a great name. Chapter 12 points to the acquisition of a great name by divine favor. Abraham would be a nation of kings, priests, and future nations. We understand that Jesus would speak of Abraham. Scripture mentions Abraham around 300 times.

**Discuss how God blessed Israel. How has God blessed you and your family?**

**How great is Abraham’s name? How did it become great?**

The next promise is “*so that you will be a blessing.*” God’s heart has always been for all the nations, not just His nation of Israel. His plan is to bless all the nations through His nation. This ultimate blessing is His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s people are blessed so they can be a blessing. Valiant Warriors understand their place of blessing, opportunity, and favor is for the purpose of being a blessing to others.

The next promise is “*I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse.*” Those who bless the children of Israel will be blessed by God. On the negative side, those who curse the children of Israel will be cursed by God. This blessing and cursing is straight forward. It is noted the first and



second translated words for "curse" in English are two different words in Hebrew. The first word could be translated "to be small, insignificant; to declare insignificant, to ridicule." The second word is the commonly used word for "curse." So, those who take Abram lightly will be cursed by God. Don't take God or His people lightly.

**Understanding the implication of God blessing those who bless Israel, what are some ways that you/we should "bless" Israel?**

**It appears that there is a rise in anti-Semitism today, especially on some college campuses. Why do you think that is so? What is the solution for this?**

The final promise in the covenant is *"and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* The Psalmist captures the intent in Psalm 67 and Psalm 98. The New Testament sees this fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Without question, this is a missionary passage declaring God as a missionary God. Valiant Warriors are committed to reaching "all the families of the earth." The idea of family is the basic building block God established at Creation for the building of His kingdom. A male husband and father, a female wife and mother, and children, is the biblical plan for family and society. Combining families with "all the" and "of the earth" makes this missionary in all means every ethno-linguistic group on the planet. Jesus would say it as *"all the nations."*

**Discuss the ultimate blessing of all the families of the earth through Israel. How will all the families be blessed through Abraham?**

**Summarize the covenant from the promise in Genesis 12: 1-3.**

**Most of us are not Jewish, so we are the recipients of God's blessing through Israel as one of the Gentile "families of the earth." Read Genesis 17. What is the sign of the covenant between Abraham and God? What are the similarities and differences between circumcision and baptism?**

Scripture References:

Formalizing the Covenant | Genesis 15:1-6, 18-21

*"After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.' Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.' Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.' And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."*

*"On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.'"*

## The Sign of the Covenant | Genesis 17

*"Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.' Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. I have made you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.'" God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year." When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him. Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son. All the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him."*

## Confirming the Covenant | Genesis 22:15-18

*"Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'"*



### **Lesson 3: The Cracks in Character** | Genesis 12:4-20; 16; 20:1-18

Abraham answered the call of God. Abraham received a covenant established by God. His life was a life of faith. He went where God told him to go. He became a father at an age where it would be rare, if not physically impossible. God provided Abraham protection from what would be considered his enemies. God blessed him with many possessions. God blessed him with an encounter with Melchizedek, who many of us believe is a pre-incarnate Christophany. Abraham is known as Father Abraham, to Jews, even today. Muslims also claim Abraham as their spiritual father.

All that can be said about Abraham, and all he had experienced, was not enough to isolate him from temptation. Abraham was not only exposed to temptation, he succumbed to temptation. If you have lived long enough and been observant enough, you know many times the mighty have fallen. We sports fans have often seen the declining talent on the field as age overcomes previous talent. But we certainly do not expect to see that spiritually. I don't think it has to happen, but it does happen. It happens more often than we would like to think.

Unfortunately, the temptation to compromise does not subside with age. I recently read that people over 50 years old co-habiting unmarried has gone up four times since 2000. So, older people are compromising morally. Certainly, the pressure to embrace transgenderism and LGBTQ+ agendas has born some fruit, even among the once biblically anchored of multiple generations. Typically, doctrinal compromise is derived out of a moral failure or compromise. People adjust what they believe to match how they want to live.

But there is also a subtle wind of compromise appealing to a softer side of human nature. The appeal is for loving people and being kind. Those concepts find their roots in biblical theology. Deception is at the heart of making people think it is more loving and kind to agree with sinful behavior and reject God's clear biblical teaching. Some people embrace annihilationism or conditionalism out of supposed motive of love and kindness, but at the same time, neglecting or really rejecting the clear teaching of scripture. People selfishly, with improper motive, try to guilt people with the "Love your neighbor command" with them being the all-authority of what that means and how it applies.

Sometimes the previously faithful abandon truth for self-preservation, lack of faith, and taking matters into their own hands. These seem to be the motives behind Abraham's sin. Motives matter, but sometimes our motives are hard to discern. Our actions are often clearer. In these episodes of Abraham's journey, we will see him lie and commit adultery. These two sins were the outward evidence of other sins.

The next few lessons will deal with the cracks in the character of Abraham. While he was a man of faith, his faith was not perfect. His faith was flawed at times. This lesson will consider three episodes in Abraham's life. Two of those episodes are almost identical, just separated by years and miles. Despite the flaws and failures, God's grace and His providence provide hope for all who place their trust in Him.

Despite all of Abraham's encounters with God and faith in following God, his life was far from perfect or easy. Abraham sinned by showing fear instead of faith. Abraham sinned by taking things into his own hands instead of waiting on God's best. But Abraham's sin could not thwart the plan of God for Abraham's life and God's redemptive history.

### **Abraham travels to Canaan. Genesis 12:4-9**

"So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.

After hearing the promise from God in Genesis 12:1-3, *"Abraham went forth as the LORD had spoken to him."* The biblical text points out that *"Lot went with him."* Abraham's father, Terah, had died in Haran. The call of God was for Abraham to leave his land and his family. Hindsight is 20/20, but Lot caused a lot of trouble for Abraham. So, the first crack in Abraham's faith could be bringing Lot along or better said, not obeying God in detail.

Abraham made it to Shechem, which was between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Abraham built an altar, and God spoke to him there and reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham. This location between Ai and Bethel would be a close geographical center of the promised land. It is understood that Abraham wandered all over the promised land while never owning it or possessing it. Verse 9 tells us that Abraham continued his journey toward the Negev. This journey would be south or downward geographically on a map.

The Negev makes up a significant portion of Israel. It is southern Israel. It is a desert like region. It was the passage to Egypt.

### **Abraham descends to Egypt due to a famine. Genesis 12:10**

*"Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land."*

Immediately after traveling to Canaan, after building an altar, and having the covenant with God reaffirmed in Genesis 12:4-8, he went down to Egypt (12:10) to sojourn there. In biblical history, typically going to Egypt was not a good thing. Egypt represents paganism and bondage. For Abraham, Egypt was a place he went due to a famine.

### **Abraham lies about Sarai. Genesis 12:10-13**

*"Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."*

Abraham told Sarai they would tell the Egyptians that Sarai was his sister and not his wife. Sarai was Abraham's half-sister. They had the same father and different mothers. Genesis 20:12 *"Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife;"* While technically, it could be considered true, the reason was to protect Abraham from harm. The important detail was Sarai was Abraham's wife. It's always a bad deal when a man does not want others

to know who his wife is. Since Sarai was a beautiful woman, he was afraid he would be harmed or killed. He clearly stated in verse 13, *"that it may go well with me."* As we are about to see, it did go well for Abraham, but it did not go well for anyone else.

So, Abraham's sin was not trusting God and being overcome by fear. His fear caused him to concoct this story that was self-preserving for him.

### **Abraham's lie leads to him being treated well in Egypt. Genesis 12:14-16**

*"It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels."*

What Abraham thought might happen actually did happen. Verse 16 states that Abraham was treated well and received all kinds of animals and female servants, but the text also states Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house. It was going great for Abraham. It was not so great for Sarai. As we will soon see, it is not so great for Pharaoh either.

### **Abraham is rebuked by a pagan Pharaoh. Genesis 12:17-20**

*"But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 'Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.'" Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him."*

The Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with plagues. The Pharaoh figured out these plagues were the result of Sarai being in his harem. Abraham and Sarai, along with his belongings, were taken away.

Let's debrief what happened in this story.

Abraham told a half-truth, misleading story, out of fear and for self-preservation.

Abraham's lie adversely impacted his wife and even a pagan leader.

Abraham's lie temporarily provided a profitable and comfortable situation for him personally.

Abraham's lie was eventually exposed by a pagan leader.

### **Discuss the four statements above about Abraham.**

**Apply each of these statements to your life today. (Discuss fear, self-preservation, lying, collateral impact of sin, etc.)**

**Can you share any past or current stories that are personal to you, or you have personal knowledge that some of these observations have been lived out?**

### **Abraham listens to Sarai and commits adultery with Hagar. Genesis 16:1-3**

*"Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, 'Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.'" And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai."*

Abraham had experienced the fiasco in Egypt with Pharaoh. He responded honorably and selflessly with Lot. He had met Melchizedek. In Genesis 15, Abraham had believed God and it was counted to him righteousness. But Abraham and Sarai still had not yet had a child. God had promised the son. They had accumulated much wealth, but they did not have any children. I am sure there were the normal and right desires for children. But on top of that, they have this promise from God and this covenant of God with Abraham. They were a long way away from being a nation.

Have you ever thought about helping God out? Sometimes we think there is a fine line between waiting on God and taking a step of faith. If we are not careful, we will justify taking things into our own hands as a step of faith. Some scholars would tell you what Abraham and Sarai did was not outside the customs and practices of that day. A handmaiden or servant could act as a surrogate for her master. We actually see that happening with Jacob, Leah, and Rachel. Under the providential hand of God, some sinful choices are permitted and factor into God's ultimate plan. God has used ungodly pagan nations like Assyrian and Babylon to discipline His own people. God's utilization of these nations is no endorsement of their paganism and did not relieve them from the just punishment due to them.

It appears that a desire for a child and aging out of the childbearing years created an urgency, especially on Sarai's part to help get this nation started. Abraham is obviously not leading his wife. This is not a lesson on why a man should not listen to his wife, but it is a lesson on, after listening, knowing God's Word and having discernment and leadership. Sarai's rationale of helping God out through Hagar is not much different than Abraham's rationale of lying about Sarai being his wife.

Our Valiant Warrior study is about Abraham and not Sarai, while in many ways, Sarai is the villain in this story. She thought it up. She treated Hagar, Abraham, and Ishmael badly after it all came down. Not to mention the conflict between Ishmael and Isaac, Arab and Jew, throughout history. But just think what if Abraham had said no, I'm not going to do that. (I understand the sovereignty of God and redemption history cannot be undone.) God certainly was sovereign over those events. But I do not think Abraham was absolved of his responsibility in this specific event and the collateral implications of that decision.

We certainly do not have time to investigate all the implications of that fateful choice. But we do see Abraham was not acting in faith and was not leading his wife. The scripture warns through examples of those who did not follow the Lord and succumbed to the temptation or bad counsel of women in their life. Eve, Lot's daughters, Potiphar's wife, Delilah, and more had a negative influence on men in the Bible.

Abraham expresses his desire for his son Ishmael (Genesis 17:18). He was 13 when Isaac was born. So, you can imagine what it was like being Abraham's son those first 13 years. He was the apple of Abraham's eye, but he was also the bad apple in Sarai's eye. This was a blended family. After Isaac was born, this was a divided family. I'm sure as you read this, some of you that have a blended family, with step-children and ex-wives, hearts are broken.

When we don't do things God's way, there are consequences. But there is forgiveness at the cross. There is life after sin. The point of this lesson is that Abraham made some big mistakes and we can question his choices. But we also see God did bless him with Isaac. God did bless Ishmael with riches and ancestors. God did bless Abraham with great riches. There was life after sin for Abraham. The consequences of sin lingered in Abraham's life, but life was also good after sin. Both sons were at his death bed when he died.



Let's summarize this section of study.

Abraham should have believed God's promise and covenant, Sarai would bear a son.

Abraham should have known adultery was wrong.

Abraham should have foreseen the consequences of having sex and a son with Hagar.

Abraham should have helped his wife, his two sons, and Hagar before and after this event.

### **Abraham and Sarai repeat this Egyptian fiasco. Genesis 20**

*"Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, 'Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.' Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, 'Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless?' Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. "Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."*

Abraham and Sarai did not deal with the problem of Abraham's fear that led to lying in Chapter 12. He repeats the same thing when he lies to Abimelech in Genesis 20. Fear leads to lying. Sarai evidently was a full participant herself. Verse 5 states, *"Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.'"* The chapter 12 experience might be looked at by understanding Abraham was a new follower of the LORD. He probably practiced the habit of lying in his past pagan practices. He was tested. He failed the test early on in his faith journey.

By chapter 20, Abraham had trusted God in dealing with Lot (Genesis 13), encountered Melchizedek (Genesis 14), been promised a son by God (Genesis 15, 17, 18), made a crucial error with Hagar (Genesis 16), and witnessed the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19). He was experienced with his walk with God. And Sarai was most likely 90 years old. So how does he make the same mistake again?

### **Abraham gives the most ridiculous reply to Abimelech. Genesis 20:8-13**

*"So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, 'What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.' And Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?' Abraham said, 'Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. 'Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'"*

This Father of Faith is, at this moment, the dupe of disaster.

First, Abraham says in essence, since "surely there is no fear of God in this place," then I will fear you and not have faith in God. How hypocritical can you get? You don't fear God, so I can't have faith that God will protect me.



Second, he again justifies his half-truth for self-preservation claiming that she is his half-sister. While that is a fact, the withheld fact Sarai was his wife is the real truth, the whole-truth, and the truth that when revealed healed plagues and infertility.

Third, he rationalizes his plan of half-truth as a strategy when *"God caused me to wander from my father's house."*

Fourth, he abdicated his protective leadership of his wife and used her for his own benefit and self-preservation, while putting her in a position to commit adultery.

**Discuss these four statements above. Apply them to your life and everyday decisions that you and others make.**

**Discuss how and why Abraham could make the same mistake of lying about his wife to protect himself from others.**

**Discuss the temptation of lying. How prevalent is lying today among men? Christian men? Why do men lie?**





## Lesson 4: A “Lot” Happening | Genesis 13; 14:12-16; 19

Abraham had taken his nephew Lot with him to Canaan. Lot’s father had died. Terah, his grandfather and Abraham’s father took Lot to Haran with Abraham and his family. After Terah died, Abraham took his nephew Lot with him to Canaan. It has been mentioned Abraham was called to leave his family along with the land he lived in. Lot was most likely a grown man. So, it would have been possible to leave Lot in Haran without abandoning a youth. Many Bible teachers through the years have contended Abraham did not fully obey God by bringing Lot with him to Canaan. In hindsight, there are many negative consequences associated with Lot.

But there are some reasonable arguments for taking Lot with him. Details of where to draw the line on your kindred are not specific. Abraham took some of his family including Sarai with him. Since Lot’s father and grandfather had died, Abraham served as a father figure to Lot. There is no explicit condemnation of Abraham in scripture for bringing Lot with him. At the very least, Lot was a controversial person that Abraham had to deal with repeatedly.

Warren Weirsbe in his Bible Study *Be Obedient* outlines Genesis 14 with:

Abraham: The Watcher

Abraham: The Warrior

Abraham: The Worshiper

In Genesis 13, I would call, in the spirit of Wiersbe’s alliteration, Abraham: The Way-Maker.

Despite Abraham’s lying about Sarai being his wife, God blessed Abraham materially.

Genesis 13:1-4

*“So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.”*

Abraham returned to where it all began in Canaan. He returned to the place of the altar and called upon God. God was blessing Abraham. God blessed Abraham in his dealings with his nephew Lot.

### **Abraham was a way-maker helping his nephew in business growth. Genesis 13:5-13**

After settling in Canaan, Lot and Abraham began their ranching business. Abraham was a very successful businessman and rancher. The flocks grew. Lot had his own ranching operation. Scripture says that a conflict arose among the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham. Abraham offered to settle the conflict by allowing Lot to choose what land he wanted.

Genesis 13:5-9

*“Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. “Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.”*

Abraham was very generous towards Lot allowing him to select the land that he wanted. Abraham was the older uncle. I'm sure anything Lot had was because Abraham gave it to him or helped him manage and grow flocks he may have inherited from his father. It would be like a corporation wanting to expand and the CEO lets a manager decide where he wants his territory to be, and the CEO will work whatever the manager doesn't choose. The dynamic would be like a younger staff person taking over the leadership of the one who trained him. It gets to the point of giving someone else an opportunity that will cost you something. Abraham was more than fair and generous to his nephew in these business dealings. Abraham had every right as the senior managing partner to select his choice of land first, but he didn't.

Abraham demonstrates faith that God will take care of him and his family. Abraham chose against greed and controlling everything. He demonstrated generosity and love toward his family member Lot. This is a different picture than the man scheming and lying about his wife to save his own neck in the previous chapter of Genesis.

Lot chose what he thought was the better property. It actually would not be the better property, but he certainly thought it was. If you go to Israel today, you can see the fertile Jordan Valley and Jezreel Valley in central and northern Israel. This southern and eastern region selected by Lot is adjacent to the Dead Sea. It is a desert land, but more important, this was the area of Sodom and Gomorrah. The real estate brokers say its Location, Location, Location. It was not a good neighborhood to raise a family.

Genesis 13:10-13

*"Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord."*

Lot was attracted to the garden-like land, but he was distracted from the wicked people who lived there. Lot's family would be crushed by the immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Abraham would be blessed with the land west of their location.

Genesis 13:14-18

*"The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, 'Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. 'I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. 'Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.'" Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord."*

**Discuss the importance of mentoring others in business and vocational skills.**

**Brainstorm on some ways you can invest in other (younger) men helping them spiritually, vocationally, and with their families.**

**What are some admirable qualities Abraham demonstrated in his dealing with Lot?**

**How should Lot consider the neighborhood he was moving his family into? What are some key factors a Valiant Warrior should consider before moving his family?**

**Abraham was a Valiant Warrior rescuing Lot. Genesis 14:12-16**

It was not long until Lot was caught up in a turf war of the region. He had made Sodom his home, so when Sodom was attacked, Lot was kidnapped and taken into captivity. Abraham was made aware of Lot's plight, and he immediately gathered his trained men to rescue Lot. His rescue was successful, Lot was returned along with his family and materials that had been taken.

Genesis 14:12-16

*"They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom. Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people."*

**Discuss the tension of when to take the approach of you made your bed so lie in it versus rescuing someone.**

**Consider how Abraham had given Lot the choice of where to live and how that impacted what was happening to him.**

**Could Abraham have provided better guidance and mentoring for Lot? We don't have the benefit of all the conversations that may have taken place but speculate about what may have been said or could have been said to help apply mentoring, helping, and rescuing people in your family, church, and workplace.**

**Abraham was a valiant worshiper as blessed of God Most High. Genesis 14:17-20**

After returning from war, Abraham had an encounter with a Priest King named Melchizedek. The text tells us that Melchizedek was the king of Salem. He was also a priest of God Most High. He brought bread and wine, he blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:17-24

*"Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' He gave him a tenth of all. The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.' Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.' 'I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.'"*

The author of Hebrews gives us more insight to Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1-4

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually. Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.

The identity of Melchizedek has been an interesting topic of discussion for many people. Many of us believe that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate Christophany. The text tells us that he did not have a beginning. His name means King of Righteousness, he is also the King of Salem or peace, he’s a priest. He brought bread and wine to Abraham, and Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek. All these things point to Melchizedek being Jesus.

Much more could be said about this encounter from Melchizedek. One of the basic things we need to grasp is God continued to reach out to and work in Abraham’s life. Abraham’s detours and flawed faith was always met with another encounter with the living Lord.

### **Who do you think Melchizedek is? Why?**

**Discuss the continued work of God in Abraham’s life despite his sin. Consider the altars, the Melchizedek experience, the interruptions from God and how that impacts/is important in Abraham’s faith journey. How does God intervene in your faith journey?**

Sodom is closely connected to Lot. Lot is closely connected to Abraham. The sin and destruction of Sodom was contemporary with and just around the corner of Abraham. Time does not permit us from taking a deep dive into the Sodom story. But we will touch on it, and you can study it more in depth or discuss it as you have time.

### **Lot chose Sodom as a place to settle. Genesis 13:10-13**

*“Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.”*

It is also noteworthy that Lot separated from Abraham, this fact of separation is mentioned in verses 11 and 14. Lot settled and moved his tents to Sodom. The idea is more than doing business there, this became home for Lot.

The men of Sodom were wicked.

**Consider the impact of separating from Abraham and settling in a city filled with wicked men had on Lot. How could this impact you and your family? Consider leaving good relationships and a good church to go somewhere for more money, more prestige, and more independence.**

Cities are often known for certain things. St. Louis is known for the Cardinals, and the Arch. Kansas City is known for the Chiefs and Barbeque. New Orleans is known for seafood and the Saints. Sodom was renowned for its sin, specifically homosexuality, the term sodomy comes from this city.

At the end of Genesis 18, God and Abraham have an interchange about God destroying Sodom. Abraham asks God if He will destroy the city if there are 50 righteous men in the city. God said He would not destroy the city if there were 50 righteous in the city. Abraham continued with a countdown of 45 then 40 then 30 then 20 then 10 righteous people. Genesis 18 ends abruptly and Genesis 19 brings the judgment on Sodom.

Genesis 19 is a sickening and sad chapter in the Bible highlighting the wickedness of sin. Two angels visit Lot in Sodom. At nightfall, the men of the city surround Lot's house and demand for the two guests to come out so the men of the city might have homosexual relations with them. Lot refuses but, of all things, offers his daughters instead. No decent human being could imagine what would cause a father to offer his daughters to such a crowd.

Genesis 19:4-8

*"Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.' But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, 'Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. 'Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof.'"*

Lot was more righteous than the reprobate men in Sodom, but he was not a righteous man. Lot had become so accustomed to the vile sin of Sodom that he was okay living and raising his family there. He was even willing to offer his daughters up to this wicked mob. He had some degree of concern for his guests but no concern for his family. The capacity of men to do evil things is highlighted here. Before we jump on Lot too much, how many men have been model men at work for their company and career, but been unfaithful to their wife? Men, more often, look down on a guy who is a slacker at work than a guy who is unfaithful to his wife.

Sin is a big problem. Sexual sin is a big problem for many men, it shears the conscience. It makes what was once the unthinkable the doable.

We are living in Genesis 19 and Romans 1 today.

It is important we do not miss the compassion of God in this story.

First, God sent angels to Lot's house.

Second, the angels blinded the wicked seeking to assault Lot's house.

Third, the angels pleaded for Lot and his family to flee Sodom.

Fourth, the angels took the hand of Lot and his immediate family to cause them to leave.

Genesis 19:16

*"But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city."*



Fifth, ultimately, God made a way of escape from Sodom for Lot and his family despite all the things Lot had done wrong.

**Discuss the five statements above in considering God's pursuit of Lot.**

**Discuss how God pursues the lost and sinful.**

Despite all God was doing, Lot continued to be a knucklehead. He was slow in leaving Sodom, he asked about going to a small village, instead of the mountains, as the angels originally instructed.

Genesis 19:17-20

*"When they had brought them outside, one said, 'Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away.' But Lot said to them, 'Oh no, my lords! 'Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die; now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved.'"*

Lot just did not get it, some men just don't. Lot had made colossal decision mistakes, and these were the consequences of his choices. The stench and filth and pull of Sodom still had an influence on him. He was better than the bums that knocked on his door, but he was far from righteous and clear headed about the things of God. But we continue to see the glimpses of God's grace in going to Lot, blinding the wicked, grabbing his hand leading him out of the city, and even allowing him to stop at a village instead of heading to the mountains.

**Discuss how to prevent making the same mistakes over and over again.**

**Discuss the long-term impact of sin's influence on how a person thinks and what a person does.**

**How do you avoid an entitlement attitude while seeking help from those who are more spiritual mature?**

Genesis 19:24-26

*"Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."*

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Do not believe revisionist biblical history, God destroyed them for the wicked sin of homosexuality that was prevalent and normative of that day. God had destroyed everyone but Noah's family when wickedness had gotten to a certain tipping point. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, some have succumbed to the pressure of culture in their hermeneutics (method of interpretation). You can find some who say the sin was pride or lack of hospitality or violent hospitality as the reason for destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. You have to remember God told Abraham in Genesis 18 He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah long before the two angels visited Lot in Genesis 19. Jude 17 again clarifies what has been universally embraced by Bible-believing Christ followers throughout church history, that is, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah primarily for the rampant, openly advocated sin of homosexuality. It is so widely accepted that most everyone understands a Sodomite is a

homosexual. To sodomize someone is to carry out a homosexual act I will not describe here.

**Discuss the settled judgment of God against sin. Consider when God executes clear judgment and why He doesn't immediately, all the time.**

**What are the lessons of Sodom, before, and after judgment?**

Abraham's prayer and concern did have an impact on the situation. He could not reverse the judgment on this sin. The Bible said God remembered Abraham. God, therefore, sent Lot out of the cities before they were destroyed.

Genesis 19:29

*"Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived."*

**Consider how God has blessed you because of the faithfulness of someone else. (It could be your parents or family or your teacher.) Lot was blessed because of his relationship with Abraham.**

Unfortunately, the consequences of Lot's decision to settle in Sodom had ongoing implications on him and his family. As Lot got older, his daughters did not have husbands nor children. So, they concocted a scheme to get Lot drunk and have sex with their father, in order to have children. They carried out their plan and both of Lot's daughters conceived by their father. The nations of Moab and Ammon were birthed through this incestuous relationship.

Genesis 19:36

*"Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. 3As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day."*

Lot had no regard for the impact of Sodom on him and his family. At the end of his life, he experienced the impact of Sodom on his daughters. Those who live around and condone an unnatural sexual relationship like homosexuality have no great issue with an incestuous relationship. Sin begets more sin which leads to depraved and reprobate mind where God eventually gives people up and over to unbridled wickedness.

Abraham was not sheltered from sin and hardship, he was greatly blessed by God in many ways. But he still did not have any children. His nephew who he probably considered like a son made repeated bad mistakes. The consequences of sin haunted Lot to the end of his life.

**Discuss how you can live and thrive when your family, your job, or other circumstances around you are not good.**



## Lesson 5: It's No Laughing Matter, or Is it? | Genesis 21

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

*"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—**A time to give birth** and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to weep **and a time to laugh**; a time to mourn and a time to dance."*

This well-known statement by Solomon frames the arrival of Isaac, the answer to Abraham and Sarai's prayer, and the hope for a nation to be born. The term "laugh" is used in Abraham's story on a few different occasions.

Abraham laughed in disbelief when God told him Sarah would bear a son at 90 years old. This is also where God tells Abraham to name the boy Isaac which means laughter (Genesis 17:15-17.)

Sarah laughed in doubt to herself when the heavenly guests said she would have a child within a year. When the Lord confronted her, she denied laughing at what she had overheard. The Lord clearly states she did indeed laugh in doubt (Genesis 18:9-15.)

Sarah would laugh in joy when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:1-7.)

Ishmael laughed at Isaac. Sarah saw this laughing as mocking Isaac, she then demanded Abraham send Ishmael and Hagar away.

Laughter is depicted in Abraham's story as disbelief, doubt, joy, and mocking. Isaac's name means "laughter." So, when the subject of Isaac is brought up, it's right to think of laughter. But what kind of laughter are we talking about? All kinds of laughter are in view when it comes to Abraham.

### The Laugher of Unbelief

Let's consider the laughter of unbelief by Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis 17:15-23

*"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 'I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'" Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' And Abraham said to God, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before You!' But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 'As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 'But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.'" When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him."*

Abraham laughed in disbelief when God told him that his 90-year-old wife was going to have a baby (17). The father of our faith did not have faith God would or could cause his wife to have a baby. At

this point in the story, we know Abraham and Sarah had taken matters into their own hands to ensure Abraham had an heir. As a point of reference to the future family dynamics, consider Abraham's request in verse 18 and God's response to his request in verses 19-21.

Ishmael was Abraham's son. His love and request for Ishmael was understandable. Ishmael was there in the flesh, Isaac was a promise not yet realized. Ishmael was a present reality, and Isaac was a promised impossibility. Abraham had moved on in his heart and mind with Ishmael. He had waited for 25 years, he had transferred his hope to this boy. His laughter reflects lost hope and faith.

**Abraham had faith in Sarah's persuasion and his adultery over God's promise.** Abraham was neglecting the root cause of this situation which caused him to justify his and Sarah's past lack of faith.

**Abraham had transferred his hope to what he had done as a replacement for God's plan.** I think many people approach some decisions with the idea that I will get forgiveness instead of permission. Instead of waiting on God, people often just do what they want to do, presuming on the forgiveness of God. While God is forgiving to the repentant, to think there is no ongoing consequences to pre-meditated disobedience, banking on a future forgiveness, while committing known disobedience is presumptuous, arrogant, and misguided by self-deception.

**Abraham misinterpreted and misunderstood the birth of Ishmael as a replacement for God's plan.** Many people misinterpret temporal momentary circumstantial prosperity for the blessing and affirmation of God. Abraham continued to be financially wealthy during what was becoming a family drama nightmare. I have seen men leave their wife and kids for their adulteress, blinded to glaring consequences upon their family, friends, church, and themselves. Abraham's reaction and request indicate he had moved on to building a life with Ishmael as the promise from God, rejecting or neglecting the repeated promise of God.

**Discuss the three statements above. Consider how these statements apply to circumstances in your life today (i.e. the temptation to justify our past sin and assume there are no lingering consequences and a replacement theology of replacing God's best plan with your messed up and sinful, selfish plan).**

Sarah also laughed considering God's promise that she would have a baby at 90-years-old.

Genesis 18:9-15

*"Then they said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' He said, 'I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' And the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' 'Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.' Sarah denied it however, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"*

It should be no surprise to find Sarah laughing at the prospect of having a baby at her age. Her entire 90-year life she had never experienced that. She did not know what it was like. She had longed for a child for decades, it had been 25 years since God had promised her a child. I'm sure she and Abraham thought for their own mental health they needed to put this hope and dream to rest. As time passes and we get

older, some ships have just sailed. Most of us in this Valiant Warrior study are not going to be professional football players. The talent was never there, but now the window of age has also closed.

I am sure Abraham and Sarah had talked often about having a child and the promise of God to give them a child. Abraham's disbelief expressed in laughter in chapter 17 must have found a sounding board in Sarah. Abraham and Sarah are painted in Hebrews as people of faith. But, at this moment in time, they were not people of faith. Their mutual lack of faith fueled each other's unbelief. You would like to see one of them walking in faith and encouraging the other to trust the Lord and believe in His promises.

**Consider how you can help your wife walk in faith. In some matters, it may be easier for you to walk in faith and trust God than your wife. In other matters, it may be easier for your wife to walk in faith than you. Discuss some of these areas where a husband and wife, or friends, if you are not married, can help build the faith of another.**

### **The Laughter of Joy**

The covenant God made with Abraham was about land and about becoming a nation. God made this promise to Abraham at the age of 75. Without question, the more impossible of the two would be him having a son at that age and Sarah's age. Any kind of delay would diminish the chances of conceiving a child.

The delay occurred probably for there to be no doubt it was a miracle of God. The 25-year delay created a lot of anxiety. Abraham and Sarai did not wait patiently in faith on God's timing. They took matters into their own hands, they involved others. Their human intervention would cause significant consequences for them and others for years to come.

Then, Isaac was born. At that moment, God's promise had become sight. Hope had been realized.

Genesis 21:1-8

*"Then the Lord took note of Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. **Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."** And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned."*

Years of infertility and lost hope changed, it was a miracle, it was a promise answered. God had made laughter for Sarah (vs. 6) and everyone who heard. It brought personal joy to Sarah and Abraham. Many of you know Lisa and I experienced infertility for eight years before adopting our oldest son. Then, we adopted our second son a couple of years later. Then, after 17 years of marriage, Lisa became pregnant with our third son. Two years later came the fourth son. During those years of infertility with no children, every baby shower for our friends and siblings were also reminders we did not have children. I feel sure this was much more difficult for my wife than me, for obvious reasons. So, the joy was also great for the mother of the child.

**Discuss the joy and wonder of the birth of your children or grandchildren. If you went through infertility, discuss the emotions and what you were thinking and feeling when a child is born.**

Recognize that a story like this is still a reminder to those who are still experiencing infertility.

### **The Laughter of Mockery**

After the joyous occasion of Isaac's birth, the proud father Abraham had a big party to celebrate the birth. It was at this large family gathering that all you-know-what broke loose. It's funny (not really) how often family gatherings are the occasion for blow ups as much as blow outs. From my own personal life and pastoral life, weddings, funerals, and family reunions are often opportunities for the hurts and unresolved issues of years past to be brought up in person.

This is exactly what happened with the family gathering. Sarah noticed that Ishmael was "mocking" (NASB) in verse 9. The word used is the same word for laughter. Some have speculated Ishmael may have just been laughing on this joyous occasion, but Sarah took it as making fun of the occasion or Isaac. Obviously, many Bible translators use the word as Sarah saw it. Without question, Sarah believed Ishmael was mocking her son based on her demands of Abraham.

Under ideal circumstances, a new baby into a family can cause some challenges. New babies typically get most of the attention. At the very least, parents cannot devote as much time and attention, as before, with the addition of another child. The high need level of a newborn to toddler demands more attention. Jealousy is a normal and natural result of the new baby. If there is another baby around, they suddenly are not being held as much as before the arrival of the new baby. I think you get the picture.

When you throw in the dynamic that Ishmael was Sarah's stepson with his mother still living in the home with Sarah and Abraham, it is understandable there would be tension in the home. Throughout the biblical text, Sarah has been portrayed as the one who concocted this plan for Hagar to sleep with her husband and have a child. As soon as Ishmael was born, Sarah despised Hagar and her son. Now, Sarah has her own son. As you can imagine, a 93-year-old mother of her only toddler child is going to be sensitive to a 13-year-old stepson laughing at her baby.

Abraham was caught in the middle. He loved Ishmael, he loved Isaac, he loved Sarah. He had to have had empathy for Hagar's situation. His previous decision to father Ishmael through Hagar was creating painful consequences for his family, immediately and historically. This event was just a microcosm of centuries of rivalry between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, the children of Sarah and Hagar. You talk about consequences of a choice made!

Genesis 21:8-14

*"The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. **Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.** Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. "And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant." So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba."*

Our study is about Abraham. Abraham could have done a lot of things differently along the way. Obviously, the original choice was what created all the issues. But Abraham could have provided some leadership along the way to make the immediate family dynamics better. Ishmael was not going to be the child of the covenant and blessing. Abraham possibly could have helped his wife Sarah by communicating his love and support for her, while explaining his love for Ishmael. Abraham could have led his wife to treat Hagar with respect and kindness. He could have created a different day-to-day interaction between the two by letting Hagar be someone else's handmaiden. Abraham could have provided a better solution than just sending his son and his mother off with some bread and a skin of water. The way Abraham treated Ishmael at this point had to contribute to the animosity between Isaac and Ishmael that lives on today.

**Remind yourself and discuss the consequences of past sin.**

**Discuss how Abraham could have handled this situation with Sarah, Ishmael, and Hagar in a better way.**

**Discuss the challenges of blended families. Discuss the issues that should be anticipated when children that have different parents are required to live together.**

**Discuss the key to living in harmony and having joy when the situation is less than ideal.**

**Discuss how to have hope in the future when it seems like your life is a mess right now.**

**Discuss the challenges of letting go and trusting God with your children and your family. Consider when to lead and when to let go. Consider when leading can be letting go. How do you let go and launch in a way that honors God?**

**Discuss the plight of the single mother and being raised by a single mother (Hagar and Ishmael). Consider Ishmael's challenging life. While Ishmael was not the son of the covenant, consider how the seed of Isaac would come to save the descendants of Ishmael.**





## Lesson 6: Finishing Well | A Lamb, A Bride, and A Blessed Life

As we conclude our Valiant Warrior study on “Abraham: A Man of Faith,” we look back briefly on the first five lessons. The first two lessons deal with what God did in the call and covenant with Abraham. It was entirely a work of grace on God’s part. Abraham did nothing to deserve being chosen to be the father of a nation, much less, the father of God’s people. The next three lessons show glimpses of faith and obedience on Abraham’s part, but for the most part, we discussed the flaws of Abraham’s faith. He lied about Sarah being his wife. His nephew Lot selected Sodom for a home. Abraham followed his wife into sin with Hagar, producing his son Ishmael who would rival his promised son Isaac, to this very day. He seemed to not handle sending away Hagar and Ishmael in an honorable way, further contributing to the animosity between Isaac and Ishmael, Sarah and Hagar.

After Genesis 21, the biblical text portrays a much more positive picture of Abraham. As we consider Abraham finishing well in these last chapters dealing with his life in Genesis, we must look back to the key event in Abraham’s life pertaining to his faith. God’s initiating grace in calling and establishing a covenant with Abraham was the key moment. Without God’s initiative, none of us, including Abraham, would ever look God’s way and turn to Him.

But there is a faith response required. Faith is always the step a person takes to enter a relationship with God. The same was true in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and today. People have always been saved by faith. Abraham lived before the Law was given. So, Abraham did not obey the Law to go to Heaven. How did Abraham go to Heaven? He believed God.

Genesis 15:6

*“Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”*

This passage is cited in Romans 4:23, Galatians 3:6, and James 2:23. The idea Abraham believed God is faith. The result of that faith was counted, or reckoned unto Abraham, as righteousness. This verse is a foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith. Justification is the judicial act of God declaring someone righteous, the righteous person is right before God. Only those who are right before God go to Heaven and have a relationship with God.

So, the two elements of salvation mentioned in this verse are faith and righteousness. The person in this verse, being Abraham, must believe or have faith in the Lord. He believed what God said, he believed the promise of God to him. What God told Abraham in Genesis was not a fully developed theology of God sending His Son, the second Person of the Godhead being fully God, into the world taking on human flesh being fully Man, to live sinlessly, to die vicariously for our sins, and be raised from the dead for our justification (Romans 4:25.) But it was what God was pointing ahead toward. While not stated in detail, this is what God intended. So, Abraham believed God, or had faith in God, and what He said.

Ephesians 2:8-9

*“For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, lest any man should boast.”*

John 3:16

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.”*

John 14:1

*"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe God, believe also in Me."*

John 14:6

*"Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me.'"*

The Bible clearly teaches we are saved by faith in Jesus during the Old Testament days, the New Testament days, and today.

Salvation is provided to the righteous. No one is righteous except Jesus Christ. So, when a person believes in Jesus Christ, God counts that believer as righteous by giving that person the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus obtained the right to bestow His righteousness on lost sinners by dying on the cross in their place. We call this substitutionary atonement. Jesus took our place on the cross and paid for our sins, so He could give us His righteousness.

1 Peter 3:18

*"For Christ also has once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God."*

2 Corinthians 5:21

*"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Abraham, because of his faith relationship with God resulting in God declaring him righteous, although he had a flawed obedience at the time, was a forever child of God. His sins did not kick him out of the family of God. As we have studied, his sin did have ongoing consequences for his family, and even today, considering the Jew and Arab conflict. But, Abraham's faith resulting in a righteous relationship with God kept him in God's hand and caused him to grow in his faith and obedience to God. Just as a new born must learn to walk and talk, newborn followers of Jesus must learn to walk and talk in their new life in Jesus Christ.

**Have one or two people share testimonies of how they came to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Point out grace, faith, and righteousness given that is not earned or deserved. Discuss the security a believer in Jesus has and how we see that in Abraham. Note Abraham was counted as righteous in Genesis 15 before the Hagar incident of Genesis 16.**

### **God Provided a Lamb | Genesis 22**

Warren Wierbe in his book about Abraham, *Be Obedient: Learning the Secret of Living by Faith*, mentioned Abraham was in the school of faith-taking tests. He passed the family test in Gen. 12, failed the famine test by going down to Egypt, passed the fellowship test with Lot in Gen. 13, passed the fight test and fortune test in Gen. 14, failed the fatherhood test with Ishmael in Gen. 16, passed the farewell test sending Ishmael away in Gen. 21, and now comes the final test. God gives tests to grow us and help us to trust Him, expect God to test you.

I think it is best to focus on what we do know. God had a plan, and He was not making it up as the story unfolded. Abraham did not know the details of God's plan. This plan was a test for Abraham. Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham (Genesis 22:1.)

Abraham failed several faith tests in his life as we have discussed. But, Abraham passed the greatest faith test he would ever have. The record of this story is found in Genesis 22. It is included for your easy reference at the end of this section. We don't have time to discuss it in detail. In summary, God told Abraham to take his son, Isaac who was probably about 14 years old, up on Mt. Moriah to offer *"your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."*

I must confess there is a lot I do not understand about this command. We can speculate about why God did this. I think it is alright to think about what might be going on in someone's mind. I have never been a person who feels compelled to have to know why God did something. But, I know everyone is not like me, so there has been a lot of speculation of why God was asking Abraham to be willing to sacrifice his son.

We know anything we love more than God is an idol and idolatry is condemned in scripture.

We know we must hold our children loosely. We only have them for a short period of time. Typically, a healthy child will grow up, move out, and move on. Hopefully, the parents are still in the picture, but the role is certainly different. Sometimes this fallen world we live in has a death sentence result in a child being taken in death prior to the parent. This is an excruciating and heart-wrenching experience, and it does happen. There are also the tearing away of children through divorce and other circumstances.

We know as Christ followers we can look beyond the here-and-now, and hope into a future that is eternal and free from the pain of sin this world brings.

We also notice Abraham, who once squirmed and lied about his wife to preserve his own hide, is different now. He obeys God, he trusts God, he confesses to Isaac the Lord will provide a lamb. This is where we get the title of God, Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide. His faith is demonstrated because at this point, there was no lamb in the thicket, just his son on the mountain trail.

Genesis 22:5-6

*"Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.' Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together."*

*"We will worship and return to you."* First, they went to worship. Abraham had learned the secret of worship, he had learned the priority of worship. Worship is more important than service, missions, and ministry. As John Piper stated years ago, *"Missions exists because worship doesn't. Missions is not priority. Worship is."* Second, Abraham says *"we will return to you."* He did not say we may return to you, he did not say one of us will return to you. The future tense speaks of certainty. Abraham must have known God would do some kind of miracle. He knew the promise of an heir and a nation. He knew Isaac was the child of promise, not Ishmael. He had to know Isaac would live. He may have been trusting in a resurrection, he may have been trusting in a substitute. Jesus fulfills both of those as the resurrection and the life, and the substitute on the cross. God provided a substitute ram to take Isaac's place. Later, God would provide a substitute Lamb to take my place.

It is also notable Isaac is willingly going on the journey. He knows they are not taking an animal for sacrifice with them, he even mentions it. Isaac is bound and finds himself on the altar. A 114-year-old father climbing up a mountain is no match for an uncooperative 14-year-old son, when it comes to holding him down, tying him up, and putting him on an altar. The only way Isaac is on that altar is he

climbed up on the altar himself at the instruction of his aging father. We could speculate a lot about the relationship between Isaac and Abraham, along with Isaac's demeanor, respect, and trust regarding his father.

So, the text commends Abraham's willingness to offer his son. It testifies Abraham was willing to not withhold anything, including his son, from the Lord. Abraham had grown to understand serving, obeying, and believing the Lord was the most important thing.

Abraham, after the Lord provided the ram, stated again, *"The Lord will provide."* The Lord will provide the sacrifice. Certainly, the Lord provided His own Son as the sacrifice. You cannot miss the pointing ahead to God sacrificing His Son on the cross for our sins. The entire sacrificial system, that had not been given to Moses, would look ahead to the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world, the Lamb that sits on the throne in heaven.

Remember Jesus said Abraham rejoiced to see My day (John 8:56.) I have to believe on Mt. Moriah was where Abraham saw Jesus' day and was glad. Abraham's faith journey had become mature, he trusted the Lord completely.

Valiant Warriors focus on the promises of God instead of looking for explanations. God was doing so much more than Abraham could have comprehended. He was declaring Himself Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides. He was pointing ahead to another Lamb who would come and take away the sins of the world. He was also looking beyond to the Lamb who will be on throne. At this point, Abraham does not seek an explanation. He simply obeys the Word of the Lord.

Unlike the Hagar and Ishmael event, Abraham was looking for God to provide. As mentioned earlier, much speculation has been made about whether Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead or provide a substitute lamb. The point for us is Abraham simply obeyed, believing and trusting in the goodness and faithfulness of God. He knew all God had promised concerning a son and a nation. He obeyed God to bring glory to God.

God knew in eternity past He was going to provide a lamb in the thicket for Abraham to sacrifice. Abraham obeyed God every step of the way and received the blessing from the Lord. This man who had a flawed and faulty faith is known as the primary example of faith among biblical heroes. His worst day did not define him, his best day defined him, his future day defines him.

**Discuss your biggest take aways from Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice.**

**Consider Abraham's thoughts, faith, and actions (Genesis 22:5.)**

**Consider Isaac's thoughts, faith, and actions.**

**Consider what God was accomplishing in this event.**

**Discuss how to balance the gift of children and not making children an idol.**

**How do you properly hold your children? Discuss the problem of living through your children.**

**Discuss the biblical balance of your marriage, your children, and your Lord.**

## Genesis 22

*"Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided." Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba. Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram and Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel. Bethuel became the father of Rebekah; these eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah."*

## God Provided a Bride | Genesis 24

### Genesis 24:1-4

*"Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. 2Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*

### Genesis 24:1

*"The LORD had blessed Abraham in every way."*

It was in Abraham's old age, it was said God blessed Abraham in every way. God had blessed Abraham with wealth early. He blessed Abraham with a visit from Melchizedek after rescuing Lot (Genesis 14.).

God's way is as the old song goes, "The longer I serve Him the sweeter He grows."

The Longer I Serve Him  
by William J. (Bill) Gaither

Since I started for the Kingdom,  
Since my life He controls,  
Since I gave my heart to Jesus,  
The longer I serve Him,  
The sweeter He grows.

The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows,  
The more that I love Him, more love He bestows;  
Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

Ev'ry need He is supplying,  
Plenteous grace He bestows;  
Ev'ry day my way gets brighter,  
The longer I serve Him,  
The sweeter He grows.

The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows,  
The more that I love Him, more love He bestows;  
Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows

Abraham, like Job, experienced a blessed life in advanced years. This is certainly a blessing of God. I have seen people who fought spiritual battles for their family through the years and get to experience the blessed life at the end of their years. They have defeated bitterness, vengeance, and depression with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and hope...Jesus has become their hope.

God also blessed Abraham's efforts and desire to provide a bride for his son Isaac. He sent his oldest servant back to his homeland to select a bride from among his people. In that day and place like many today, marriages were arranged by the parents. While that is not our custom where we live today, there are many admirable things we can learn from this practice.

One major thing is the involvement of the parents. In this case, it appears it is all on Abraham and his servant. But, it was primarily Abraham's process, criteria, and faith that would select the bride for Isaac. He did not want Isaac marrying a Canaanite. It should be pointed out it was the worship of false gods that caused him to go back to his homeland. (Remember Rahab the Canaanite harlot and Ruth the Moabite were in the line of David and Jesus)

In most cases, parents have the best interest of their adult children at heart. Parents also have years of experience in life, marriage, decision making and more. Parental wisdom should not be quickly dismissed. God often uses parents to provide guidance and protection for children. God can even work through parents who are not believers.

Another part of this story is faith. Faith is demonstrated by Abraham, it is passed down to his servant. Their faith story and journey impacts Rebekah, and Laban, and eventually Isaac.

Another note of this story is sovereignty. God, in His sovereignty, was building a lineage for the coming of His Son into the world by way of a Jewish and royal line. He would orchestrate history, and marriages, and kingdoms to accomplish His plan of redemption. This was much more than a simple matchmaking story. It was under the providential hand of God. God is always doing more than we can see, and understand, and imagine (Ephesians 3:20.)

**Discuss what you would consider a blessed life in older age.**

**Discuss the importance of selecting the right spouse. For younger single men, how do you want or see your parents' involvement in selecting your marriage partner?**

**For parents, how do you see your role in selecting a marriage partner for your children? How do you go about introducing the idea or process to your children? (the earlier you start anything like this, the better)**

### **God Provided a Blessed Life | Genesis 25**

God blessed Abraham at the end of his life. He died old, satisfied, gathered to his people with both sons at his burial.

Genesis 25:7-11

*"These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife."*

Abraham lived to a ripe old age, he was an old man. This was not a derogatory statement, it was a declaration of success, and completion, and blessing. He was satisfied with life. In this world of dissatisfaction, this is an amazing statement.

**How would you describe a life you would be satisfied with?**

I think the ultimate sign of Abraham's blessed life is his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him with Sarah. I would hope there was some expression of togetherness before Abraham died. I think that might be the crowning mark of Abraham's satisfied-with-life, life. Having your sons together by your side. Especially considering the way Abraham sent Ishmael off, the fact he came back is incredible. You would like to think through the years Abraham reached out to Ishmael, maybe after Sarah's death? For Ishmael to show up at the funeral also speaks of the hospitality of Isaac. We know the unity and hospitality between Isaac and Ishmael was short-lived. But thank the Lord for special moments. It says a lot about Ishmael, that he was willing to pay homage to a father who loved him greatly, and displayed it for the first 13 years of his life, only to be sent away after his brother's 3-year-old birthday party.

**Consider how family brings out the best and worst in people.**



Charles Swindoll in his book, *Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith* concludes with four instructions.

Wherever God leads, follow.  
Whatever God promises, believe.  
Whenever God tests, trust.  
However God blesses, share.

I hope you enjoyed and grew spiritually in your study of Abraham. He was a man of flawed faith. But, at one point, he believed God, and it was counted unto him righteousness. His faith commitment secured righteousness and God's security in his relationship with God. He lived much of his life hoping for a land he never possessed, waiting on a son that was 25 years in the coming, and living with the consequences of the biggest mistake of his life. But Abraham died at an old age, satisfied with life, with his two sons at his side. So goes a man of faith.

### **Share your biggest takeaways from this study of Abraham.**

Hebrews 11:8-19

*"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."*



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**SEMESTER THIRTEEN**

ABRAHAM: A MAN OF FAITH