

### ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

There's an old song entitled, "What a Difference a Day Makes." Have you ever experienced times when those words proved true in your life, when the happenings or choices of one moment seemed to change everything? As we open our study of Abraham, who became a true giant of faith, we'll see how that golden oldie could well have been his theme song! In this lesson we'll take a look at a time when one day's event -- and his response -- not only changed Abraham's life forever, but also has made a difference that reaches all the way to us today.

Review your memory verse: Hebrews 11:1.

Read Hebrews 11:8-10

1. Abraham decided to take a trip -- which, though much more difficult than in today's world, was still possible and somewhat common. But what was it about Abraham's journey that made it unique, no matter what the century? (verse 8)
2. To begin to discover the "story behind the story," tell what background information you find in these passages concerning Abram (God later renames him "Abraham").

Genesis 10:1, 31, 11:10, 26-30 (Note that Bible genealogies are often not intended to be complete. Also, "Haran" is the name of a man and of a town as well.)

Joshua 24:2

3. As you read through the following verses, see if you can sort out the order of the basic events in Abram's life. (Also note any other information you consider important.)  
Acts 7:2-4 (verse 4 refers to Israel, formerly ancient Canaan)  
Genesis 11:31-12:1-5 (12:1 in the NIV reads, "The LORD had said...")

Most evangelical scholars date Abraham's life at around 2100 B.C. and locate ancient Ur in the lower Mesopotamian Valley near the Persian Gulf. In Abraham's time it appears that this area had a highly developed civilization where technology, commerce, art, education, religious practices and government procedures were advanced and flourishing. The times were generally prosperous, and apparently Abraham's family had been well off in Ur. And the land of Canaan was about 1,000 difficult trail miles away. (Information drawn from A Survey of Israel's History, by Leon J. Wood and David O'Brien)

4. Look back over the information you've collected about Abram's situation thus far. What facts, concerns, etc. could have discouraged him from obeying God's directive of Genesis 12:1-3, both in Ur and then later in Haran?
  
5. No doubt about it, what God had asked Abram to do could have seemed very difficult and risky. But according to Genesis 12:2-3, what great things did God promise to him if he decided to obey?
  
6. Notice again the promises of verses 2a and 3b. Read Romans 9:1-5 (especially noticing the last verse) and Romans 5:6-9. What was God telling Abram?
  
7. Remember from Acts 7:2 that God appeared personally to Abram as He gave His great call. Notice also His repeated use of the phrase "I will" (and "you shall") in Genesis 12:2 and 3. How would each of these help Abram in his decision?

As you watch God dealing in this way with Abram, what do you learn about Him (the same God who is working with you today)?

8. Look again at the promises listed in Genesis 12:2 and 3. Notice all the implied life concerns that God wants Abram (and all of us) to leave up to Him:

ability to bear children  
 having a mate(implied)  
 protection/nurturing of his family  
 provision for Abram's needs/desires  
 provision for Abram's development and  
 ultimate good

responsibility for Abram's reputation  
 responsibility for Abram's place/rank in society  
 handling mistreatment or injustice for Abram  
 opportunity/ability to help or have positive impact  
 opportunity/ability to have a role in God's plans

Personal: Right now, are any of these difficult for you to entrust to God -- for yourself or those you love? Explain.

9. According to Genesis 12:1, the only way for Abram to begin moving toward all that God's great heart had for him was to be willing to leave behind his dependence on his own plans, solutions and supports. Thinking about your answers to question 8:  
 What strategies or solutions have you been depending on to provide these things for yourself?

Looking at both parts of this verse (Genesis 12:1) what do you need to do instead? (What attitudes and actions does God call for?)

10. Read Psalm 146, I Peter 5:7 and Matthew 11:28-30. What further encouragement do you find to help you in this process?

It may be helpful to note that making plans is a good and necessary part of life, and we need to employ all the resources God has provided -- our minds, wise input from others, etc. But God does tell us to be careful to make plans that are consistent with Scripture and to hold our plans lightly -- He may have a totally different method in mind. The big differences between our plans and His lie in the fact that His are always perfect and He has the power to carry them out!

11. If you had been a close friend or relative of Abram's in Ur or Haran, your concern for his safety, etc., may have led you to try to dissuade him from undertaking this journey. Despite your good intentions, would this turn out to be the most loving thing you could do for Abram? Explain.

Thinking back through this lesson, what is the best thing we can realize and do for our loved ones when they face times of crisis or decision?

Read Genesis 12:4-9. Notes: From the way it is mentioned in verse 6, apparently the great tree of Moreh was a well-known landmark. It was very probably a resting place on a main travel route and, just as probably, used as a place of worship of the local deity. Also, the ancient writings of this era reveal that the Canaanites were characterized by the grossest forms of cruelty and perversion, especially demonstrated by their religious practices.

12. Tell what happens in verses 6-8.

13. Why do you think that the author lets us know that the Canaanites were on the scene?

14. Over 400 years later, God instructs the returning descendants of Abraham to rid this land of the Canaanites. What does His bringing of His man Abram to them, as well as the long years of restrained judgment, tell you about God?

Thus far, Abram is looking like he's got this faith situation pretty well wrapped up. However...Read through these next two incidents God gives us from Abram's life.

15. From each passage, briefly tell what Abram does, what attitudes he displays, what results his actions lead to, and/or how God intervenes and works with him.  
Genesis 12:10-20

Genesis 13:1-18

16. What principles about the life of faith can you draw from these passages?

Read Hebrews 11:9-10

Abraham was blessed -- with prosperity, times of great victory, an heir. But in future lessons we will also see that throughout his life there were many trials, repeated failures, sad results and struggles that had to be lived with until his dying day.

17. How does verse 9 describe Abram's lifestyle?

What reason does verse 10 give for this?

Abram was learning to direct his resources (energy, time, money, emotional involvement) as if there were an eternity ahead, and a God who is the Source of all delight and goodness. (See Genesis 15:1 and notice the NIV and KJV, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.")

18. How does this insight from your big brother Abraham help you today, whether you face smooth going or great difficulty?
19. As you look back through this lesson, what have you learned that you would most like to see put into practice in your life?
20. Read Joshua 24:3. Through all his ups and downs, what was true about Abram's life? What can you count on as well?