



## FATHER ABRAHAM

Genesis 11:10–14:24

From his first appearance in the Bible, Abraham's life is characterized by trust in God and the promises God made to him. But his life does not just demonstrate Abraham's faithfulness; it also demonstrates the faithfulness of Abraham's God—and ours.

Now as we introduce the life Abraham, I don't plan on making him into some kind of spiritual superstar; we already have too many superstars and not enough servants. Besides, the real hero here is Abraham's great and gracious God.

Abraham is introduced to us in Genesis 11 by his original name Abram. He's married to Sarai, as she's called here, and he has a nephew named Lot. They're all living in Ur, which is in modern-day Iraq.

Now when we first meet Abram here, he's seventy-five years old. God captures his heart and reveals to him the role he will play in fulfilling God's promise—a promise made to Adam and Eve of a coming Seed,

the Redeemer. That Seed is going to come from the family line of Abram and his wife Sarai, who, as we'll learn later, have not been able to have any children their entire marriage.

The call of Abram in chapter 12 originally takes place while he is still in Ur, before going to Haran (Acts 7:2). In this call, the Lord gives some commands and makes some promises to Abram.

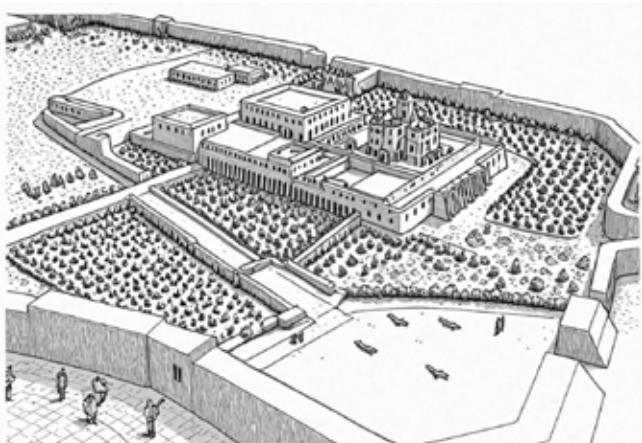
In verse 1 we read, "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred.'" This is a command to leave his place of stability and security.

Abram's hometown was a spiritual desert, and God commands him to leave. But this was the place of his extended family and circle of friends and business associates. God says, "Abram, I want you to leave the stability of everything you've ever known. Leave the security of everything that's familiar, and don't stop until I tell you."

And with that, the Lord makes some promises to Abram.

The first promise relates to Abram's *promotion*. In verse 2, God says:

*"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and*



Model of the ancient city of Ur



*make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”*

Abram is to obey God, and God will do the rest. Promotion comes neither from the east nor the west, but from God (Psalm 75:6-7). From Abram, God will make a great nation—Israel.

The second promise relates to Abram’s *protection*. In verse 3, God says, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse.”

History has proven over and over that God has protected the nation that came from Abram. You’ve never once met a member of the Philistine nation; you’ve never met a Hittite or any Canaanite. Those nations don’t exist anymore. But you’ve certainly met someone from the Israelite nation, and that’s because God keeps His promises.

God’s promises relate to Abram’s promotion and his protection. Now the Lord adds a third promise that relates to Abram’s *prominence*. In verse 3, the Lord says, “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The Lord is telling Abram that the Redeemer who will bless the earth is going to descend from him.

And we’re told in verse 4 that Abram responds in faith: “So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.” At seventy-five years of age, following his father’s death in Haran, Abram takes his wife and his nephew Lot and starts traveling, not knowing where the Lord will take him.

How’s that for a life of faith! And after traveling some five hundred miles, he arrives in the land of Canaan, and there the Lord says to him in chapter 12 and verse 7, “To your offspring I will give this land.” This is your homeland, Abram—this is the promised land. And we read that Abram “built there an altar to the LORD.”

Abram moves from there to a mountain between Bethel and Ai, the highest point in the region, from which he can literally see the land the Lord has promised to give him and his descendants forever. He builds another altar and calls upon the Lord—he’s worshipping his true and living God.

Abram leaves this mountain, and verse 10 tells us that a famine arises in the land. Now after all these

promises and provisions and worship services, we would think Abram would trust God to take care of him. But instead he decides to depend on Egypt and departs for that land.

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As Abram and Sarai approach Egypt, he starts worrying about his beautiful wife. She probably rolls her eyes, but they agree she will be introduced as his sister; otherwise, they reason, some Egyptian might kill him in order to take his wife. And what happens?

*The Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful . . . they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house.* (verses 14-15)

Sarai’s going to become one more concubine in Pharaoh’s harem. Now what? Well, God steps in and strikes Pharaoh’s house with a plague. He quickly connects the dots and sends Abram, with Sarai, out of his country.

In chapter 13 we find a rather humiliated Abram traveling back to Canaan .

*He journeyed . . . to the place where his tent had been at the beginning . . . to the place where he had made an altar . . . and there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.* (verses 3-4)



There's nothing sweeter than getting back to that place of fellowship with your merciful, faithful God.

The Bible now shifts our attention to Abram's nephew. We're told in verses 5-6 of chapter 13 that Lot's flocks and herds have multiplied and there's not enough pasture to allow Lot and Abram to stay together.

Abram graciously offers Lot his choice of the land, and in verses 10-11 Lot chooses the well-watered plain of the Jordan, a land bordering the Canaanite cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot dwells near Sodom, whose inhabitants are described in verse 13 as "great sinners against the LORD." Lot has chosen fertile land in a region where people have no interest in God.

Perhaps to encourage Abram's faith, the Lord speaks to him again:

*"Lift up your eyes and look . . . for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. . . . arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."*

(verses 14-15, 17)

And with that, Abram builds another altar and holds another worship service.

It isn't all sunshine and worship services, however. Chapter 14 records the invasion of four kings, who fight with the kings in the region of Sodom. The invaders are not only victorious but also take Lot prisoner.

Well, Uncle Abram doesn't waste any time. Verse 14 says he "led forth his trained men . . . and went in pursuit." The Hebrew word for "led" here has to do with wielding a sword. Evidently Abram had taken sword fighting in college, and he is good at it. He and his men defeat these kings and free the captives.

Now as Abram is returning home, Genesis 14:18 tells us that Melchizedek, the king of Salem—later named Jerusalem—comes out to greet him. Melchizedek also is a priest of Jehovah, and he gives Abram food and pronounces a blessing on him. Abram gives this king and priest a share of his spoils out of respect and admiration.

Melchizedek appears and then disappears suddenly in Scripture. He'll be presented as a picture of Christ, our High Priest and King in Hebrews 7.

Now in these few chapters, Abram's faith has had its ups and downs, to say the least. He might have wavered back there in Egypt, but now he's standing for what's right and godly.

I don't know what your battle is today, but I know your life isn't all sunshine and worship services either. Perhaps God is leading you from a place of security and stability as well. You can rest in knowing He is worthy of your trust and will always keep His promises.

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How does Abram's response to God's call challenge your faith? What keeps you from acting in faith on the basis of God's promises?

How is God's faithfulness demonstrated in Abram's life? How is it demonstrated in your life?

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