

God Of...Abraham | Week 1

Good morning, Church. Thank you for being here today. There are lots of other things you could be doing. We are extremely grateful you chose to be here.

We are starting a brand-new sermon series today and it's going to be a great one! As we kick off today, I need a few helpers.

Illustration: (examples of how different people prepare for a road trip)

Hand the older adult the large fold out map but have some fun and ask them to unfold the entire map. Make a bit of a spectacle of how wide and tall the map is and then hand them the magnifying glass.

Ask the younger adult to pull out their phone and pull up an app to find the place you are going to have them find. Interact with them and tell them that you want them to plan a trip on your cue.

Tell them to find out where they are right now, and then tell them to go. One or both of them should ask where you want them to go.

My response: To the place I will show you.

Whether you are someone who likes to plan every detail of a trip, or you are someone who likes to go with the flow, going on a trip still implies a destination. Or, at least a little direction.

How frustrating and impossible would it be to go on a trip where your destination is unknown? Even those who think this sounds fun have to admit it requires a great deal of faith in whoever is sending or navigating for you.

Over the next few weeks, we are going to follow the journey of a man named Abraham. A man who decided to follow his God. A God who would be known to generations of Abraham's descendants simply as...The God of Abraham.

We believe that regardless of where you started your spiritual journey or where you find yourself in it now, that **Everything changes when God (of Abraham) changes you.**

And, while we believe this in faith just like Abraham did, we believe that any endeavor in faith will require an enduring faith from start to finish.

So, who is Abraham. Some of you may immediately be taken back to the old church song, Father Abraham, had many sons....

That's a true statement, but a lifetime of ups and downs came before Father Abraham had many sons.

When we first meet him, his name is actually Abram. Aside from Moses, no Old Testament character is mentioned more in the New Testament than Abraham.

James refers to Abraham as "God's friend," a title used of no one else in Scripture.

Believers and Christ follower in all generations are called the "children of Abraham"

Years after Abraham has died, in **Exodus 3.6** ⁶ **Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."**

God speaks to Moses in this moment and God refers to himself as, "The God of Abraham..."

Abraham's importance and impact in redemptive history are clearly seen in Scripture.

I don't know about you, but that's some serious pressure. God is describing himself using Abraham's name. The spotlight is now shining bright!

How? Why? What did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do in order to get this nickname?

Let's take a little peak into his life...Lets stand in honor of the reading of God's Word.

Genesis 12.1 | **The LORD said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. ⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.**

Pray

In these first verses of Genesis 12, God makes **3 commitments to Abram.**

- 1. To give him a land**
- 2. To multiply a people through him**
- 3. To make him a blessing**

God follows through on His commitments to Abram, promising to bless the rest of the world through him. And, with that in mind, God will bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.

Joke: How great would that be? Can you even imagine someone cursing at you in traffic and you just think, "Whatever. God will take care of them..."?

The fact that God used Abram should bring you and I hope...why?

As we watch this story unfold, God changes everything.

First, Abram is not exactly the first choice for a faithful follower. In fact, he came from a long line of pagans (heathens, non-believers) and worshippers of false gods.

Abram's father and grandfather were not faithful followers of God. Abram did not grow up in a home with an "understanding" of God. That's not how he was raised.

Abram had a past. All of us here today probably have a little Abram in us. We have a past. We have some secrets.

Maybe God calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because He is trying to convince us that he can use even me.

God is saying listen up... I'm not just the God of the goody goody's and holier than thou's, and the I didn't mess up in HS or college crowd. I'm not just God for those who didn't smoke, or drink, or chew, or hang out with girls who do.

Maybe God is trying to make sure everyone knows that He's not just the God of those who we think have got it all together.

That should bring you and I so much Hope. You should be shouting when you hear of God's matchless grace and His unending love. When God calls himself the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob....that's where your joy comes from.

You don't need to worry about what's in your rearview mirror. God knows. You don't need to worry about what other people have to say. You worry about being faithful to God today.

This is what Abram did. God calls him to this new journey and look what happens

In Genesis 12.4 | **4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.**

We see Abram's obedience over and over again as He follows God's direction.

Still, even though the trip sounds like it is going well, we cannot forget that Abram had several areas about his personal life that were either under construction or completely closed altogether.

Abram is an old man. Joke: Ever traveled with someone elderly? In another country? Across a desert?

Abram is childless.

Abram is nomadic (homeless).

But, God chooses him anyway. Because, **Everything changes when God changes you.**

So, old, childless, homeless Abram starts walking

This is what Abram did.

Genesis 12. 6-7 | 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Abram endeavors to be faithful and follow God.

We can learn a lot from the faith of this old, childless, homeless pagan.

Even without a destination, without a clear path, without a guarantee, Abram steps out in faith.

If you want to experience all that God has for you, you have to start walking in faith.

I want to pause here for just a second and explain what faith is from a Biblical standpoint.

Thankfully, the Bible contains a clear definition.

Hebrews 11.1 | Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Simply put, the biblical definition of faith is “trusting in something you cannot explicitly prove.”

This definition of faith contains two aspects: intellectual assent and trust.

Intellectual assent = believing something to be true.

Trust = actually relying on the fact that the something is true.

Illustration: A chair. Intellectual assent is recognizing that a chair is a chair and agreeing that it is designed to support a person who sits on it. Trust is actually sitting in the chair.

Understanding these two aspects of faith is crucial. Many people believe certain facts about Jesus Christ. Many people will *intellectually* agree with the facts the Bible declares about Jesus.

But knowing those facts to be true is not what the Bible means by “faith.” The biblical definition of faith requires intellectual assent to the facts *and* trust in the facts.

Believing that Jesus is God incarnate who died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and was resurrected is not enough.

James 2.19 | Even the demons “believe” in God and acknowledge those facts.

We must personally and fully rely on the death of Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. We must “sit in the chair” of the salvation that Jesus Christ has provided. This is saving faith.

The biblical definition of faith does not apply only to salvation.

It is equally applicable to the rest of the Christian life.

We are to believe what the Bible says, and we are to obey it. (Not just the parts we like...all of it)

There is no such thing as halfway faith.

We are to believe the promises of God, and we are to live accordingly.

We are to agree with the truth of God’s Word, and we are to allow ourselves to be transformed by it.

Why is this definition of faith so important?

Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Without faith, we cannot be saved.

Without faith, the Christian life cannot be what God intends it to be.

It takes great faith, and this is what Abram showed.

Usually, the first step is always the hardest. Start walking.

Worship in faith. Pray in faith. Serve in faith. Give in faith. Love in faith. Fast in faith. Read in faith. Believe in faith. Just like Abraham.

Take time today or even this week and ponder on this question...**What are the places in my life that I’m being unfaithful?**

This takes some serious honesty and self-reflection. This takes courage to admit. This takes boldness to bring to God and ask for forgiveness. This takes bravery to ask for help.

You can't stay in the same place and end up at a different destination.

Abram's journey was new and unknown, but he went. He took steps.

In the next couple of weeks, we will see how God plans to change Abram and deal with the road work behind and in front of him.

Where do you sense God's calling you to take a step?

Maybe He is calling you to take 10 steps. Maybe 10 years' worth of steps.

But, do not miss this turn, because this is where you will see God do His greatest work.

Because, **Everything changes when God changes you.**

Thankfully, for Abram and for each of us still today, God's plan to change us includes the strength to turn to Him and the endurance to become complete in Him.

What move is God calling you to make?

It may not be moving away from your family, but it may be a move away from the familiar.

What is God nudging you toward that you are ignoring?

(fold up the map and put it away)

Have you put away the map or turned off the GPS in hopes of not having to journey down that road?

He's the God of Abraham...but is He the God of _____?

Is your step a step of Salvation? (I give you my heart and life)

Is your step a step of Surrender? (not my will but yours)