

HEROES OF THE FAITH #1 - ABRAHAM

God's Love From the Beginning

- God created man and woman in his image - for God's glory. And primary to that glory was for God to love and be loved.
- Many years passed after Adam and Eve. Genesis 6:9 "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God." God hadn't given his law through Moses yet - there were no 10 commandments. And no prophets. Yet he "walked faithfully with God."
- The Bible gives us no record of God speaking to humans between God's conversation with Adam's son, Cain, in Genesis 4, and his conversation with Noah in Genesis 6 – likely thousands of years. Then 500 years later, God speaks again - this time to Abram. Question: Were these communications normal in those days, or unusual? Ideas.....:
 - ◆ Adam & Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, and the garden was a symbol of God's presence = God didn't speak often?
 - ◆ When their son, Cain, murdered his brother, Abel, God's consequences were that Cain must leave the land near Eden: "I will be hidden from your presence." (4:14, 16) = God "present" with Adam/Eve?
 - ◆ Enoch in Genesis 5:22 – in the middle of the genealogy, Enoch "walked with God" (Genesis 4:26).
 - ◆ After many generations of births, Gen. 4:26 "At that time, people began to call on the name of the Lord." If people call on him, is it reasonable to expect that he will usually answer? Psalm 145:18 says, "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."
- For God to be near us doesn't mean he has to talk directly to us – it just means he will act for us. He may act by opening our eyes to his love, or by using someone to speak to us, or by relieving a situation, or by transforming our attitudes and goals, or by having us recall previously spoken words – or... by speaking directly to us!
 - *The problem we face in hearing God is that we don't really call on God.* We find it hard to . . . to wait expectantly on him; to call without preconceived notions about how he must answer; to "call on him in truth" so that we think truthful things about God and his purposes for me; to quiet ourselves long enough and regularly enough to hear him if he does want to speak.
 - ***If someone wants to walk with God, it's safe to assume that he will want to walk with them!*** It's possible to have a relationship with God even without a Bible, without Jesus coming, without the indwelling Holy Spirit. Can our relationship with God be deeper because of them? Yes. But at the core is a God who loves us, who we can call out to, who can walk with us – if we are willing to walk with him. And that's a good humble and simple beginning for each of us. And when we add Jesus to this love-relationship, it gets even more wonderful!

Abraham

- His name was initially Abram. He lived in the region of modern-day Iraq. He was one of the many descendents of Noah's son, Shem, which is why we call him a Semite; he's the racial father of all Jews and Arabs.
- Joshua 24:2 - Abraham's father, Terah, worshipped other gods. So having an idol-worshipping father didn't disqualify him from being chosen. So our background doesn't disqualify us from being used by God.
 - ▶ *Genesis 12:1-5 "The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him. . ."*
- **A conditional promise:** ▶ Genesis 17:1 "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless." ▶ Genesis 18:18-19 "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."
- God asked for **faithful walking with him**, which would be seen in righteous living. And that expectation hasn't changed in 4000 years. Relationship and righteousness. God always takes the first step toward us; we don't have to earn his love. But to receive the blessings of the covenant, he asks for faith seen by obedience.
- **A challenge to faith** is when facts seem to mount up against the promise our faith is in. Then you have to go back to the drawing board and read the fine print, and make sure you didn't misunderstand the promise – which we often do.
 - ◆ God's promise of many descendents had a problem: Sarah was barren, and 75 (Abraham 85). So Sarah decides to help God out. She gives her maidservant to Abraham as another wife so he can have a child (Ishmael). 10 years later God says Sarah will conceive (17:15f). Abraham and Sarah laugh.
 - ◆ I have sympathies for Abraham. It's not always easy to know when to take things into our own hands, or wait for God to do something different. It's called "being responsible." It's called "participating with God." (E.g. food, marriage, holiness, etc.)
- Genesis 22, God told Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice. He obeyed because "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And Hebrews 11:19 – he thought God could raise him from the dead. God: "I will bless you because you obeyed (Gen. 22:17-18).
 - ➔ **Application:** (1) God always looks for relationship and righteousness; we are blessed to be a blessing. (2) When God promises us something, we must discern what he asks of us – and doesn't ask of us; when we need to give effort, and when we need to wait in faith. (3) We learn that sometimes faith requires stepping out of the comfortable; sacrifice, yet still holding on to God's promise.