

## **Problems and Promises**

### **Context**

Abram the first-born son of Terah, had two younger brothers. As the eldest son, he was in line for the family business. For 75 years Abram, (later renamed Abraham) was headed in one direction, he meets God and is invited to go in another direction. Viewed as foolishness through natural eyes, but he believed what God said. (Genesis 12:1-5)

### **The Promise**

Unlike the idols and “gods” worshipped in that time period, God called Abram into relationship with him. He also gave him a promise of blessing for him and his descendants and making his name great.

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life”.  
(*Proverbs 13:12*)

*Genesis 14:* During the time of Kings Amraphel, Arioch, Kedorlaomer and Tidal went to war with the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and conquered them. Unfortunately Abram’s nephew Lot was swept into captivity. Abram gathers 318 trained men, pursued the captors and recovered Lot, his family and goods.

*Genesis 15: 1-6* After Abram and his men were victorious, he became afraid of retaliation. God tells him not to be afraid, that he was his shield and “very great reward”.

(V2-3) The promise given to Abram had not come to pass, he had great success in all areas of his life, but the promise was yet to be fulfilled.

(V4-5) Even though Abram is coming up with his own solution to the unfulfilled promise, God assures him that the fulfillment will be his flesh and blood.

Two insights in these two verses; he was reverently honest with God, God is not intimidated or angered by this. Also God takes him outside and uses the stars to illustrate and clarify his promise to Abram.

V6 Abram believed the Lord, but not much has changed in his circumstances.

### **Some Time Later**

*Genesis 22:1-14*

## Some Time Later

Genesis 22:1-14

Abraham had taken matters into his own hands he wasn't perfect. Despite this, God would not only bless Ishmael, but also still fulfill his promise through his son Isaac.

As inconceivable as it sounds to us today, God would test Abraham. (V1) God calls to Abraham, he answers; "here I am". This is a response of a slave or servant, a wonderful insight into a man who had become very powerful in all ways.

God asked him to take (V2) "your son, your only son, whom you love" and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. This was a common practice to sacrifice children in Canaan at that time. In reality, God detest this practice and would say so in Deuteronomy.

(V3) Records Abraham's obedience to the unthinkable, with 3 days of very little dialogue. He was obedient to God, but all of us with children can understand the anguish he must have been feeling at that time. Abraham believed God, to the point that if he went through with the sacrifice, God would raise him from the dead.

*"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,<sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."<sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death". (Hebrews 11: 17-19)*

(V7) Abraham is not an obedient robot, his son asked him a difficult question and Abraham's soul must have been in turmoil.

(V14) Abraham called that place "the Lord will provide". "And to this day it is said...on this mountain", "The thing he longed for God asked for and he was obedient"

Years later on that same space Jesus (like Isaac) would carry his own wooden cross up that mountain. But, "your son, your only son, whom you love" would be sacrificed for us.

(Romans 4: 18-21)

*<sup>18</sup>Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."<sup>19</sup> Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead.<sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

"Against all hope, he hoped"

## **Reflections on Abraham's Story**

1. God invites us into a relationship with him.
2. Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
3. Faith leads to action.
4. Faith leads to waiting.
5. Faith will be tested.

## Life Group Sermon Application Curriculum Leader's Guide

Week of **03/8/15**

### Problems and Promises

I couldn't find much on "Janine Monize" but she wrote; "God has used this period of waiting to reshape my life. You see, unless it was so incredibly meaningful to me—unless I was so emotionally connected to the outcome—I would not have been as eager as I have been to spend so much time seeking HIM. It has forced me to my knees and to pray passionately so I can receive guidance, hope, and validation. Each day I am learning. Each day I am growing. Each day I fall more in love with God".

"I've come to know God's character and to see how trustworthy He truly is. I've learned how to hear His voice. I've come to understand how much He loves me and wants the best for me. I've learned that time has been my protection—not my punishment. God is pruning me and developing my character in ways that are needed for my future".

**Habakkuk 2:2-3** And the Lord answered me: "Write down the revelation; make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it may linger, wait for it; it will certainly come; it will not delay.

### Main Sermon text: (Genesis 12:1-5)

There are some **consistent themes**, and key points, that emerge from these passages:

- For 75 years Abram was headed in one direction, he then meets God and is invited to go in another direction. Although some may have viewed this as foolishness, he believed what God said.
- The God that Abram met was different from the idols and "gods" of that period of time. He was calling Abram into a personal relationship with him.
- When God called Abram to follow him he gave him an incredible promise pertaining to him and his descendants. That promise had not come to pass, he did have great success in all areas of his life, but the promise was yet to be fulfilled. Abram believed God but not much had changed in his circumstances.
- Even though Abraham tried to fulfill the promise on his own, the promised child was born. But "sometime later" God tested him by asking him to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering. He was not only obedient, but later the writer of Hebrews would say that that Abraham believed that God could raise him from the dead.
- Abraham named the location, "the Lord will supply". Many years later in the same space, God would provide another sacrifice, that was also an only son that was loved...Jesus.

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- Reflections on Abrahams Story:

God invites us into a relationship with him.

Faith is- confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Faith leads to action.

Faith leads to waiting. Faith will be tested.

**Discussion questions/prompts** for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying the Bible passage(s) and the sermon)

- 1) As we saw for 75 years Abram was headed in one direction, he then meets God and is invited to go in another direction. Have you experienced this in your life? Possibly when you committed your life to Christ. People around him said that he was foolish, maybe crazy, have you ever experienced this from people as you followed and obeyed God?
- 2) We begin to learn a lot about God even from the first book of the Bible. We see that the God that Abram met was different from the idols and “gods” of that period of time. He was calling Abram into a personal relationship with him. Hopefully this is your experience, is it hard for you to see God this way? Also when you share God’s love with unbelievers, is this truth hard for them to see, believe and understand?
- 3) When God called Abram to follow him he gave him an incredible promise pertaining to him and his descendants. That promise had not come to pass, have you found yourself in situations where you are waiting? Talk about what you felt, experienced and if it has concluded what did you learn about God and yourself?
- 4) Even though Abraham tried to fulfill the promise on his own, the promised child was born. Have you tried through your own efforts to make something happen? What did you learn about trusting God and waiting for him to fulfill his promise?
- 5) Abraham named the location, “the Lord will supply”. It is very important for us to remember not only God’s promises, but also what he has done in our lives. It will begin to build your faith and eventually become a strong trust in God. How important is this and what do you use or do to remember God’s working in your life?

For those who might like to use visual aids in their Bible storying, or study preparation, especially for groups with children, here are some helpful links:

<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://www.raisingourkids.com/coloring-pages/printable/bible/index-02.html>

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Log on and check “Right now Media” there are several good resources that will relate to this study for the kids. Some are for pre-school and older, so go surfing and see if you can find something for your group.