



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Abraham: An All-In Life

Trusting God

Tim Badal | October 27, 2019

Let's turn again to Genesis. We're in our series called "Abraham: An All-In Life." This title is a great reminder of the life of Abraham in one short phrase. Without even reading a word of the story, we know God had him on a journey of what

it meant to be all-in. As we'll see today, right when Abraham thought he had gone all-in enough, God had more for him. In fact, we'll see how his story culminates in one of the greatest acts of faith in all of history when we get to Genesis 22.

I won't tell you that story yet, but it's why in Hebrews 11—the famous "Hall of Faith" chapter—Abraham was given more attention than any of the other men and women mentioned. That's because he shows us what it means to be all-in for God. So already we're learning what being all-in is about.

Let me remind you that "all-in" isn't just about our pocketbooks. Rather, it has everything to do with all facets of our lives. It isn't really so much a matter of the details, but reflects our relationship with God. When we get the vertical relationship with God in the right place, then every decision we make and every relationship we have will be blessed by God. In other words, God will be with us and provide what we need. We also can be sure that the One Who has begun a good work in us will be faithful to bring it to completion. But the journey to completion is not always easy. There will be bumps and curves along the way and we'll see this in Abraham's life.

Like Abraham, many of us have really good days when it seems easy to be all-in. Yet there will also be days when we struggle or feel lost. Sometimes we find ourselves being all-in for ourselves, instead of being all-in for God. But as we walk with Abraham through the good, the bad and the ugly parts of his life, we can learn what it means to be all-in for God.

What we've learned so far is that all-in means following God. It means going to the place He calls us to and obeying what He calls us to do. Second, we learned what it means to prioritize God. If we're all-in for God, that means He is the first and best in our lives. In other words, our time, calendars and money all are to be funneled through our relationship with Jesus Christ, because He is the most important one in our lives.

Today we're going to learn what it means to trust God. As we'll see, trust is easy when things are going well. But what about those waiting rooms in life? What about those times when God's answer doesn't come when we want it to? Sometimes instead of saying yes or no to our prayer requests, God tells us to wait. The Bible is full of waiting rooms. I might do a series on that sometime.

In the first two books of the Bible we find three waiting rooms:

- Abraham waited for Isaac for 25 years and didn't see God's answer until he was 100 years old.
- Then one of Abraham's descendants, Joseph, also had many years of waiting. He went from the favored son to being a prisoner for 13 years, until the dream God had given him became a reality.
- Finally in Exodus, we see Moses waiting 40 years while God shaped him for the calling on his life. Only when he was 80 years old did God commission Moses from a burning bush to go to Pharaoh with the words: "Let My people go."

Waiting rooms are hard. Some of you are probably in a waiting room today. Sometimes it might be the waiting room of infertility. Month after month, your deep desire for a child is never satisfied. Others might be waiting for a spouse. You're single and wondering if the love of your life will ever come. You might be praying for this daily, but the answer has not yet come. Or you might be waiting for the right career opening, a way to provide for your family or the opportunity to use what you've trained to do.



Maybe you have a medical concern. I hate those waiting rooms. Have you ever noticed that when they run a test on Thursday how they say, "We'll get back to you next week—have a great weekend"? It's hard to have a great weekend when you're in a waiting room. Others might be waiting for a relationship to be reconciled. Still others of you have actually lost someone dear to you and are waiting to see them again in heaven.

If we're honest, waiting rooms are never fun. But here's an important truth: God does His best work in waiting rooms. If you walk away with anything this morning, you need to remember that God is a master at making us better in the waiting rooms of life, whatever kind they are. He uses those times to take us low, so that in the right time and place He can bring us high. That's what God will do in Abraham's life. So whatever you're waiting on this morning, the goal in that experience is for you to have a healthy and vibrant relationship with God. The only way this happens is if you're able to trust Him in that time of waiting.

Abraham heard from God that he would have a son when he was 75 years old—which was for him about middle age. But years have gone by and that promised son has not come. Others in his household were having children. We read last week how his household had grown so large that he could no longer live in the same area with his nephew Lot. So Abraham and Sarah watched many other children be born in their household, but for them nothing happened. They were in a waiting room.

In Genesis 15 we see an example of what God does while we're in waiting rooms. It also will help us understand how we're to wait in the right ways. But first, let's define some terms. What is trust? If you were to Google this word, this is what you would find:

Trust: The firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability or strength of someone or something.

That is a great definition. If you think about it, you're doing this all the time. You do it when you hit the brakes on your car, having firm belief in the reliability and strength of the manufacturer of your vehicle. You do this in relationships, allowing yourself in the most intimate of ways to be known by someone else, especially in your marriage relationship. You reveal things about yourself to someone else because you believe they are reliable and trustworthy to love you and not hurt you. That's why it's so painful when a relationship is broken.

We also see this in the business world. As a caterer, when people call or email me, they trust my promise to bring food for their event. They trust that I'll be at the right place, at the right time and with the food being in the right condition. My customers are putting a huge amount of trust in my ability to perform what I promise to do.

Trust is also evident in the church. We have to trust our leaders and pastors. For this relationship to work, you have to trust that my study of the Scripture is right. That doesn't mean you blindly trust everything I say. You need to be Bereans and examine the Bible for yourself (Acts 17:11). Our church would be very dysfunctional if we don't trust one another to help us as we grow in Christ or when we're in need.

1. Three trust options

Here's the problem. There are basically three places you can put your trust. I'm talking here about your ultimate trust, not just about one relationship or one situation. This applies to where you trust your life—all of who you are.

Trust fate

First, you might say, "I'm going to put my trust in fate." You just let whatever happens to you, happen. You believe there's something out there that is ordering life, but it's impersonal and uncaring. You're hoping that more good will happen to you than bad. We might call this karma or providence or happenstance. People who think this way usually assume that if they've been good, good things will happen to them. The problem is that it doesn't always work out in a way that makes sense. If there's no real rhyme or reason to fate, why should we trust it?

Trust yourself

The second option for trust is to trust ourselves. This feels right and natural to us. It makes sense that we should be confident in ourselves. I know what I know. I know my abilities and my limitations. Therefore I'll put the weight of my life on my own ability to take care of myself. I'm the best one to navigate both the trials and triumphs of my life. I'm the captain of my ship and will trust myself.

This is probably the most popular option by far. We trust our abilities and our thinking to take us through life—even though we end up white-knuckling it most of the way. The problem is we never really know what the day will bring. We're really finite and fallible, and the world brings so many challenges and complexities that are outside our control.

Trust God

Trusting in ourselves might seem to be the most reasonable choice—until we read the Scriptures. The Bible says some trust in men, some trust in chariots and some trust in money (Psalm 20:6-8). But according to the Bible, our trust should instead be in God. As we read the Bible, we come to understand that nothing comes through happenstance or fate. God is the one true sovereign over all the world.

We need to turn from trusting ourselves to trusting Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”* If we are to have any hope for our lives, if we’re going to make it through the challenges of the waiting rooms, we need to rely on God.

This is what God was calling Abraham to do. In Genesis 12, God asked Abraham to trust Him. Because Abraham trusted God, he left Ur of the Chaldeans and journeyed to Canaan. You can’t follow God without first trusting Him. It’s sometimes easy to say, “God, I trust You,” but when we realize what it can cost, we find the holes in our confession.

2. Trusting God means no matter what happens to me, I will turn to Him instead of away from Him.

I’m combining Google’s definition with what Scripture tells us. Trusting God means I have a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability and strength of God. I’m holding steadfastly to the belief that God is Who He says He is and that He is enough for any situation, no matter what happens to me. You need to consider the depths of what might happen to you. Can you say, “Whatever happens, I’m going to turn to God instead of away from Him”? Will you choose to run to Him in your time of need, even though everything in you wants to grab the wheel and take back control of your life?

Trusting in God is letting go and letting God. Trusting means believing He is reliable because of Who He is and what He’s done and what He’s said. The Bible speaks of this in a different way. It says God is altogether faithful (Psalm 119:138 CSB), consistently and utterly faithful (1 Thessalonians 5:24 Phillips). He is perfectly faithful (Isaiah 25:1 CSB, NIV).

I realize this definition of trust is easier to write down than it is to live out in our lives. It’s easy to preach, “You need to trust God,” but your preacher still has a hard time doing that. It’s not because God has failed in some way. I’ve not looked at God’s resumé or stat sheet and thought, “You know, He doesn’t work too well in this situation.” We’ll talk more about why this is hard in a few minutes.

Let’s turn to Genesis 15 and look at what was probably one of the lowest places in Abraham’s life. Waiting rooms can cause us to begin doubting what we’re doing and why we are where we are. Abraham had some real concerns and fears. Genesis 15:1 opens with the words, *“After these things...”* After what things?

Remember in Genesis 13, Abraham and Lot had separated. Being the generous uncle, Abraham had given Lot the first choice of land. Essentially Abraham offered him part of the gift of land that God had given him. Lot however made the unwise decision—I would actually call it selfish and sinful—to make his home outside of Canaan, in the land of Zoar, where there were the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot knew what these cities were like, but it seems he was drawn to them anyway. He definitely saw the lush vegetation in that region and knew he could prosper there. After they parted ways, God came to Abraham and told him, “Lift up your eyes. My promises are true. Even as you’re walking through the dust of Canaan, so your descendants will be as numerous as the dust particles.”

We aren’t reading the next story in Genesis 14, because it focuses more on Lot than on Abraham, who is the man we’re keeping the spotlight on. But right away Lot found himself in trouble. Scholars believe Lot got caught up in a provincial war, with five kings on one side and four on the other. One of those kings captured Lot, then he and his household were held hostage. So Abraham took a couple hundred men and did a night-time raid, in which he was able to destroy the enemy, rescuing Lot and his household. It was an incredible victory.

We need to remember that the kingdoms surrounding Abraham’s territory were much larger and more powerful. Even though Abraham’s surprise attack was successful, it didn’t go over well with his neighbors. That’s why Genesis 15 opens with, *“After these things...”* Abraham was frightened. He had crossed the Delaware, as it were, in a surprise raid against superior forces, but it was likely that sooner or later they would retaliate.

3. What does trust in God require?

God had given Abraham two great promises: a land and a son. Well, the son hadn’t arrived yet, and now the land was in danger of being taken away as well. Even more, Abraham could not hear God speaking. So Abraham had little reason to be confident in God’s faithfulness

at this point. Chapter 15 opens with him in a place of sorrow and fear. We'll now see three things that show us how Abraham came to trust God even in this hard place and how we are to trust Him as well.

Trusting God means getting real with Him.

In a time of great sorrow, fear and waiting, we first need to get real with God. That's what trusting God is—getting real with Him. We read in Genesis 15:1, "...the word of the Lord came to Abram..." This is very important. Abraham didn't have to tell God about his problem; God already knew and came to him.

You also are so loved by your Heavenly Father that He already knows what's causing you great concern. At just the right time, God came to Abraham in a vision to give him something that would enable him to endure in his time of struggle. He knew what was going on in Abraham's life. His first words were, "Fear not."

That phrase actually is found over 200 times in the Bible. I don't know if it's true, but someone has claimed that there are 365 "fear not's" in the Scripture—one for every day of our fear. That sounds so good it has to be true, right? Seriously, we can be sure that in our moments of fear, God will meet us. God assured Abraham, "I'm your Protector and your Provider." Those are the two things that were bothering Abraham: the enemy might come and decimate him, and he would never be provided with a son. In other words, he was not sure the promises of God were going to come true. So these were God's first assurances to Abraham.

Here's what I love about Abraham. He doesn't say, like our teenage children do when we tell them something, "All right. If you say so, that's great." Instead, Abraham questioned God. Getting real with God means we are honest with Him. Abraham was open about his doubt. Scripture is real and raw. Abraham was a man of faith, but even though he wanted to trust God, he still couldn't see how God was going to keep His promise. It felt like he was dealing with life on his own. It helps us to see this great man of faith being able to question God, yet God did not rebuke him.

When our children question us in the Badal home, they get a demonstrative rebuke: "Who do you think you're talking to? I am your father. You need to trust that what I say will come true." My kids give me that look, "I don't know, old man. I'm not sure about this." Which, of course, makes me become even more demonstrative.

But when God heard Abraham's doubt, He discussed that doubt with him. When you're real with God, He's not going to get angry and knock you down. Rather, He'll have a conversation, because He longs to be in close relationship with His children. So it's important that we bring our questions and concerns to Him, including our doubts. We see this openness in David's writings as well.

However, when we come to God with honesty—that's a good start—there also has to be humility. Twice in our passage we see that Abraham addresses God as "Lord God." He realized God was sovereign, ruling all of creation. He knew Who he was talking to. He knew he was finite, but God was infinite. He knew he was impotent, but God was omnipotent.

From an earthly perspective he was struggling, but he also knew Who God was. He knew God did not owe him a response. I love when Job questioned God and He came back to Job saying, "I am the Lord. Job, were you there when I did this? When I did that? Then you need to trust Me now" (Job 38).

However, just because we're honest and humble, that doesn't mean our circumstances will necessarily change. Abraham still had enemies and still had no child. What was God's response? Did He say, "Because you were honest and humble, I'm going to give you what you want." We think we can barter with God. If we're humble and honest enough, God will respond by doing what we wish. He doesn't. The promise to Abraham was not fulfilled right away.

Trusting God involves ongoing reminders.

God came to Abraham to remind him of the promises. Abraham needed to be encouraged. After Abraham told God he was expecting Eliezer of Damascus to be his heir, God responded in this way in Genesis 15:4-7:

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.⁷ And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

God essentially took Abraham back to school to review what He had said and done in the past. He said, "I am the God Who brought you out of Ur of Chaldeans to where you are now. I took you from Point A to Point B. Now, I realize you're not yet at Point C, but if you're worrying so much about Point C that you forget about Points A and B, you're going to be anxious and lacking faith."

God realizes we can't see into the future, so He encourages us to look back and remember. Worry and anxiety are always forward thinking, but we are told none of us know what a day might bring (Proverbs 27:1). Instead, we find our hope by looking back at the faithfulness of God, remembering what He has already done. God reminded Abraham of what he had been given and He does the same thing with each of us.

Abraham had heard God's promises before in Genesis 12 and 13. He will hear it again in Genesis 17 and 21. God kept reminding Abraham again and again, "Don't lose hope. Look back." Over ten times in the New Testament, we are also called to remember what God has done. Why is this important? Here are three reasons.

1. We need reminders because we fear. Abraham was worried about what would happen to him. He needed the ongoing reminders that God had taken care of him in the past and that if God's promise was true, then he wasn't going to die without first having an heir from his own body. Like Abraham, we are also fearful. It's okay to fear—that's part of being human. But when we consider what God has done in the past, we can have hope no matter what we see coming.

2. We need reminders because we forget. We all have spiritual amnesia. Isaiah 17:10 says, *"For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge."* When trials come, our natural response is to panic. "What's going to happen to me? What am I going to do?" In that moment, we have forgotten God's goodness. That's why Peter says in 2 Peter 1:12, *"Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have."*

We need reminders, not because we don't view these things to be true, but we forget the truths we know, or we forget to apply them to the trouble we're now facing. God said to Abraham, "Let's go over this again. I love you and I'm going to give you a land. I'm also going to give you a son, and through him you will be a blessing to all the world. Your descendants will not only outnumber the dust of the earth, but will also outnumber the stars in the sky."

3. We need reminders because we lack faith. In verse eight we see Abraham is still unsure of what God was going to do. Once again, he pushes back. His words are honest, but respectful. He says, "How am I to know that I shall possess this land and have this son? How can I be sure Your promises will come to pass?" I'm grateful for his words, because they give me hope. After all, Abraham had heard directly from God, yet he was struggling. So when I open the Bible and struggle to believe what God says there, I'm in good company—and so are you. God is patient with us and will see us through.

So He told Abraham, "If the stars and dust aren't convincing you, go get Me some animals." Beginning in verses 9-13 we read:

He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years."

We can't really understand all that was going on here. These were ancient rituals that we no longer have much record of, but we do know that God is setting up a contract. History tells us contracts were made with an animal being butchered by each party, so those animals were part of the blood covenant between them. Essentially they then called curses on themselves if they broke the covenant. Aren't you glad that our contracts are all just done by email?

What God was telling Abraham was this: "I am going to ratify both sides of the covenant." He was speaking of what theologians call the Abrahamic Covenant, which was a very important covenant in the Scriptures. By implication, it contained more than just a contract with Abraham. Rather, God was covenanting with all of humanity that He would send His Son to save us from our sins. God signed both sides of the deal. That meant that Abraham could not fail to keep his side of the covenant, because God would be faithful for him. This is also true of the new covenant that was made through the blood of Jesus Christ. God ratified both sides of our salvation and we're told that nothing can now separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:31-39). You can't fail. You can't sin yourself out of the covenant of God.

That doesn't mean we should sin so grace may abound (Romans 6:1-2). Paul was clear about that. But this should give each of us a great level of confidence when we fail. Abraham failed after this, but God did not consider that to be enough to break the covenant. He said, "This is My covenant, My plan, and I have ratified both sides of it."

Trusting God means resting in Him alone.

In other words, we need to put all our weight on Him, relying on His faithfulness. Abraham was in a waiting room, concerned that the promises would not come before he died. In that moment, it didn't seem the promised blessings were going to come. But centuries later

through Paul, God says this in Romans 8:28, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."*

God says to us, "I know you don't understand it all right now, but one day you will. Then you'll understand My purposes and plans for you. Even though the moment is difficult, I work all things together for the good of those whom I love." That was true for Abraham and it's also true for each of us who call Jesus Christ our Savior.

Notice a couple things in our text about resting. First, to rest means we have to be ready for tough times. We don't rest because we can see that God has everything taken care of right now, so we'll all live happily ever after. Right away God told Abraham in verse 13 that although his offspring would be God's blessed nation, they would undergo 400 years of slavery. This prophecy of course was fulfilled in the book of Exodus, when the people of Israel were in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. God gave the exact number to Abraham.

Next, God promised Abraham that he would live to a ripe old age. That meant none of his neighbors were going to kill him. God would protect him. Then God told Abraham his descendants would come back to own the land of promise after the 400 years in slavery to Pharaoh. That promise was fulfilled in Joshua's time, as he drove out the pagan inhabitants of Canaan.

None of it would be easy. Resting in God is hard, but it's what He wants us to do. There might even be years of exodus along the way. Resting in God means we don't run from Him, even when everything in us wants to give up.

Finally, resting in God means not rushing into foolish decisions. We'll talk about that next week in Genesis 16. Talk about bipolar. Abraham went from trusting God to trusting his own plan. Genesis 16:1-2 says this:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her."

We know what happened there and it was ugly and dysfunctional. Even after all he had heard from God, the waiting room became too much for Abraham and Sarah. This decision not only had massive implications in their own lives, but it also impacted generations to come. Two major religions, Islam and Judaism, would war for centuries, because of this bad choice.

When we rest in God, we cannot at the same time rush into bad decisions or bad places. We need to wait on Him. It's the job of this pulpit ministry to remind you and me that God is in control. He has a plan and His future for us is good. But for us to experience His blessing even in the present, we have to trust and we have to obey. Amen?

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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