

ABRAHAM

An All-In Life

Believing God

Devotional

Genesis 21:1-7 & Genesis 25:1-11

If you and I had been with Abraham at the moments of decision in his life, we might have pitied him: When he left Ur, we might have said, Abraham, you poor fool, do you mean you are going to wander out there in the desert and perhaps live in a tent the rest of your life, when you could have the enjoyment of the city and all of its blessings? When he allowed Lot to choose the best of the land, perhaps some of us might have thought, Abraham, don't throw away your rights like that! You are the older one. You have the right to choose. Why let Lot take that choice piece while you are left with this dry old pasture? You are throwing away your rights. Abraham let Lot choose, and God chose for him.

And do you remember when the king of Sodom offered all the riches of his city to him, Abraham said, I'll not take even one of your shoelaces; I don't want any of it. Some of us would have been tempted to say, Now wait, Abraham, you are carrying this a little too far. You could have deducted this from your income tax, and just think what you are missing. You could have all the riches of Sodom. Think about how you could use it in the Lord's work.

But Abraham chose God every time, and his was a life of fullness. He lived 175 years, and every one was packed full, spiced with excitement and adventure, filled with challenge and interest, rich in faith and blessing. He died an old man, full of days. There is the promise of a full life to those who live in the Spirit.

In verse 8 there is an indication that our pattern man of faith had divine fellowship; he was gathered to his people. What does that mean? It means that he was gathered to those before him who had exercised faith in God. He was with those righteous ones who all through that intervening time of history had been walking with God. Enoch and Noah were examples of such men who learned to know the living God. Those are Abraham's people, just as the people who are ours are not the fleshly people, but the ones to whom we are spiritually bound.

By no means did his life end four thousand years ago. In Matthew, when the Sadducees—who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead—asked Jesus a question, He answered them: Have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 22:31b-32). By this He was answering those who did not believe in life after death. He was saying that Abraham is living.

What a picture Abraham's life is! His was a life like yours and mine! There was nothing unusual about him; nevertheless, God made him an extraordinary person whose life reaches far beyond the realms of earth, out into eternity. His life is one of blessing, fellowship, and fullness. Abraham stands as a living testimony to anyone who takes the path of faith and walks this way. In so doing, we will find the same blessing.¹

¹ Daily Devotion © 2006 by Ray Stedman Ministries found @ www.raystedman.org/daily-devotions/genesis-12to25/gathered-to-his-people

Open it

1. If you knew you only had a few months to live, what is one thing you would like to do?

Read it

Genesis 25:1-11 (Have fun with all the names!!!)

Explore it

2. Who did Abraham marry after Sarah died?
3. How many children did they have together?
4. How old was Abraham when he died?
5. Who came to bury Abraham? Where was he buried?
6. How does Moses describe the life of Abraham?

Apply it

As we close out this study of Abraham, there is much that takes place between the testing of God on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22 and the death of Abraham here in Genesis 25:1-11. The closing years of Abraham's life were distinguished by

- The death of Sarah (Genesis 23:1-2)
- Securing a family burial plot from the Hittites (Genesis 23:3-19)
- Isaac meeting Rebekah and getting married (Genesis 24)
- Abraham's marriage to Keturah (Genesis 25)
- The birth of Esau and Jacob

As one observes the final chapter of Abraham's life, it seems very similar to life today.

7. The earlier days of Abraham's life were filled with major spiritual events and yet it seems the latter days of his life were less dramatic. Why do you think this is and what can we learn from it?

8. What types of things make the twilight years a unique and special time? How can we use these moments to spiritually impact future generations?

9. What spiritual things can become more difficult as we get older and what unique ministry opportunities are available to the older ones in our congregation?

CAN'T FIGHT THIS FEELING

Abraham had plenty of reasons to fade into the background and while away the days waiting to see his beloved Sarah again. After roughly 112 years of marriage—longer than most people live—he buried her in a newly purchased family tomb and returned to his nomadic tent city near Hebron. For the first few weeks or even months, Abraham's grief probably left him feeling like he wanted to die. That's not uncommon for a widowed partner after death ends a long, successful marriage. But God calls the shots on life and death, not us. So the aging patriarch held on. Time passed, and Abraham's emotional wounds slowly healed. We don't know how long—months, perhaps, or more likely a few years. Many counselors say it takes a widowed spouse as long as three years just to find normalcy again, to say nothing of full recovery. I suspect Abraham allowed five years, but that's just a guess. Sarah died after his 137th birthday, which would make him 142 before the old spring in this step returned. ²

10. The loss of Sarah would have been monumental to Abraham. Looking back on their lives what things might have filled his thoughts in the moments after her passing?

Today, the world says hard things are to be passed over as quickly as possible and should be avoided at all cost. But the Bible encourages us otherwise. The promises are these: **Grief brings wisdom** (Ecclesiastes 7:4); **God is near** (Psalm 46:1; 147:3); **and comfort can be found** (Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Here's what I know for sure: Grief will show you what you're made of, and it will show you what God's made of—stuff that doesn't change, leave or die. **Grief has the potential to transform your life for the better.**³

11. What lessons do we learn when we lose someone close? How can such wisdom serve as a blessing to us?

² Swindoll, Charles R.. Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith (Kindle Locations 3489-3496). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

³ The Stages of Grief and How to Cope by Amy Jacobs found @ <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/collegiate-how-to-deal-with-grief>

12. Abraham had spent over 100 years with Sarah and while their lives were filled with many peaks and valleys, they had both walked with God and seen Him move. How can a close relationship with God bring two people closer together?

13. What truths from scripture can give even the most brokenhearted person hope amidst the loss of someone close?

14. What are some unique and significant needs of widows or widowers? In what ways can we as believers serve those who have lost a spouse?

ROLL WITH THE CHANGES

"Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah" (Genesis 25: 1). This woman is hardly mentioned anywhere in the Bible except in a genealogy (see 1 Chronicles 1: 32-33). Regardless, Abraham fell in love with her, and she became his bride. For some, that information doesn't quite settle.

His getting married again after a full lifetime with Sarah feels a tiny bit like betrayal— almost as if his falling in love again somehow invalidates the love he had for his first wife. That's often how children feel when their widowed parent develops feelings for a new relationship. Abraham enjoyed a long, productive, delightful relationship with Sarah. He was a faithful and devoted husband throughout their life together. They shared the role of parenting for thirty-seven years, rearing their promised son to godly manhood. After a century of marriage, Abraham had become accustomed to coffee and bagels every morning with his partner, and her scent in his nostrils had become as natural to him as breathing. But death stepped in, uninvited, and parted them.⁴

15. The Bible is clear that Abraham was free to marry after the death of Sarah. What wise steps should be taken when considering remarrying after the death of a spouse?

16. The second marriage wasn't going to just impact Abraham but also his family. What issues can arise when someone chooses to remarry? Why should both sides of this seek to be empathetic to the feelings of each other?

⁴ Swindoll, Charles R.. Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith (Kindle Locations 3498-3505). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

TIME FOR ME TO FLY

The final chapter in the life of Abraham ends the same way his life began. In Genesis 12, God began with the promise to bless Abraham; at the end of this passage we see those blessings continued in Abraham's son, Isaac (Genesis 25:11).

God gave Abraham 175 years of life on this earth, and then he breathed his last "at a good old age and full of years." Not only was it a life full of years, but it was a life filled with trials and temptations, failures and victories, tears and laughter. As we reflect on the life of Abraham, we are compelled to ask if Abraham's journey was worth all the trouble he endured. God had made several promises to Abraham. Called by God when he was seventy five years old, Abraham traveled with God for the next one hundred years. Through his pilgrimage he became known as the friend of God. Was living as a nomad in a foreign land worth giving up the wealth and luxury of the metropolis in Ur? What did his faith accomplish for him?

He was promised the whole land of Canaan, yet at his death all he owned was a cave. He was promised that he would be the father of a multitude; at his death all of his sons but Isaac had been sent away. As he had lived, so also Abraham died—a man of faith. During his life he saw only the beginning of the promises God had given him fulfilled, but he trusted that He who began a good work in him would see them to completion.⁵

17. If we looked at Abraham's life from an earthly perspective would we say that his venturing in faith was worth it? What promises were left unrealized at the time of Abraham's death? (Hebrews 11:13)

The scripture describes him as "full of years. This is the Hebrew verb *sābēa'*, "to be sated, satisfied, satiated, surfeited, to have in excess," usually in the sense, "to be satisfied by nourishment," then fullness in other areas of life, such as fullness of days. Abraham's life has been long and full -- blessed by God in many ways.⁶

18. Moses says a mouthful when he says that "Abraham died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years" which speaks of a full and blessed life. What will it take for you to say that you have lived this type of full and blessed life?

⁵ The Death of Abraham Genesis 25:1–11 found @ <https://www.reformedfellowship.net/bible-studies-on-the-life-of-abraham-lesson-19-the-death-of-abraham-genesis-25111>

⁶ Study notes by Ralph Wilson entitled Death of Sarah and Abraham found @ http://www.jesuswalk.com/abraham/11_death.htm

19. Abraham blesses his children with gifts upon his death. Is it important for parents to live and spend wisely so that they might give an inheritance to their children? How can you make your inheritance a blessing and not a curse?

BLAZIN' YOUR OWN TRAIL

Abraham hears God's voice and talks to God personally. For so many, many people -- before and after Abraham -- God is formal, far off, distant. But for Abraham, God is intimate. With all my heart I believe that this is the way God wants to relate to you and me. He wants us to know him and hear him and talk to him intimately, as friend with friend. We are given that gift of intimacy with God through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Not to take advantage of this privilege would be a tragedy indeed.

Abraham believes God. The more he listens to God's words to him, the more he believes. It is this trust in God -- even when God asks the hardest thing of sacrificing Isaac his son -- this faith that God counts to him as righteousness. He is truly the "father of faith" for us all.

Abraham obeys immediately. No matter how hard, when God speaks to Abraham, he obeys quickly -- immediately, "early the next morning."

Abraham worships. He doesn't let his familiarity with God get in the way of his reverence for God's awesome holiness. He worships through prostrating himself, through planting a tree, through building an altar, through sacrificing to God from his flock, through prayer.

Abraham surrenders everything he values to God. Abraham offers one tenth of the spoils of war to God, but his commitment doesn't stop with the tithe. He surrenders his most valued possession to God -- his son Isaac.⁷

20. Which of the above faithful characteristics of Abraham could you improve upon most? What is one takeaway from studying this "ALL IN LIFE"?

⁷ ibid