



GOD CALLS A MAN

Course 3, The People of Destiny, Lesson 4

The Call of Abraham marks a pivotal moment in Biblical history—a divine invitation that set the course for God’s covenant with His people. Abraham’s journey began not in a place of power or prestige but in humble obedience to a call that defied logic and comfort. Leaving his homeland, family, and all that was familiar, Abraham demonstrated remarkable faith in God’s promises, even when their fulfillment seemed distant and improbable. His story reveals profound lessons about trust, surrender, and the blessings of walking in obedience to God’s leading.

God’s call to Abraham wasn’t just about the man himself; it set in motion a plan that would ultimately bring blessings to all nations. Through Abraham’s seed came the promise of redemption, fulfilled in Christ. As we study Abraham’s call, we’re reminded that God still calls individuals today—inviting each of us to trust Him fully, step out in faith, and embrace the plans He has prepared for our lives.

The Problem: The life of Abraham stands as a remarkable testament to God’s faithfulness, guidance, and purpose. His story captures universal human struggles—uncertainty in decision-making, the tension between faith and works, and the challenge of maintaining trust in God amid trials. Abraham’s journey reveals how God not only calls individuals but also equips them to fulfill His broader plan for humanity.

From the very beginning, Abraham faced decisions that required reliance on God’s wisdom rather than human understanding. Leaving behind his homeland and everything familiar, he chose to trust God’s promise of a new land and a great nation, despite the apparent impossibility of the task. His life shows us that while God’s plans may not always be fully clear, His guidance is faithful to those who seek Him.

Abraham’s story also highlights the preservation of true worship and faith. Living in a world steeped in unbelief, Abraham was chosen to uphold the knowledge of the true God and demonstrate righteousness by faith—a theme echoed throughout the New Testament. His obedience and trust became the foundation of a covenant that would bless all nations through Christ, reminding us of God’s ultimate plan to save and unify His people.

Additionally, Abraham’s experiences illustrate the importance of living in alignment with God’s ideals, particularly in family and relationships. Despite challenges and missteps, his life underscores the blessings of following God’s design for marriage and the struggles that arise when human ambitions take precedence over divine will.

Through Abraham’s journey, we see that God’s specific callings and overarching purposes work together to reveal His love, justice, and redemption. His story encourages us to seek unity, humility, and obedience, allowing God to lead us in both the everyday and the extraordinary aspects of our lives.

Objectives:

- I. We begin by examining divine guidance through the experiences of Abraham, emphasizing how God directs His followers.
- II. We explore how, even amid growing apostasy, God preserved the promise of salvation through Christ by working through Abraham.
- III. We recognize how God specifically uses His servants to uphold and sustain true religion on earth, as demonstrated in Abraham’s life.
- IV. We study the way of salvation revealed to Abraham, focusing on the essential balance between faith and works in the Christian experience.

V. We consider Abraham's marital life as a vivid illustration of God's ideal for marriage, while highlighting the potential dangers of deviating from His divine plan.

I. DIVINE GUIDANCE IN ABRAHAM'S LIFE

God is not distant or detached but intimately involved in the lives of those who seek Him. God reveals His will, often through a combination of means, such as His Word (the Bible), prayer, circumstances, the Holy Spirit's prompting, and wise counsel from others.

God provided clear direction to Abraham—calling him to leave his homeland, establishing a covenant with him, and guiding him step by step toward the fulfillment of His promises. Abraham's story serves as an example of how faith and trust in God enable believers to discern His will, even when the path ahead is uncertain or challenging. God's guidance can shape our decisions, provide purpose, and inspire trust in His plans.

The Word:

1. How did the Psalmist express the truth that God guides? Psalm 32:8; compare Psalm 23:2; 48:14; 73:24
2. Where were Abram and his family living when God first called Him to move elsewhere? Genesis 11:29-31; 15:7-15; Acts 7:2-4
3. Where was Abram living when God called Him the second time? To what country did the Lord lead him? Genesis 12:1-5

Explanation: Ur of the Chaldees, identified with the site of Tell el-Muqayyar in modern southern Iraq, was a prominent Sumerian city in Lower Mesopotamia, near the Persian Gulf and south of Babylon. During Abraham's time, Ur was a thriving metropolis known for its advanced civilization, including achievements in architecture, trade, and learning. The city was a major center for the worship of the moon-god Sin (or Nannar in Sumerian), reflecting the pervasive pagan influences that surrounded Abram and his family, despite their faith in the true God.

Excavations conducted by Sir Leonard Woolley between 1922 and 1934 revealed remarkable insights into the city's sophistication. Woolley uncovered the remains of the great ziggurat dedicated to the moon-god, as well as royal tombs, residential areas, and temples. These findings demonstrated that Ur was a hub of cultural and technological advancement, with evidence of skilled craftsmanship, a flourishing textile industry, and an extensive trade network that connected the city to regions as far as India and Anatolia. The discovery of cuneiform tablets further highlighted Ur's role as a center of learning and administration.

It is not difficult to understand why God called Abram out of a city where "pure religion and undefiled" (James 1:27) was virtually absent. Abram and his family, though believers in the true God, were surrounded by pervasive pagan influences in Ur. With his father, Terah, and their entire household, Abram moved north to Haran in Upper Mesopotamia, a city situated on the Balikh River, one of the two major tributaries of the Euphrates. This relocation was clearly intended as a temporary stop on their journey to Canaan.

Haran, like Ur, was a significant center for the worship of the moon-god Sin, reflecting the widespread idolatry of the region. It was here that Terah passed away, marking the end of one chapter in Abram's journey of faith. When Abram departed for Canaan with his nephew Lot, his brother Nahor chose to remain in Haran. Generations later, Nahor's grandson Laban was still living in Haran, and it was to him that Jacob fled to escape the wrath of his brother Esau (Genesis 28:5, 10).

Why did God lead Abram to Canaan? Although Canaan was a land marked by impurity, infidelity, and widespread paganism, God had a greater purpose in leading Abram there. By calling Abram to leave his family and homeland, God created an opportunity for him to grow in faith and offer undivided devotion to the true God. Living as a nomadic

stranger in a foreign land, Abram's reliance on God deepened, free from the influences and ties of his upbringing. Similarly, God sometimes leads us away from familiar places so that we might better fulfill His purpose for our lives.

Moreover, God's plan for Abram extended beyond his immediate family. He intended for Abram and his descendants to serve as emissaries of His truth in Canaan, offering its inhabitants a chance to turn from their evil ways and come to know the true God (Genesis 15:16). God's mercy was evident in His desire to reach the Canaanites even as He prepared to establish Abram's descendants in the land. Ultimately, the entire region of Canaan would become the inheritance of Abram's offspring, fulfilling God's covenant promises (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:7, 18; 17:8; 50:24).

Relevance: As God led Abram and his family, so He leads us today. His guidance, though sometimes taking us away from what is familiar or comfortable, is always directed toward fulfilling His purpose for our lives. When we trust Him and seek His will, we can find assurance that He will guide us, just as He faithfully led Abram.

II. THE PROMISE OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST

Throughout history, the Lord has ensured that the promise of salvation through the Messiah remains unforgotten. As Scripture declares, "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*" Romans 5:20. By the time of Abram, neglect of the true God had become widespread, with idolatry and unbelief dominating much of the world. Yet, in the midst of this spiritual decline, God chose Abram—a man of faith and obedience—as the ancestor of the line through which the Messiah would come. Through Abram, God preserved His redemptive plan, demonstrating His unwavering commitment to bring salvation to all who turn to Him.

The Word:

4. What special promise did God give Abram when He called him to leave Haran? Genesis 12:3; compare 18:18; 22:18
5. To whom was the promise later repeated? Genesis 26:1-4; 28:14
6. What did this special promise mean? Galatians 3:8; John 8:56; Hebrews 2:16
7. How did God demonstrate to Abraham the enormity of the Father's sacrifice in giving His Son to die for the sins of the world? Genesis 22:1-18; compare Hebrews 11:17-19

Explanation: Abraham's life is a testament to God's promise to bless all families and nations through him, ultimately fulfilled in the birth of the Messiah as one of his descendants. When God declared, "*...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 12:3), He was proclaiming the Gospel to Abraham. See Galatians 3:8. This Gospel—salvation through the death of the Son of God—became a living reality for Abraham when he demonstrated unwavering faith in God's command to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham trusted God's assurance that Isaac would be the heir of the covenant promises and the ancestor of the Messiah (Genesis 15:4; 17:16, 19; 21:12). Furthermore, his faith led him to believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill His promise, should the sacrifice be carried out (Hebrews 11:19).

Relevance: The blessings God promised through Abraham extend to the world and to each of us today. Because of his faithfulness, Abraham became the forefather of the Messiah, providing a pathway for redemption. By faith, Abraham looked forward to the coming of Christ, rejoicing in the assurance that his sins would be forgiven (John 8:56). By that same faith, we now look back to the finished work of Christ, celebrating that the penalty for our sins is paid and that in Him we are redeemed.

III. HOW GOD USED ABRAHAM TO PRESERVE TRUE RELIGION

The Lord used Abraham as a witness to the peoples of Canaan and Egypt, revealing His power and truth through Abraham's interactions with them. Even when Abraham faltered in faith, God mercifully overruled his mistakes,

protecting him from harm and using those situations to bring conviction to influential leaders. Abraham's life demonstrated God's sovereignty and ability to work through human imperfections to accomplish His divine purposes.

The Word:

8. What mistake did Abraham make twice, and how did God overrule? Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-18
9. How did Abraham defend Sodom and save the lives of Lot and his family? How did Abraham show his gratitude to God for protecting him? Genesis 14:14-24
10. What special plea did Abraham make for Sodom just before it was destroyed by fire? Genesis 18:22-33

Explanation: The Sodomites had every opportunity to turn to the true God, especially with Lot and his family living among them and Abraham residing nearby. One might expect that, after Abraham defended Sodom against its enemies, the people would repent of their sin and seek God. Yet, their hearts remained hardened, and their iniquity grew so vile that the Lord decided to destroy the city. Even in their final moments, Abraham earnestly interceded for them, pleading with God to spare the city if ten righteous people could be found. This reveals a vital truth: ungodly societies often owe their preservation to the presence of a few faithful individuals who stand as witnesses for God's mercy and grace.

Abraham's own failings also highlight God's ability to work through human imperfection. Twice, Abraham misrepresented Sarah as his sister, which was a partial truth since she was his half-sister (Genesis 20:12). However, presenting her in this way denied her role as his wife, leading to potential harm. Even so, the Lord protected Abraham and Sarah, using these situations to bring conviction to both Pharaoh and Abimelech. This was no credit to Abraham, just as our mistakes are no credit to us. Yet, God's sovereignty ensures that His name is glorified, even when His people falter. This serves as a reminder of His boundless grace and ability to bring good out of human failure.

Relevance: As followers of Christ, we are placed in worldly societies to serve as witnesses for Him (Acts 13:47; Matthew 5:14-16). Our actions, words, and character are observed by those who do not share our faith, offering opportunities to reflect God's love and purity. Only by remaining close to Christ can we truly embody His grace, living as beacons of light in a darkened world.

IV. THE WAY OF SALVATION BY FAITH REVEALED TO ABRAHAM

Throughout Scripture, righteousness and salvation are always grounded in faith. Abraham did not attain salvation through his good works; rather, it was the result of God's grace, which was granted to him because he believed in the divine promises. His faith was the foundation of his relationship with the Lord, and his good works naturally followed as the outward evidence of that faith and trust in God.

The Word:

11. On what basis was righteousness "counted" (reckoned or imputed) to Abraham? Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-5
12. What covenant did God make with Abraham? What was the outward sign of this covenant relationship? Genesis 17:7, 10-14; Romans 4:9-11
13. What did the gift of God's righteousness make it possible for Abraham to do? Genesis 26:4-5
14. What does our faith-grace covenant with God make it possible for us to do? Hebrews 8:10-12; Romans 3:31

Explanation: At the age of 99, Abram received a new name from God—Abraham (Genesis 17:1, 5). The name Abram, meaning "the father is exalted," was transformed into Abraham, meaning "the father of a multitude," reflecting the fulfillment of God's covenant promise. Likewise, Sarai's name was changed to Sarah (Genesis 17:15). Sarai, meaning "my

princess," became Sarah, meaning "a princess," signifying her role not just as Abraham's princess but as the mother of a great nation.

The everlasting covenant of grace given to Abraham affirmed that so long as he believed in the Lord, he would receive God's grace—both the power to live righteously and the assurance of eternal salvation. As Paul explains in Romans 4, the practice of circumcision did not earn God's gift of righteousness for Abraham; rather, it served as a sign of an experience already granted through faith. Similarly, the practices of the Christian Church, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, along with personal good works, do not earn Christ's righteousness or salvation. These are made possible by the gifts of grace we receive through faith. The practices and works serve as outward signs of our covenant relationship with Christ, indicating that we have accepted His salvation and righteousness. The blessing of salvation is ours at the moment we believe (John 3:36; Matthew 5:6), and good works naturally follow as evidence of our faith (John 14:15; Romans 3:31; James 2:18).

Relevance: Abraham's experience can be ours today. Through His Spirit, the Lord brings conviction to our hearts (Romans 2:4), prompting us to respond in faith and accept Christ as Savior and Lord (Mark 9:23). When we do, He gives us His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts as His righteousness (Romans 8:9-10; Ephesians 3:16-17). Circumcision is no longer required as a sign of the covenant relationship (Romans 2:26-29; Galatians 5:2; 6:15), but Christ calls us to wholehearted obedience to His law as a natural response to His gifts of grace (1 John 2:4-5). In this way, we experience the fullness of His covenant blessings, just as Abraham did.

V. ABRAHAM'S MARITAL LIFE

When Abraham doubted God's promise that he would have a son through Sarah, he pursued an alternative solution, leading to a substitute relationship that brought deep sorrow and strife into his home. Similarly, unfaithfulness in marriage often stems from a failure to trust the Lord's provision and a desire to seek fulfillment through our own misguided efforts. True joy and lasting peace come only from relying on God's promises and remaining faithful to His design for our relationships.

The Word:

15. What decision did Abraham and Sarah make to compensate for Sarah's inability to have children? Genesis 16:1-3
16. What was the immediate result? Genesis 16:4-11
17. What was the later result? Genesis 21:9-19
18. According to the Apostle Paul, what two spiritual experiences are illustrated by Abraham's two marriages? Galatians 4:22-26

Explanation: Abraham's marriage to Hagar was a human attempt to fulfill a divine promise—a decision rooted in doubt rather than faith. This act reflected Abraham's "old covenant" experience, relying on human effort instead of trusting God's plan. Similarly, whenever we struggle to trust God and seek to fulfill His promises through our own works or outward practices, we fall into the same pattern of the old covenant, often resulting in spiritual failure and disappointment.

In contrast, when Abraham placed his faith in God's promise, he experienced the fulfillment of the divine miracle—the birth of Isaac. At the age of 100, with Sarah at 90 (Genesis 21:1-7; compare 17:17), God demonstrated His power and faithfulness. This was Abraham's "new covenant" or everlasting covenant experience, where trust in the Lord brought the assurance of His promises and the joy of living in His grace. When we believe in the Lord, we too can experience the fulfillment of His promises and find lasting joy in Christ.

Relevance: As we conclude this study of Abraham, consider the following questions:

1. Do you trust God to guide your life, even in times of uncertainty, as Abraham trusted Him?
2. Are you willing to enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord, relying fully on His grace and promises?
3. Have you accepted Christ and the gift of His righteousness and salvation?
4. Are you committed to living for Christ—modeling His love in your family life and representing Him in your community?

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. God is not concerned about our personal decisions regarding where we should live etc.
 - b. Old Testament people were saved by grace just as we are.
 - c. Good works make our salvation more certain.
 - d. Our experience of Christ's salvation and righteousness makes good works possible.
2. Discuss: How do Abraham's life experiences demonstrate God's extraordinary forgiveness and grace toward those who are faithful and loyal, even when they make mistakes? How does this encourage us in our own faith journey?