

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
May 4, 2014
Hebrews 11:8-19
“The Faith of Abraham

Memory Verse

“By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.” Hebrews 11:11, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Topic: *Learning to Trust Jesus: Part 2 – Examples of the Faith: Abraham*

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 11:8-19, Genesis 12:1-5; 15:1-5; 22:1-18

Sunday School Title: “The Faith of Abraham

ESS: Abraham’s faith enabled him to obey despite the unknowns, believe God, trust in God’s provision, and wait confidently for his future reward.

REVIEW: Last week we talked about some characteristics of faith. (Review with the class the points from last week’s lesson – *Faith is combined with hope; Faith believes in God’s existence and character; Faith is trust; Faith results in obedience.*)

For the next few weeks, we will study Hebrews 11, focusing on various Biblical characters as examples of faith.

- Do you know anyone that you would describe as having great faith?
- What is it about this person that makes her/him different?
- How do you know his/her faith is strong?
- What about you, is your life characterized by strong faith?
- Do you rely more on faith or sight?

This week, we’ll study Abraham and the faith he exhibited.

READ Hebrews 11:8-19

ABRAHAM’S FAITH ENABLED HIM TO:

1. OBEY DESPITE THE UNKOWNS

READ Genesis 12:1-5

In Genesis 12, we see that God called Abraham to pick up and go. God said, “leave your country, people, and father’s household and go to a land I will show you” (Gen 12:1). God didn’t supply many details. The specific destination wasn’t described. The details of the journey weren’t given. God told Abraham to go, and “by faith, Abraham obeyed” (Heb 11:8). Notice that Abraham obeyed God’s call to go even though there were many unknowns. I’m sure Abraham had questions and hesitations. *Why do I need to go somewhere else? How will I provide for my family? Will we be protected throughout the journey? Where will we end up? How is this for my descendants when I don’t have any kids?!?* There were probably more questions than answers. But this didn’t stop Abraham from obeying in faith. True faith obeys God’s call, even when the unknowns outnumber the givens.

Henry Blackaby teaches that if you can see and explain the details of what you’re doing, you’re not operating by faith. Faith is the opposite of seeing and knowing. Have you ever felt called by God but failed to obey because you didn’t have enough details? How is living by faith challenging?

2. BELIEVE GOD

READ Genesis 15:1-6

In Genesis 15, we see God explain to Abraham that, despite Abraham's old age and his wife's barren womb, God will enable them to bear a son. And this son will be the beginning of descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. For an old man and wife who had tried for years to have children, God's promise must have sounded a bit far-fetched. Their age and physical state of their bodies were beyond the prime time for child-bearing. Having a son now just didn't make much sense. *Why now? If it hasn't happened for years, how's it gonna happen now?* But once again, Abraham believed God's promise, despite the questions he must have had. In fact, Scripture says "by faith, Abraham was enabled to become a father *because he considered him faithful who had made the promise*" (Heb 11:11). Genesis 15:6 says, "Abraham believed the Lord." Abraham's faith wasn't in God's blessings or gifts. His faith was in God. Abraham *believed* God. Abraham didn't just believe *in* God; he *believed* God. There's a difference in believing *in* someone and *believing* someone. If you believe *in* someone, you see his potential and hope he will live up to it. On the other hand, if you *believe* someone, you have absolute trust that he WILL live up to his word and fulfill his promises. For Abraham, God's promise was indeed mysterious, but he knew, without a doubt, that God was faithful. Whatever God said, Abraham took it to heart and banked on it because he *believed* God.

How would our lives be different if we truly believed God instead of just believing in Him? How would our families be different? Our church?

3. TRUST IN GOD'S PROVISION

READ Genesis 22:1-14

In Genesis 22, we see God command Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Think how strange this must have sounded to Abraham. God promised to give Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age. God promised that this son would be the beginning of descendants as numerous as the stars. And then, God calls Abraham to kill this son – the fulfillment of one promise and the hope of promises to come. In addition to the gut-wrenching fear and sadness that must have consumed Abraham, he must have had questions, too. *Why Isaac? Why must I kill him? How will he begin a line of descendants if he's dead? Why would you give me this gift of a son only to take him from me?* But once again, despite the questions he must have had, Abraham obeys. Abraham surely realized that God's command to sacrifice Isaac seemed to contradict God's promise to give Abraham numerous descendants. (See Hebrews 11:17-18.) And yet, Abraham obeys with confidence that God will take care of fulfilling His promises. On his way up the mountain, Abraham assures his son "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering" (Gen 22:8). Abraham's faith trusted fully in God's ability to provide. Whether God's provision turned out to be a ram for the sacrifice in Isaac's stead, or whether God miraculously raised Isaac back from the dead after the sacrifice, Abraham trusted in God's provision. In our own lives, the question of provision often hinders us from walking in faith. We worry about finances, jobs, education, safety, etc. If the answers and opportunities aren't readily available, we tend to hesitate. But if we can see and understand every part of the plan, is faith necessary at all?

Describe a time when you stepped out in faith and watched God faithfully provide for you.

4. WAIT FOR HIS OBEDIENCE TO BE REWARDED

READ Genesis 22:15-18

After Abraham willingly obeyed the Lord and prepared to sacrifice Isaac, God promised to reward him. Genesis 22:16 says, "Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, I will surely bless you." So there's no question that God rewards faith and obedience. But the reward God offers is a future reward. God's reward involves Abraham's descendants years down the road. In fact, God's promise of blessing the entire world through Abraham's family won't fully come to fruition until Jesus, the Messiah, comes - hundreds of years later. Hebrews 11:13 says that Abraham "was still living by faith when he died. He did not receive the things promised; he only saw them and welcomed them from a distance." Many times, we may not get to see and enjoy the immediate reward of our faith and obedience. Those rewards

may come years down the road, even after we're dead and gone. But we can be assured that because of our faith, "God is not ashamed to be called (our) God, for he has prepared a city for (us)" (Hebrews 11:16). God promises to reward our faith (Hebrews 11:6). And sometimes we must wait for the manifestation of that reward. But in the meantime, we can experience the reward of God's presence in our daily lives and cling confidently to the hope of an eternal reward in Heaven with Him.

My grandfather used to say, "the difference between a good meal and a GREAT meal is about 60 minutes." Waiting for something good can be difficult. But sometimes it's more than worth it! Is waiting for God's reward worth it? What are some of the rewards God promises us? What rewards does God give us now when we exercise faith?

CONCLUSION: Abraham's faith enabled him to obey despite the unknowns, believe God, trust in God's provision, and wait confidently for his future reward.

APPLY:

God calls us to walk by faith. Is there an area of your life where God is asking you to take a step of faith? What is holding you back? Pray and ask God to enable you to step forward in faith-filled obedience, despite the unknowns.

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your personal study. This is NOT the lesson.)

Study Guide by David Guzik, 2001. Available online: www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david

By faith, Abraham obeyed: Abraham did step out in faith, going to a new place God had promised him; but his faith was less than perfect. This is seen by comparing [Genesis 12:1-5](#) with [Acts 7:2-4](#), where it is evident that Abraham first went half way to the place God called him to go, and only *eventually* obeyed completely. Yet now, thousands of years later, God does not "remember" the delayed obedience, only the faith.

By faith, he dwelt in the land of promise: Abraham lived as a "sojourner" in the land God had promised, never owning any of it except the plots that he and Sarah were buried on. **Dwelt** is the ancient Greek word *paroikos*, describing a "resident alien" - one who lives somewhere, but doesn't have permanent status there. A resident alien or a sojourner is evident. The way they talk, the way they dress, their mannerisms, their entertainment, their citizenship, and their friends, all speak of their native home. If someone is the same in all these areas as the "natives," they are no longer sojourners - they are permanent residents. Christians shouldn't get "green cards" for planet earth!

Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob: Because they had no permanent home, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in **tents** instead of houses. They looked forward to a better city - **the city which has foundations, who builder and maker is God.**

By faith Sarah: Sarah's faith was not perfect. She first laughed in unbelief ([Genesis 18:9-15](#)) and then she learned to laugh in faith ([Genesis 21:6](#)).

Because she judged Him faithful who had promised: Faith boils down to judging that God is faithful to and able to keep His promises. It was this faith that enabled Sarah to **receive strength to conceive seed**. God gave the strength, but Sarah had to receive it by faith.

Were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude: Because of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, thousands - millions -of descendants were born. Their faith had an impact on more lives than they ever dreamed of.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises: The promise of the Messiah was made to Abraham and Sarah, and they believed the promise. Yet they **died** having never received it, only seeing it **in faith**.

They **saw the promises afar off**, willing to look at and consider the promise of God, even though it seemed so far away.

They **were assured of them**: They carefully considered the promise, and assured themselves that the promise had to be valid because it was God making the promise.

They **embraced them**: They took the promise and embrace it in faith. How many times in a day do you think Abraham and Sarah thought of the son God promised had them? Many, many times - they **embraced** the promise.

They **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims**: Abraham and Sarah always took the promise with the understanding that this world was not their home; that God had a better and more enduring home for them in heaven.

If these examples of faith endured through difficulty and discouragement without **having received the promises**, how much more should we who have received those promises?

They seek a homeland ... they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Walking in faith is easier when we remember that this world is not our home. It is easier when we remember that on this side of eternity, not everything is settled and every wrong is not righted. That is why they **seek a homeland** and a **better ... heavenly country**.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: But for those courageous enough to believe in God, and to believe in Him as *real*, and heaven and eternal life as *real*, **God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them**. We may speak of the fact that we cannot be ashamed of God; but do we often consider that God may be ashamed of us? When we do not regard God and heaven and eternity as real, there can be a sense in which God is **ashamed to be called our God!**

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac: The verb tense for **offered up** indicates that as far as Abraham was concerned, the sacrifice was complete. In his will and in his purpose, he really did sacrifice his son.

Offered up his only begotten son: Though Abraham had another son (Ishmael, the son of his fleshly attempt to fulfill God's promise), God did not recognize the other son ([Genesis 22:1-14](#)) - so Isaac could be called **his only begotten son**.

Accounting that God was able: **Accounting** means in the ancient Greek just what it sounds like in English. It is a term from arithmetic expressing "a decisive and carefully reasoned act." (Guthrie) This means that Abraham calculated God's promise worthy of confidence.

From the dead, from which he also received him: As far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead, and it was from the dead that he received him back, in a manner that prefigured the resurrection of Jesus. When Abraham was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed to contradict each other, he did what we all should do: he obeyed the command and let God take care of the promise - which God was more than able to do!