

LIFE LESSONS WITH MAX LUCADO

JOURNALING

How can I tell others about God's free gift?

L E S S O U R



THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

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REFLECTION

To benefit the most from this lesson, take a few minutes to review Abraham's life in the Bible. Here are some key passages: Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-6; 22:1-18; and Galatians 3:6-9. As you consider Abraham's life, try to think of someone who has been an example of great faith to you. What are the evidences of that person's faith?

SITUATION

In order to make his case for God's ancient plan of salvation, Paul traced the Jewish lineage back to its beginning with Abraham. The original patriarch of the Jewish nation was not himself a Jew. Paul argued that if God granted salvation (righteousness by faith) to Abraham, long before he fathered the Jewish nation, would it not make sense to conclude that God has a plan for the rest of Gentiles? And God's plan has always been based on faith, not lineage.

OBSERVATION

Read Romans 4:13-25 in the NCV or the NKJV.

NCV

¹³Abraham and his descendants received the promise that they would get the whole world. He did not receive that promise through the law, but through being right with God by his faith. ¹⁴If people could receive what God promised by following the law, then faith is worthless. And God's promise to Abraham is worthless, ¹⁵because the law can only bring God's anger. But if there is no law, there is nothing to disobey.

¹⁶So people receive God's promise by having faith. This happens so the promise can be a free gift. Then all of Abraham's children can have that promise. It is not only for those who live under the law of Moses but for anyone who lives with faith like that of Abraham, who is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written in the Scriptures: "I am making you a father of many nations." This is true before God, the God Abraham believed, the God who gives life to the dead and who creates something out of nothing.

¹⁸There was no hope that Abraham would have children. But Abraham believed God and continued hoping, and so he became the father of many nations. As God told him, "Your descendants also will be too many to count." ¹⁹Abraham was almost a hundred years old, much past the age for having children, and Sarah could not have children. Abraham thought about all this, but his faith in God did not become weak. ²⁰He never doubted that God would keep his promise, and he never stopped believing. He grew stronger in his faith and gave praise to God. ²¹Abraham felt sure that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²So, "God accepted Abraham's faith, and that faith made him right with God." ²³Those words ("God accepted Abraham's faith") were written not only for Abraham ²⁴but also for us. God will accept us also because we believe in the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵Jesus was given to die for our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God.

KJV

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of the law are righteous, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷(as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸who, contrary to hope, in faith believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "I shall be your father." ¹⁹And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was able to perform. ²²And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²⁴but also for us. We shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

EXPLORATION

Tell how Abraham became right with God. Abraham's life may have been filled with love for God, good works, and obedience to religious rules. But none of these things made Abraham acceptable to God. What did?

2. How did Abraham receive God's promise? How can others receive it?

3. What obstacles did Abraham overcome to believe God's promise?

4. What does it mean to have a strong faith? Does strength of faith rely on its source or on its object?

1. What words were written for both Abraham and us?

INSPIRATION

Henry Drummond [writes:] "You will find, if you think for a moment, that the people who influence you are people who believe in you. In an atmosphere of suspicion men shrivel up; but in that atmosphere they expand and find encouragement and educative fellowship. It is a wonderful thing that here and there in this hard uncharitable world there should still be left a few rare souls who think of evil. This is the great unworldliness. Love sees the bright side, puts the best instruction on every action. What a delightful state of mind to live in! What a stimulus and benediction even to meet with it for a day! To be trusted is to be loved. And if we try to influence or elevate others, we shall soon see that success is in proportion to their belief of our belief in them. For the respect of another is the first restoration of the self-respect a man has lost; our ideal of what he is becomes to him the hope and pattern of what he may become."

His faith moves mountains of inertia in other people. It pulverizes prejudices and impossibilities. This faith is the fruit of God's Gracious Spirit that sweetens our world. It replaces suspicion and distrust with friendship and hope and joy and cheer. It makes our friends, family, and casual acquaintances stand tall.

Nothing of this caliber comes from God. If we lack it we must ask for it. He urges us to come boldly requesting good gifts from Him (Luke 11:9-13). He does not withhold His Gracious Spirit on those who request His presence and are prepared to cooperate wholeheartedly with His commands (Acts 5:32). He will not withhold any good thing from those who seek His faith in sincerity. He is faithful. From *A Gardener Looks at the Fruits of the Spirit* by Philip Keller

REACTION

6. How does Abraham's example inspire you to a deeper faith?

7. How can our life of faith influence others?

Describe a time when someone else's faith made a difference in your life.

What things can keep our faith from growing?

What do you usually do when you experience doubts?

II. What can we learn from Abraham about dealing with hindrances to faith?

LIFE LESSONS

Almost everyone in Abraham's day, as in our own day, had faith of one kind or another. Some of them believed in idols, others believed in luck or fate, and many simply had faith in themselves. Abraham's faith had a divine object. He had faith in God, and he acted on it. The faith people witness in our lives may not automatically communicate the object of our faith. They will see the effects of our faith. If they ask, we must be ready to tell them our faith rests in Jesus Christ. We live by faith because we live in him.

DEVOTION

Father, you accepted Abraham's faith, and you accept ours today. We do not deserve your forgiveness and mercy, yet you give it freely. Thank you for covering our guilt in the blood of your only Son. Continue to strengthen our faith in you, for your glory.

For more Bible passages on faith, see Genesis 15:6; 2 Chronicles 20:20; Isaiah 7:9; Habakkuk 2:4; Matthew 9:29; Acts 15:9; Romans 5:1; 10:17.

To complete the book of Romans during this twelve-part study, read Romans 4:1–5:21.

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How are the people around me impacted by my faith in God?

L E S S O N I V E



VICTORY OVER SIN

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