

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Third Quarter 2015: *Missionaries*
Lesson 2 “Abraham: The First Missionary”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 12:1–3, 14:8–24; Hebrews 11:8–19; Galatians 3:6; Genesis 12:6, 7, 18:18, 19.

Memory Text

“So also Abraham ‘believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’” (Galatians 3:6–8, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Call of Abraham
- III. Abraham’s Testimony to the Kings
- IV. Exemplar of Faith
- V. Abraham, the Wanderer
- VI. Abraham: A Missionary in His Own House
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. The Introduction to the Quarter’s lessons (page 8 suggests that Revelation 14:6-7 is like a “Great Commission” contextualized for the last days of earth’s history. Read and compare Matthew 28:18-20 and Revelation 14:6-7. What are some of the similarities and differences between the two passages? What can we learn about God from this comparison? What can we learn about the task God has set before His end-time people? (Introduction to whole Quarter)
2. Read Galatians 3:6-8. What does Paul mean when he suggests that God “announced the gospel in advance” to Abraham? What is the gospel and how so you think this applied to Abraham’s situation? (Sabbath Afternoon’s lesson)
3. Read Genesis 12:1-3. What three things did God promise to Abraham? What is the relationship between this passage and Genesis 1:26-28 and the Fall (Genesis 3)? How did Paul draw the conclusion that Abraham was the “heir to the world” (Romans 4:13)? (Sunday’s lesson)

4. Read Genesis 14:8-24. What did Abraham's actions in this chapter say about his character, his faith, and his God? How do you think the fact that Abraham was an immigrant affected his faith and his views of God? Did Abraham and the peoples around him understand the concept of one God at this time? For historical background to this question do an internet search on the term "monotheism." (Monday's lesson)
5. Read Hebrews 11:8-19. What does this passage tell us about Abraham and his faith? In what way do you think he is an "example of faithfulness?" What are the implications of the Abraham story for anyone who wants to be a missionary for God? In what ways have you personally experienced what it means to "step out in faith?" (Tuesday's lesson)
6. What was Abraham's spiritual condition at the time God made the call of Genesis 12:1-3 (Joshua 24:2-3)? How does travel impact our spiritual condition? How can one maintain a balance between openness to new ideas and commitment to what you already believe? (Wednesday's lesson)
7. Read Genesis 22:1-14. What spiritual lessons did Abraham learn in the course of this story? What does this story tell us about God? Would Abraham have been even more faithful to God if he had said "no" when God invited him to sacrifice the son of the promise? (Wednesday's lesson)
8. Read Genesis 18:18-19. What important lessons about faithfulness and serving God do we find in these texts? What evidence is there that Abraham's family was faithful to the Lord after him (Hebrews 11:11, 20)? What does it mean to "keep the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:19)? (Thursday's lesson)
9. Read Genesis 12:11-13, 20:2. What do these accounts tell us about Abraham's faith? What do they tell us about God? (Friday's lesson)

A Fresh Translation of Key Passages

Matthew 28:18-20

And after arriving Jesus spoke to them,
 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 Therefore go (having gone)
 make disciples of all nations
 baptizing them in the name of
 the Father and of
 the Son and of
 the Holy Spirit
 teaching them to keep (observe) all that I have commanded you
 And behold, I am with you every day ("all the days")
 Even until the close of the age."

Revelation 14:6-7

And I saw another angel
 flying in mid-heaven,
 having the everlasting gospel to preach
 to those who live on the earth,
 to every nation, tribe, language and people.
 Saying with a loud voice,
 "Fear God and
 give glory to Him,
 because the hour of His judgment has come, and
 worship Him who made
 the heaven, and
 the earth, and
 the sea, and
 the fountains of water."

Genesis 12:1-3

And Yahweh said to Abram,
 "Go (for yourself) away from
 your land (country),
 your relatives, and
 your father's home,
 to the land (country) which I will show to you.
 And I will make you into a great nation, and
 I will bless (*barack*) you, and
 I will cause your name to be great
 And you will be a blessing.
 And I will bless those who bless you, and
 whoever makes fun of you will be cursed, and
 all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

A Graphic Illustration

| CREATION | CURSE | GEN 12:1-3 | GEN 17:1-8 |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| God | Separation | Blessing | Relationship |
| Others | Pain | Nation | Posterity |
| Earth | Thorns | Land | Canaan |

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When God picks a person in the Bible who exemplifies the highest fulfillment of His ambitions for us sinners, when He finally really wins somebody, and He inspires later writers to say, "If you want to know what God wants, look at him, all the way through the Bible." It's Abraham. Over and over it's Abraham who was what God wanted. And it says of Abraham that he was God's friend. And what was it that made him such a friend? It always says Abraham trusted God. Now, a version may say "believed God." Same word, there's only one word for belief, trust, faith, all the same word. That's why we need the different versions. Abraham trusted God, he really did. And God considered him His friend.

Now evidence that he really trusted God, James says, is that he loved cooperating with God and doing what God said. And when God said take your son, sacrifice him; the trust was not, "Well, if you say so God, fine, I'll do it." No, he trusted God enough to say, "God, as I know you that will make sense some day. It surely doesn't now. But I hear you speaking. We've talked so often, I know you wouldn't ask me to do something wrong, or something that will confuse others for eternity, so I'm on my way. But may I reverently ask you why?" And for three days and three nights he asked Him why. And he came to a conclusion. God would either resurrect his son or provide a substitute and Hebrews says he was right. He showed he was a friend. And James says see how Abraham, the friend of God, *showed* his trust. He didn't just say, "Sure, I believe in God."

James says the devils do that and it scares them. They're no friends of God. Abraham's trust was the trust of a friend, and a friend shows his friendship in certain, very special ways, like being jealous for your friend's reputation. And when God said I'm going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham said, "God how could you? As I know you, you wouldn't. I mean, if there were fifty saints there you wouldn't. Forty. Thirty. Forgive me if I seem irreverent, but God, shouldn't the judge of all the earth do what is right?"

They must have been good friends to talk like that. It doesn't say, "And God rebuked him for talking like that and didn't speak to him for a month." No, God says, "Who else knows me that well? I love your jealousy for my reputation. You're right, I wouldn't destroy them if there were five saints, but I can't find that many." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angels' Messages, #1, recorded October, 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MM3ANGELSM>

What's the main thing that is mentioned of Abraham? Abraham trusted God, and God said, "That's what I'm looking for."

Sometimes we read that as a sort of accounting procedure. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him in the ledger as righteousness." No, in the great controversy, my understanding would be, every once in awhile there has arisen an individual on this planet; and they are not all men, there are women mentioned, who really trusted God. Trusted in Him enough to listen, and God did wonderful things with those people, and their conversations are on record. Moses was another; Job was another. And God says to the family, makes mention of it in Scripture, "There's a friend with whom I can speak face-to-face as a man speaks with his friend." And there's one thing mentioned of every one of them—the word "trust" or "faith" or "belief." All God has ever asked of us is trust. Sin is a breach of trust. The remedy is to win us back to trust. And do we see much evidence in Genesis as a basis for trust? I think it starts right away, in the seven days of creation week. And every weekend as Sabbath rolls around, we are reminded of the evidence that begins on page one, that God is respectful of our freedom, infinitely generous. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job*, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: In our Bible reference sheet we have the passage regarding Abraham, and James' reference to that. Abraham is referred to as a "man of faith." Couldn't you call it "blind faith" when Abraham set out to obey God—when God said, "Take your son. I want you to bring him and to offer him as a sacrifice"?

Graham: This is very similar to the example you just gave. We were not there at Creation to see. We do have confidence in the biblical record because it has proved in so many other ways to be trustworthy. Abraham's relationship with God—why, they were two of the best friends in all history! Abraham knew God well. He had had long experience with God. When God asked him to do things before, it had always worked out well and it made sense. So there was no *blind* faith on Abraham's part. God asked him to do something that puzzled him a great deal. At the moment he couldn't understand. But he said, "God, if it is you saying it (and I know you so well) I know this will make sense and there will be some solution, so I'm on my way." This kind of faith is saying, "God, I'm on my way, but may I ask you why?" And so on the way, he asked why. And as he thought it through, he thought, the One who gave me this son miraculously is well able to resurrect my son. Or maybe He will provide a substitute. And Hebrews says he was right. So instead of that being blind faith, I would say he knew God well enough to go—and to know that there would be a solution that would make sense. And so it did.

Lou: But there was in that experience an element of uncertainty. That is to say, how will it work out? There was pain, certainly.

Graham: He wondered.

Lou: Yes. So faith can include that kind of thing.

Graham: Because God is so trustworthy, we are willing to obey Him when He asks us to do something beyond our present understanding. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks Is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

How you define faith and trust enters into this. And we need to read other places. To me, faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known; and we get to know Him through the gospel. The good news is about God, that He is infinitely worthy of our trust. It implies an attitude toward God of love, and trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God, based upon the more than adequate evidence, all summed up in the good news, to be willing to believe what God says—as soon as we're sure *He* said it! And to accept what God offers, as soon as we're sure *He's* offering it, and to do whatever God wishes, without reservation, as soon as we're sure *He's* asking us, and not somebody else. Anybody who has such a trusting relationship with God, of love, trust, and admiration, willing to listen, is perfectly safe to save.

He could die just beginning that relationship, like the thief on the cross. He would arise loving, trusting, and admiring that kind One in the middle. He will be willing to listen, and accept all kinds of instruction and correction. He is therefore safe to save. But you can't regard God in that attitude without a new heart and a right spirit. So you are a new creature, which he's going to mention in a moment.

And that's what David eventually wanted—truth and honesty in the inner man. Mention honesty, and you remember Micah, Amos, Hosea, they all talked about this. All God asks of us is that we stand humbly in His presence with an honest willingness to listen, and let Him do for us whatever needs to be done.

I would add that even though with the passing of time I'm finding more and more that everything God has asked us to do makes such good sense and I agree with Him; I would have to say that being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I'm willing to obey this trustworthy God when He instructs me to do something beyond my present understanding. Wouldn't that be safe? Because He's proved always to make such good sense in every other respect. And I think that's what Abraham said to Him. "God, you've always made such good sense. But your

command to sacrifice the son of the promise makes no sense to me. But I know it will. So God, I'm on my way." I believe faith says to God, "God, I hear you, and I've checked that carefully. It is you. And I am on my way. But as I go, in all reverence, may I ask why?" "And that's how we come to know God. And for three days and three nights Abraham thought that through; and in the end he said, "God, I'm even beginning to think of ways in which you could work this out. I'm not telling You how, but I know you will; because you'll not contradict yourself in the promise you gave me about my son. Maybe you'll resurrect my son. Just as you gave him miraculously, you could easily resurrect him. Or maybe you'll provide a substitute."

And that's what God chose to do. And Abraham is cited in Hebrews 11 as one who trusted God, but thought it through. Faith is not blind. You can jump off a cliff if you take leaps in the dark, and call that faith. It is not safe. History is strewn with the wreckage of people who leap in the dark and call it faith. Light makes faith possible, and without it we ought to wait. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

And yet, is it not in the realm of religion, that's the only one, where we are invited to believe without evidence? And that's called very wonderful, because that's 'faith'. And the more willing you are to believe without evidence, the more faith you have. Which would mean that the more you know what you believe in, the less faith you will need. Because eventually, when you really know, you won't need any more faith because you know. So if you really know God, then you don't need any faith. That doesn't make much sense, does it?

We shouldn't be using the word "faith" at all, because faith has come to mean "believing in something you know isn't so," or believing something for which you have inadequate evidence. The word in the Bible is "trust." And the Bible warns us against trusting people we do not know. Don't even trust prophets who say, "I am a prophet of the Most High, and the angel of the Lord has told me this." "But he lied to him." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians and 1&2 Thessalonians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links: <http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)*

Further Study with Ellen White

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

God called Abraham, and prospered and honored him; and the patriarch's fidelity was a light to the people in all the countries of his sojourn. Abraham did not shut himself away from the people around him. He maintained friendly relations with the kings of the surrounding nations, by some of whom he was treated with great respect; and his integrity and unselfishness, his valor and benevolence, were representing the character of God. In Mesopotamia, in Canaan, in Egypt, and even to the inhabitants of Sodom, the God of heaven was revealed through His representative. {PP 368.2}

Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate, infuse it, that it may be preserved. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved as masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. It is to work with the influence of Christ, to lift where Christ lifts, to impart correct principles, and to stay the progress of the world's corruption. It is to diffuse that grace which Christ alone can impart. It is to uplift, to sweeten the lives and characters of others by the power of a pure example united with earnest faith and love. {PK 232.2}