

## Daring to Move Forward

Series: Daring Faith

Brad Bailey - October 21, 2018

Faith as \_\_\_\_\_ expressed in \_\_\_\_\_

Abraham - The Father of Faith

*"...to those who believe as Abraham did... Abraham is the spiritual father of us all..." - Romans 4:16 (GNT)*

Hebrews 11:8-10 (NLT)

Moving forward in faith...

1. Begins with a \_\_\_\_\_.

*The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed." - Genesis 12:1-3 (GW)*

A call from \_\_\_\_\_

A call to \_\_\_\_\_

A call that is beyond our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
and requires trust

2. Requires leaving what is \_\_\_\_\_...and  
\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Involves not settling down \_\_\_\_\_.

Genesis 12:6-9 (NLT)

*Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abram*

*built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup> After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. <sup>9</sup> Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.*

4. May involve \_\_\_\_\_ from attachments when needed.

Genesis 13:5-9 (GW)

*Lot, who had been traveling with Abram, also had his own sheep, cattle, and tents. <sup>6</sup> There wasn't enough pastureland for both of them. ...<sup>7</sup> Quarrels broke out between Abram's herders and Lot's herders. ...<sup>8</sup> Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have any more quarrels between us or between our herders. After all, we're relatives. .... Let's separate. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right, and if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."*

5. May have to \_\_\_\_\_ the blessing on the \_\_\_\_\_...as we trust the One who blesses for life itself.

Genesis 22:2:

Hebrews 11:17-19

*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*

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Today we are continuing our venture into DARING FAITH.

As notes in our first week...

***Faith is the connection to the bigger world.... the intersection between the finite and infinite.***

When the **word faith is used**... it can refer to a set **a set of propositions** which **one agrees with**...as when we speaks of **“the Christian faith.”**

But this is where **we have lost the dynamic truth about faith.** We have created a culture that pours out lots of knowledge... and focuses on whether we simply agree... and refer to such agreement as belief.

But real belief is what **you actually trust in.**

**Illus CHAIR** – Agree that that is a chair with secure structure...and sitting down on it.

As the Biblical writer James says...

*My brothers and sisters, if people say they have faith, but do nothing, their faith is worth nothing.* - - James 2:14 (NCV)

The faith we are talking about could be described as...

***Faith is trust expressed in response.***

**And today we continue to engage this dynamic faith...** as captured by the life that has long been called the **father of faith.... Referring to the man Abraham. [1]**

When God began to rescue the world ... it began with a call to a particular life. God said that He would rescue the world through a people that would be formed from Abraham.

**The Bible places Abraham in very historic terms.**

He is rooted in the **most exact of ancestry**...noting his exact ancestry... year of father’s birth and death.

And the **most exact of places.** Told how he his family “Ur of the Chaldeans”.

For so long... **many deemed that such figures** must be **projections of more local and later tribal figures**... until the excavation began throughout the areas...and discovered that the biblical book of Genesis, narratives fit perfectly with what, from other sources, is known today of the early 2nd millennium BCE.

Most scholars now agree that **Ur Kasdim** was the Sumerian city about 200 miles southeast of Baghdad in **modern day Iraq.**

The city of Harran has been found on the site of the modern **Harran in Turkey.** [2]

**And from his historic position he is known as the father of all of the major monotheistic religions. From his son Isaac comes the Jewish people. From his son Ishmael comes the**

Arab people often associated with the Muslim religion. And in terms of genealogy... it is through his lineage... that leads to Christ's earthly father.

But God is very clear that genealogy is not what makes Abraham our father. It may root him in history...but it is the fact that he trusted God...and was responsive to God...that makes him the spiritual father of all who then follow.

People had begun to forget God...and worship pagan false powers...and God speaks to him...about calling him to leave...and to leave and God will be forming a people to help bless the whole world.

### Hebrews 11:8-10 (NLT)

*It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. <sup>10</sup> Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.*

When God called... he went.

### Romans 4:16 (GNT)

*to those who believe as Abraham did... Abraham is the spiritual father of us all;*

Today... bring together **some of the key aspects** of what is involved with the process of faith... the process of **moving forward in faith**.

### Moving forward in faith...

#### 1. Begins with a calling.

### Genesis 12:1-3 (GW)

*The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed."*

The first thing we should recognize...is that faith is about how we respond to a call...and that it is...

### A call from beyond ourselves

I think there is an idea that faith is about **positive thinking**. Realists find it hard...because they don't always see that everything is so ideal.

But the **Bible doesn't suggest that everything is ideal**. It calls us to trust what God says.

That begins with what He has said (Scriptures)...as well as the calling we hear from Him.

**Doesn't say** is was an **external audible voice**. It simply shares what Abraham heard in some form or fashion.

For some that can **seem elusive**.

- But let's start by desiring and quieting...
- Some of us have a sense of what God is calling us to already... and we've been stalling... settling.

So... "What is God calling you to?"

If you don't sense anything...it may be a good season to create space to listen.

Many of us...DO have a sense...but have stalled.

Second thing about such a calling... is that it is often...

### **A call to change**

Leaving his land **involved sacrifice**. Ur was **evidently a bustling, wealthy city**. Excavations have revealed that **very comfortable homes** existed in ancient Ur; some had a dozen or more rooms for family and servants, all arranged around a paved inner courtyard. **Common amenities** included water fountains, lavatories, and waste disposal. Remember, too, that Abram and Sarai were **far from young**; he was likely in his 70's, she in her 60's. He surely **wanted Sarai to be reasonably comfortable** and well cared for—what any good husband wants for his wife. [4]

**Most people don't really want change. SO we don't really want to hear God's calling. We want faith without change.**

Thirdly... such a calling is...

A call that is beyond our scope and understanding...and requires trust

**I like planning** and preparation.

I know there is a difference between responding to what one has figured out...and what one can't know.

So I appreciate what is so central to the faith of our father.

He is **asked to leave everything**... and **go to a place God will show him**.

This is precisely what it means to become the **finite trusting an infinite God**.

We are **not going to understand**.

Mystery... always is.

You see in life we only connect to what we can contain and control...or we understand we are a part of something that isn't closed...and we try to listen...discern.

Tendency to hear such a calling in a **romanticized way**.

We think he was told he won a game show and the curtain was about to be opened.

We may think he simply won a trip to paradise... with travel accommodations.

It's dishonors Abraham... it dishonors faith.

Abraham was called to a promised land...but Abraham had **plenty of problems** and plenty of **pain** and plenty of **perplexity**.

Some too old...Abraham was **75 when called**.

Some...life feels more cursed with problems... Abraham had **no children**... in a culture who knew such a state as the saddest of curses...and had a wife whose agony he knew every day.

### **Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Faith is knowing that IN ALL THINGS...God can bring blessing.

The only thing God told him was to go and that he would be with him. He knew that God told him that he would bless him and make him a great nation, but he could not see how God was going to do that. It is one thing for God to tell you something, and it is quite another to understand how he is going to accomplish it. We want to understand all the details and know the outcome before we really put our feet up and relax.

### **Moving forward in faith...**

#### **2. Requires leaving what is familiar...and comfortable.**

Of course ...this is the central point... he left.

**Nothing easy** about that.

You can imagine all the preparations... inability to explain it to others...the morning when the whole caravan assembled... leaving the homes... or UR knowing they would now only have tents in the desert.

### **The Response is the central point**

Spend our lives thinking the question is simply how good we are...but God says...how responsive.

**Illus: Mike the dog** > God is not looking for your pedigree...he is looking for your responsiveness. [5]

### **Moving forward in faith...**

#### **3. Involves not settling down too soon.**

We may think that Abraham had a basic road trip... a route with a destination. But he left with no clear destination...and even when God began to speak of the land as specific to Canaan... it would be years until coming to that place. And along the way they had times of stopping.

### **Genesis 12:6-9 (NLT)**

Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him.<sup>8</sup> After that,

Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD.<sup>9</sup> Then Abram **continued** traveling south **by stages** toward the Negev.

If you're using the insert with the text...circle those words "continued"...and "by stages."

His father had led them to Haran (represents where his whole family had lived...hometown)... Shechem (place you first arrive and might could just settle into)... Bethel... Egypt (escape... refuge)... ... were NOT the Promised Land.

Each were meaningful...but they were not the final destination.

> **Don't settle too soon.**

It's easy to initially know that you have not fully arrived to all that God has put in you... you may sort of hit a resting point...but then it becomes more comfortable... and you begin to feel more and more settled.

Soon... we lose sight of the destination...we lose our sense of the journey.

Abraham's journey can teach us...not to settle down too soon.

This is something I have felt in the past few months... there are milestone points that I have seen God fulfill... that have become too settled.

So I have been asking God to challenge what the next five years should seek.

In the next 5 years I believe

- I believe we will **begin to connect more lives to Christ** who have **NO roots in a Christian faith**... reaching a point in which half of all God is drawing... are from more secular backgrounds.
- I believe God in **transitioning our leadership to the next generation** – including transition to new a lead pastor ... leadership roles ...and at least half of our governing elders.
- I believe God would have us **help plant another church** in the greater Los Angeles area.

> **I don't want to settle too soon.**

**Moving forward in faith...**

**4. May involve separation from attachments when needed.**

Abraham had a valuable bond with his nephew Lot. Abraham had lost a brother when he was younger...and Lot had lost a father... so Abraham and Sarai sort of adopted Lot... but it was not only a common part of the culture... it was likely very meaningful.

But there came a point in which the scope of these two marga clans... would not be able to stay together. And we read...

And at one point...

### **Genesis 13:5-9 (GW)**

*Lot, who had been traveling with Abram, also had his own sheep, cattle, and tents.*

*<sup>6</sup> There wasn't enough pastureland for both of them. ...<sup>7</sup> Quarrels broke out between Abram's herders and Lot's herders. ...<sup>8</sup> Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have any more quarrels between us or between our herders. After all, we're relatives. .... Let's separate. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right, and if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."*

### **Moving forward in faith....**

#### **5. May have to place the blessing on the altar...as we trust the One who blesses giving life itself.**

Many may recall that Abraham and Sarah would eventually conceive the promised heir...name the boy Isaac...and then God would test Abraham by calling him to sacrifice him. And Abraham's response was to believe that God would provide...even raise him to life.

### **Hebrews 11:17-19 (NIV)**

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

It's sort of the ultimate point of faith...in which one may be called to put on the altar the very thing they believe God has given them.

The truth is that we can end up with the gift becoming the god itself. We can become more attached to God's promises and provisions...than God himself.

### **CLOSING:**

So I want to challenge us to recognize that faith is always trust expressed in response.

What is God calling you to?

What do you need to actually step out in trust to follow?

[Illus – tight rope walker...] - In 2012...Tightrope walker **Nik Wallenda** walks the high wire from the US side to the Canadian side of Niagara Falls (PICTURE)

More than 150 years ago, French aerialist **Charles Blondin**, known as 'The Great Blondin', famously walked a high wire strung farther down the Niagara gorge.

In June of 1859 when he attempted to become the first person to cross a tightrope stretched over a quarter of a mile across the mighty Niagara Falls.

He walked across 160 feet above falls several times, each time with a different daring feat - once in a **sack**, on **stilts**, on a **bicycle**, in the dark, and once he even **carried a stove** and cooked an omelet!

A large crowd gathered and a buzz of excitement ran along both sides of the river bank. The crowd “Oooohed!” and “Aaaaahed!” as Blondin carefully walked across one dangerous step after another -- blindfolded and pushing a wheelbarrow.

Upon reaching the other side, the crowd's applause was louder than the roar of the falls! Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience: **"Do you believe I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?"** The crowd enthusiastically shouted, "Yes, yes, yes. You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. You can do anything!"

"Okay," said Blondin, "Then get in the wheelbarrow....."

Today... we need to see that we each have things we believe has promised... called us to... which we may say we have faith in...to which it's to me to get in.

### Notes:

1. Notably, Abraham is known as the “father” of all three monotheistic religions. “In Judaism the promised offspring is understood to be the Jewish people descended from Abraham’s son, Isaac, born of his wife Sarah. Similarly, in Christianity the genealogy of Jesus is traced to Isaac, and Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac is seen as a foreshadowing of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. In Islam it is Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn son, born of Hagar, who is viewed as the fulfillment of God’s promise, and the Prophet Muhammad is his descendant.” – As described in Britannica Encyclopedia.

In the Old and New Testament, Abraham is named in 230 verses. References to Abraham (or Abram) in Genesis 11–25:10 disclose biographical incidents in the life of Abraham. From this point on, the 135 remaining references to Abraham point back to these historical events.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/7-abraham-faith-our-father-romans-327-425>

The Jews took pride in their physical descent from Abraham, believing that being his seed was synonymous with salvation. John the Baptist immediately challenges this thinking as incorrect: But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

### **Romans 4:17 (Berean)**

**As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the presence of God, in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not yet exist.**

**Abraham is also uniquely and repeatedly described as our father in faith. When Jesus forgives Zacchaeus, He says, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:9).** In Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it’s “Father



Abraham” that the rich man prays to from Hades (Luke 16;19-31). And John the Baptist warns the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized (Matthew 3:8-10), Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

John’s point is that being a biological descendant of Abraham isn’t what matters: rather, it’s about following him in faith and in works of repentance. Speaking of Abraham’s covenant of circumcision with God, St. Paul says that (Romans 4:11-12),

He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

And in

### **Galatians 3:7-9 (NLT)**

<sup>7</sup> The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. <sup>8</sup> What’s more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, “All nations will be blessed through you.” <sup>9</sup> So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

The name Abram means “exalted father”; Abraham means “father of a multitude.”

2. “There can be no biography of Abraham in the ordinary sense. The most that can be done is to apply the interpretation of modern historical finds to biblical materials so as to arrive at a probable judgment as to the background and patterns of events in his life. This involves a reconstruction of the patriarchal age (of Abraham, [Isaac](#), [Jacob](#), and [Joseph](#); early 2nd millennium BCE), which until the end of the 19th century was unknown and considered virtually unknowable. It was assumed, based on a presumed dating of [hypothetical](#) biblical sources, that the patriarchal narratives in the [Bible](#) were only a projection of the situation and concerns of a much later period (9th–5th century BCE) and of dubious historical value.

Several theses were advanced to explain the narratives—e.g., that the patriarchs were mythical beings or the personifications of tribes or folkloric or etiological (explanatory) figures created to account for various social, juridical, or cultic patterns. However, after [World War I](#), archaeological research made enormous strides with the discovery of monuments and documents, many of which date back to the period assigned to the patriarchs in the traditional account. The excavation of a royal palace at [Mari](#), an ancient city on the [Euphrates](#), for example, brought to light thousands of [cuneiform](#) tablets (official archives and correspondence and religious and juridical texts) and thereby offered [exegesis](#) a new basis, which specialists utilized to show that, in the biblical book of [Genesis](#), narratives fit perfectly with what, from other sources, is known today of the early 2nd millennium BCE but imperfectly with a later period. A biblical scholar in the 1940s aptly termed this result “the rediscovery of the Old Testament.” -

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abraham>

See also - <https://www.thoughtco.com/archaeological-evidence-abraham-in-the-bible-116875>

3. How did Abram come to learn about Jehovah God? We know that Jehovah had faithful servants on earth in those days. Shem was such a man. Though not the eldest of Noah's three sons, he is often mentioned first. That was evidently because Shem was a man of outstanding faith. Some time after the Flood, Noah referred to Jehovah as "Shem's God." (Gen. 9:26) Shem showed respect for Jehovah and for pure worship. (Source lost)

4. See the box "The City That Abram and Sarai Left Behind."

5. From David Needham, "Close To His Majesty, An Invitation to Walk with God"