

Sunday 28 January 2024

## Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

Title: Developing A Life Of Faith

Key Text: Hebrews 11:8-12; Genesis 12:1-5

God has a plan for every generation. In the Bible, God is known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This shows how God is interested in every generation. God is interested in families: He's interested in your family, He's interested in every generation of our families, and He's interested in bringing great multiplication and influence through your family.

Whatever the state of your family, God has great plans for your family. This is the foundation of our new series, and we continue by going into more detail with the first generation which is Abraham. One of the key characteristics of Abraham was that he was a man of faith (Hebrews 11:8-9,12). So we see that:

1. Faith to leave the familiar (Genesis 12:1-5; Hebrews 11:8; Hebrews 11:1 CEV; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Genesis 12:4-5)
2. Faith to embrace the future (Genesis 13; Genesis 15:1-6; Galatians 3:29 NLT; John 15:5)
3. Faith to remain faithful (Philippians 1:6; Romans 4:20-21; Hebrews 6:12; Genesis 17:1-6; 15-16; Genesis 21:1-5; Romans 10:17)

## Apply

**1. Faith to leave the familiar.** The Bible tells us that Abraham's story begins with an encounter with God (Genesis 12:1-5). God made huge promises to Abram that would impact his life, his family, and all people on earth! Prior to this, Abram's father Terah had settled the family in Harran, which is where Abram was when God spoke to him. Terah had been on his way to Canaan but had stopped short of his destination. God told Abraham to go further than the previous generation of his family. To not be a settler like his father, but to be a pioneer. God's command was clear: God wanted him to leave the familiar, the country and people that he knew well and had become accustomed to, and all his relatives. God wanted him to make a

clean break with his past so he could take hold of his promised future. Wherever you were born, whatever your background, wherever you are living right now, God wants you to know that your past does not have to define your future. Your future can be defined by Him. He has a plan for you and your family and for generations of your family. You might be trapped in overpowering addictions you can't shake off, bad habits that have been in your family for generations, like a foul temper, or alcohol and drug addiction. But God is offering each one of us and our families a new beginning that can start the moment you decide to follow Him. Aged 75, Abraham decided to believe what God had said and do what God had told him (Hebrews 11:8). He first had to become fully convinced that this was the right decision, before trying to convince his family. So where did his certainty come from? The Bible tells us that it was faith (Hebrews 11:1 CEV). When God is speaking to our hearts, He gives us the assurance and conviction we need to do whatever He asks us to do. When it comes to making major decisions, it is wise to recognise and be grateful for those God has given to us as shepherds who can advise us and help us. We need not be fearful and just do things entirely on our own. Husbands and wives can bring godly wisdom and help each other too. Like Abraham, you might not have all the details worked out, but when God speaks to your heart, you must go in obedience with the confidence and certainty He provides and work out the specifics as you go. The danger is when we over complicate and over analyse things. God wants us to be people who know how to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). It's time to set aside business as usual. We can't stand still when there is so much at stake, when there is so much promised by God that we haven't seen yet. Don't let the past define your future, believe that God has a better future for you with your name on it, a future you haven't met yet. Leave the past behind you and cut ties with it. Resolve fear, resolve bitterness, remove the roadblocks you've been putting up that prevent you from moving forward (Genesis 12:4-5).

**2. Faith to embrace the future.** For the next 10 years, Abraham enjoyed the land of Canaan, he walked the length and breadth of it (Genesis 13) and travelled further afield. He received a reminder of the rest of God's vision for his life (Genesis 15:1-6). Incredible as it might seem, God still speaks to people today in the way that He spoke to Abraham. Through Jesus we inherit all promises made to Abraham so we too can have big dreams (see 'Dream And You Will Win The World' by Pastor Cesar Castellanos). God has big dreams and He is still fulfilling His promise to Abraham to this very day through ordinary people who discover and remain in

His perfect will for their lives. Abraham had to realise that God intended his life would have a big impact. He realised he needed to embrace this promise and let it change the way he thought, the decisions he made, and the way he conducted himself towards other people. He realised God had made him the seed of a great nation that God was raising up to bless all nations. Can you visualise that God will do something in your life? Yes (Galatians 3:29 NLT)! God wants us to be fruitful and to reproduce the character of Jesus in others by letting God change us first (John 15:5). Abraham realised that God's vision required miracles: his wife could not and had not given birth to children before. Can you believe that God wants to do miracles in you and through you? Well, He does and He will if you will remain in Him and let His words remain in you. Make the decision that you too are going to become a person of faith who expects miracles to fulfil God's promises for you and for generations after you.

**3. Faith to remain faithful.** It is one thing to start on a journey of faith and take hold of some things God has promised, but it also takes faith in God to remain faithful to the end (Philippians 1:6). You can have confidence that God will bring to completion what He has started in you, if you will remain faithful and continue to obey Him. Aged 99, 24 years later, Abraham remained faithful and did not stop believing God would keep His promise (Romans 4:20-21). We need to realise that God's timing is perfect! Remaining faithful is part of what it takes to make us into the people who can handle what God wants to give us (Hebrews 6:12). We see how God rewarded Abraham and Sarah's faithfulness (Genesis 17:1-6; 15-16). Because they had remained faithful to God, continuing to believe His promise would come to pass, God gave them new names to more accurately describe the people they had become. If we continue to do this, we can be sure that at the right time, just as He did with Abraham and Sarah, God will fulfil his promises to us to give us many spiritual descendants. Don't waste your waiting. Use it to learn all you can, make course corrections and learn from mistakes. Finally, as a 100th birthday year gift, Isaac was born to Sarah the wife of Abraham (Genesis 21:1-5). God gives us grace for every challenge when we choose to trust Him and act on that trust. So how can you become a person of faith?

- **By listening to God:** God spoke to Abraham because He knew he would listen to Him (Romans 10:17). Faith comes to you as a free gift from God when He speaks to your heart. This can happen as you go about your day quite naturally as Abraham did, and when reading the Bible, or in daily prayer

- **By believing in the God of the Bible:** Decide to believe that God is good. Believe that His words are true and He will do what He has said.
- **By obeying God's word:** Abraham's life changed when he obeyed God, left the past and embraced the future God had for him. You too can do the same.
- **By remaining faithful to God:** This means waiting patiently for God to answer in His time and way, not going your own way (Philippians 1:6).

Perhaps you have been drifting off course or you are far from God and you want to come close again. It is never too late to return to God and rebuild your life again differently, this time with friendship and obedience to God. God wants to change your nature so you naturally begin taking every opportunity to speak to people wherever you go. We are human beings not human doings. Perhaps it will mean obeying the Holy Spirit's prompting to go and speak to someone you've never spoken to before, starting your life group with the help of your leader, or serving by faith in a capacity you've never had before.