

Abraham & Sarah

☎ = God is Calling, "GO!" ☎ =

Trust Me & Leave Your Comfort Zone!!"

SEPTEMBER 30, 2007

God has a plan. By trusting themselves over God, Adam and Eve earned a long "time out" of the Garden – for a lifetime. The stories of Cain & Abel, Noah, and the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapters 1-11 continue on to teach us how humans always find ways to ignore God and follow their own reasoning, and how God responds with time out from community. After human wickedness reached an all-time high, God sent a flood to wipe out humanity but saved Noah, his family, and animals to start over with (Gen 6-9). God then pledged with a rainbow never again destroy the world with a flood, and set a new covenant with Noah

But, humans couldn't get the message. They continued seeking self-fulfillment while ignoring God and their broken relationship. Finally, God put in motion *God's* plan to heal the relationship by building a nation of *God's* choosing, giving it structure and calling it to live as *God's* people, and ultimately becoming part of it, demonstrating a trusting relationship with God, and love to & for others. God always initiates, acts first, and we are always the responders to *God's* love, and recipients of *God's* corrective mercy when we insist on ignoring God.

God's plan starts with Gen 12, *God's* story of creating *God's* nation. Enter Abraham & Sarah (actually, Abram & Sarai – their names when God chose them at the end of Gen 11). God told Abram to pack up his family and things and move across country to a land God would give his descendants. In return for trusting God, God would bless the entire world through the nation of Abraham's descendants.

Because Abram and Sarai trusted this promise and followed *God's* calling, Abraham ultimately became the single ancestor for two nations (the Arab nation

through his first son, Ishmael, and Jewish nation through his second son, Isaac), three faiths (Muslim, Judaism, and Christianity), and through Jesus God has blessed all nations for all times (Gen 12:2).

But, *God's* time is not like our time. Abraham and Sarah waited decades for *God's* promise of a son and many descendants, and became impatient and took matters in their own hands. As you read about Abraham and Sarah, you'll see they are not saints. God constantly bailed them out of messes they'd create by relying on their own human thought process and not allowing God to act on *God's* own time. From Abraham forward, we learn that God chooses flawed humans to work with, and chooses them knowing the risks. But God keeps *God's* people in loving check, as a shepherd herds his/her sheep, always calling them back to follow *God's* plan. Thanks be to God that we cannot mess up *God's* plan – God always bring us back to the path needed to accomplish *God's* plan.

Basic

MEMORY VERSES

Old Testament:

Genesis 12:1 (NRSV)

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

New Testament:

Matt 28:19-20 (NRSV)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, // baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Luther ("Freedom of a Christian" 1520)

"[Faith] is a living "spring of water welling up to eternal life," as Christ calls it in John 4:14."

Advanced

MEMORY VERSES

OT: Gen 12:1-3 (NRSV)

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(Bonus: Gen 12:4-5a)

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

NT: Matthew 28:16-20 (NRSV)

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Bonus: add Mt 28:1-10)

[The angel said]... 7 Go quickly and tell [Jesus'] disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, ^{F220} and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." 8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Luther

("Freedom of a Christian" 1520)

"Many people have considered Christian faith [eg belief in a set of facts] an easy thing, and [many] have given it a place amount the virtues [what we need to do]. They do this because they have not experienced it and have never tasted the great strength there is in faith. It is impossible to write well about it, or to understand what has been written about it unless one has at one time or another experienced the courage which faith gives a man when trails oppress him. But he who has had even a faith taste of it can never write, speak, meditate, or hear enough concerning it. It is a living "spring of water welling up to eternal life," as Christ calls it in John 4:14."

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



and so at age 75, Abraham receives word from the 'boss' that retirement will be delayed. **Genesis 12:1-4**

http://www.thebackpew.com/backpew/0_abrahams_goldenyears.htm

Thoughts to grow on

Never think you are too old for God to call you into new ministries:

Abraham was

- ✦ Age 75 when he packed up for God's on road trip (12:4)
- ✦ Age 86 when Ishmael was born (16:16)
- ✦ Age 99 when he was circumcised (17:24)
- ✦ Age 100 when Isaac was born (21:5)

Sarah was

- ✦ Age 65 when she headed out with Abraham
- ✦ Age 90 when she gave birth to Isaac (17:17)

Through a simple but life-changing act of trusting God's promise and setting out on an adventure, Sarah and Abraham enabled the entire world to be blessed. Are you both young enough and old enough for God to work with?

Activities & Questions to Ponder

The activities suggested below are listed from younger to older. Parents, it is hoped you will use some or all of these suggestions as faith activities at home, or conversation in the car, to help reinforce the week's lesson, and to create a space and time when family faith dialogue can develop and flourish during the week.

- ✦ Waiting is part of our lives: waiting for Christmas, waiting for Grandma to come, waiting for our birthday. God calls us to trust while waiting on "God's Time", and sometimes that takes a lot of effort – and a lot of time. As a family project, make bread together. Either quick breads (muffins, nut breads) or a yeast bread will work, but if you have the ability, find a recipe or a boxed mix for a yeast bread that requires kneading, rising, and waiting (and allocate enough time to work create, bake, and cool your bread within the same day). As you work together, talk about how long it is taking to make the bread, to wait for the rising &/or cooking process. This is like God's time with us, waiting for faith and our maturing, to work together to create something better than the individual parts. Discuss also how it takes the heat of the oven to change ingredients that can harm us, like raw eggs, into food our bodies can use. Sometimes God's time includes tough times, which help transform us into better people, helping us understand what really is important in life. When the bread is finally done, discuss how it needs to rest and cool before eating, so that the moisture is redistributed throughout the bread, once again requiring waiting.

This is like God's time calling us to rest each week to allow our bodies to regenerate and to renew before another week. When the bread is cooled, slice it up and enjoy the fruits of your labor together!

- ✦ Waiting to grow up takes time, patience, and a lot of work to become a contributing adult to society. Sometimes the days are endlessly boring – first with school and then with work, and other times they are filled with fun and joy, as on a hoped-for vacation. Create an expression of who you would be if you did not invest the time and hard work into school, work, learning to live with others, and/or learning to follow rules that require you to put your wants behind the needs of others.
- ✦ How would life be different if we were simply born adults, with full ability to get good jobs to pay the bills without having to do anything for it? Discuss with others what does keeping focused and completing hard work contribute to a good life, and what does it take away from life? What is the balance God calls us to?
- ✦ Abram and Sarai were told to pack up and head across country without having employment or family waiting on the other end. Discuss with another how you would feel understanding that this is what God has called you to. What would make it easy to do? What would make it hard? What would be the rewards of trusting God to that extent – or would there be any?

Our Ministry Project for 2007-2008

[Jesus said], "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me"

Matthew 25:35-36 (NIV)

We are thrilled to announce we have sponsored our first child through Compassion Intl! More info is on its way, so stay tuned! We are asking a minimum donation of \$1 per child, or a flat \$32, per child per week (\$32 covers one month's payment for our child). Please prayerfully consider your ability to support this ministry, trusting God's promise that God will provide for all your needs as you use God's resources to help others. If you have not done so, please fill out a confidential covenant form indicating your financial support.

A PRAYER for This Week

God who calls us to trust you into the unknown, we thank you for telling us your story through Scripture so we can rest assured in your promises. You know we are scared in new situations. Calm our hearts, still our souls, and increase our faith to trust your call, confident in knowing you will never fail us and will always walk with us no matter what. In Christ's name and by your Holy Spirit I pray, Amen.