

Growing in Faith on the Journey (2)

We make the road by walking it!

Within the larger theme of *God's Global Mission of Transformation*, we are recognising that Abram's faith-response to God's call on his life actually involved going on a journey with God from which he would learn who this God was who had called him, and what he needed to learn about what God expected of him. He was *Growing in Faith on the Journey* – in other words, we make the road by walking it!!!

Remember, Abram had no Bible to refer to in order to gain some insights into the character of God or even the expectations that God had of him other than simply doing what God had told him to do out of the faith he had planted within him!!!

Today, we will look at Faith Lessons 3 & 4 that Abram needed to learn, but remembering that he did not have a Bible to refer to – the Torah had not been written – so he had nothing to go by in terms of how his relationship with God should work.

This is what these 'faith lessons' are about – Abram needing to learn how God was expecting him to conduct his affairs in life in so as to reflect the nature of the God who had called him.

Faith Lesson 3 – The Necessity of Honesty in Relationships

¹¹ As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife." Then they will kill me but will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.' ¹⁴ When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. ¹⁵ And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels. ¹⁷ But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" ²⁰ Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

(Gen 12:11-20)

- Abram convinces Sarai to lie about their relationship trying to save his own skin

Picture the scene here - Abram is saying to Sarai, his wife:

"Sweetheart, you are gorgeous, and I really do love you, but I'm willing to sacrifice you to a foreign leader in order to save my own skin."

Gen 20:12 reveals that they were half-brother/sister – same father, different mother.

- Marriages have to be nurtured and protected – they are God's basic building blocks of family and society, so honesty between partners is essential.
- Abram gets a lesson from a pagan Pharaoh on how to treat his wife!!! vv. 17-20

⁷ Similarly, you husbands, should try to understand the wives you live with, honouring them as physically weaker yet equally heirs with you of the grace of eternal life. If you don't do this, you will find it impossible to pray properly. (1Pet 3:7 - J.B. Phil)

- Abram is learning that trust in God requires a growing understanding of God's character, and God's faithful and loving character requires honesty and an honest trust in his faithful provision and protection.
- Abram goes back to his first altar and calls again on the name of the LORD! 13:1-4
Whenever you recognise you have created a problem – go back to God!!!

Faith Lesson 4 – Learning to handle conflict within broader relationships

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ And quarrelling arose between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. ⁸ So Abram said to Lot, 'Let's not have any quarrelling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are close relatives. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.' ¹⁰ Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan towards Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out towards the east. The two men parted company: ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. ¹³ Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD. ¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring^[a] for ever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.' ¹⁸ So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD. (Gen 13:14-18)

Conflict arises between Abram's workers and Lot's workers - it's all getting too big

- Abram instigates a discussion – an open communication with Lot, to go their own ways and invites Lot to choose which way he wants to go, and Abram will go the other way.

- This is such a growth in trusting God, after his wimpy, fearful abandonment of his wife for his own preservation.
- After the separation from Lot, God appears to him again (Gen 13:14)
- God's original word to Abram had been to leave his country, tribe, and father's household – it seems clear that Terah and Lot did not specifically fit into God's call on Abram – these elements were all part of the learning journey of faith for Abram
- As we learn the discipline of building our devotional altar with God, we allow God to give us wisdom for the circumstances of life and bring clarity on our own specific calling - we are making the road by walking it!!!
13:14-18

Application in Our Own Lives

The picture we see presented in Abram's life is the same as what God expects in every one of our lives – growth and development into fuller expression of God's image in both our understanding of who God is, and how we are to reveal that knowledge in our lives.

So combining Faith Lessons 1 thru 4:

- We all need to be building our personal relationship with God – building our prayer altars
- We all have to learn to be flexible and adaptable when faced with those issues over which we have no control
- We all need to learn honesty with ourselves and others in our relationships
- We all need to learn how to handle interpersonal conflicts because we all face them

This is simply part of our growth and discipleship as Christians
The Apostle Peter makes this very clear in his pastoral letter:

2Pet 3:18

¹⁸ But be constantly growing in the sphere of grace and an experiential knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity.

(Ken Wuest's

Translation)