

What do you know about Abram? What images of him do you have? He was a nomad who never built a house and put down roots, Father of the Jewish nation, lied about his wife, wealthy, etc.

Note: It is important to note that the initiative was with God. Six times in the first seven verses of Genesis 12 God says “I will.” That’s the way it is with each one of us. When God initially enters our life, it’s not because we invited Him, but because He has chosen us and has drawn each one of us to Himself. (See John 6:44, 65.)

Before God came to him, Abram had no spiritual understanding. He had no knowledge of the true God. He was under the influence of his pagan environment. Yet God saved him by grace.

As you look at the make up of this caravan leaving Ur (11:31), would you say that Abram was obedient? Did he do as God told him to leave everyone and everything behind? Abram did not totally leave his father’s house or his relatives. He took his father, Terah, and his nephew, Lot, with him.

Did he make it all the way to the Promised Land? He stopped in Haran. It was a sluggish start.

Application: If we stay in Haran, we will never find the land God wants to give us. We have to make the choice to leave something behind, to reject what we have always counted on, and to leave our comfort zone. This is the call: to identify what we have held onto from Ur and dragged with us to the Promised Land.

Note: Abram will be easy to pick on. He was a man of great faith—after years of testing by God. But he didn’t start out that way. At the point of his call, Abram was a man whose faith was meager—real, but meager. He made a lot of mistakes. And if we are honest with ourselves, that’s where most of us are. In our best moments our faith is vibrant and vital, but in the moments of testing it is weak and wanting. God worked in Abram to shape, mature, nurture, develop, and transform his character. We much can learn from Abram.

Why did God tell Abram to leave his country, father’s house, and relatives? God was going to make a new nation, not merely revise an existing one. Little of the culture, religion, or philosophy of the people of Ur was to be a part of what God planned to do with His people, Israel. Abram’s departure was necessary for his spiritual growth. His environment was not conducive to that growth. His family would not help him in the pilgrimage. They would be an anchor holding him to his past.

Application: Like Abram was called to go to a new place, God will call you to leave your comfort zone every few years and go to a new duty station/promised land. Life in the military is one of challenge, trial—and faith testing.

What was Abram’s spiritual background? He came from a pagan, idol worshipping existence. See Joshua 24:2.

Abram (Abraham) is held in high esteem today by which three religious groups? Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Over forty Old Testament references are made to him. Islam holds Abraham second in importance to Mohammed. The Koran refers to him 188 times.

Let’s examine where we are chronologically. Did Abram have the Ten Commandments? The Law? Was Israel around? Had the Old Testament been written? None of these had happened yet.

What was the basis of Abram’s relationship with God? God spoke to him, he heard, and he obeyed.

When God says, “Go!”...and doesn’t specify where...and you take off...how can you know if you’re in the middle of His will? God’s will is not an itinerary for the future or a road map for your life. God’s will is a relationship. God’s will is stamped all over the Scriptures—to transform us into His character. See Matthew 6:33.

What are God’s promises to Abram in verses 2 and 3? If you had been Abram, what would have been running through your mind at this point? What blessing! Unfathomable!!

Why is Abram building altars in verses 7 and 8? They were an act of worship, a commemoration of a special spiritual experience, a reminder for generations to come. He built them wherever he had a personal encounter with God. It was a figurative way of claiming the land for God.

Application: Have you had any “altar-building” moments? Have there been times in your past when you sensed a special presence of God, a special moment of blessing?

Why did Abram leave the Promised Land and head to Egypt in verse 10? When Abram arrived in the Promised Land he was put to the test. The land would be his, but right now there was a famine, and it was more difficult than he expected. Abram used “common sense” in the face of a tough situation when he should have sought the Lord for help and direction.

Did Abram do the right thing? Did he consult God? There is no record that Abram asked God for help or guidance. Despite the fact that this land was where he was supposed to be, he used his best worldly judgment and left for Egypt. Abram deprived God of a chance to miraculously provide and he also deprived his people of the faith-testing experience of relying on God to provide.

Abram built no altars in Egypt to our knowledge, nor are we told that Abram ever called on the name of the Lord there. It would thus be safe to say that Abram’s faith failed in the face of that famine.

Note that Sarai is about 65 years old and still beautiful. Was Abram telling a lie about Sarai being his sister? No, she was his half sister. Their father was Terah, but they had different mothers.

What were Abram’s motives? So “I will be treated well” and “my life will be spared”—self-centered motives.

Application: The end doesn’t justify the means. Here is a clear-cut case of situational ethics. Situational ethics first of all poses a hypothetical problem which has no alternatives except ones that are morally unacceptable. The lesser of the evils is then justified in the light of the circumstances. Situational ethics doesn’t acknowledge the sovereignty of God Who is able to deliver His people regardless of their circumstances.

How did the Lord protect Sarai? He inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household.

How long was Sarai in the harem? We are not told exactly, but a clue might be found in Esther 2:12.

How did Abram prosper during his stay in Egypt? He became rich.

What consequences did Abram have to pay for his disobedience and deceit? He was humiliated, driven out, lost respect among his people, lost credibility and the opportunity to witness to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and gained the reputation of a liar.

It does not appear that the Lord criticized Abram for what he did. In fact, the Lord blessed him even though he lied. Why? What does this say about God? The Lord had made an unconditional commitment to bless Abram. It didn’t depend on Abram’s performance. God was gracious toward Abram. Just because Abram failed, God wasn’t about to go back on His word.

Application: Is there a parallel commitment to us? Does God’s blessing depend on our performance? See Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Application: Abram’s call was to go to Canaan. What is God’s call upon your life? What spiritual journey have you been called to? What is your life’s purpose? What issue or area in your life right now is God most concerned about? To what are you clinging for security? We must identify what it is, actively reject it, and believe that God is the life-giver. This is the challenge before us.