

OASIS: THE FIRST FAMILY OF FAITH 10.2.11
DONE IN SYNC WITH THE “LIVING GOD’S STORY” JOURNEY
GENESIS 12:1-9 & GENESIS 22:1-19



GENESIS 12:1-9

The Call of Abram

12 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.”

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. When they had come to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb. ¹

¹ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ge 12:1–9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

GENESIS 22:1-19

*The Command to Sacrifice Isaac**(Heb 11:17–19)*

22 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.” ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.” ⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” ¹³ And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸ and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” ¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba. ²

² *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ge 22:1–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

OASIS: THE FIRST FAMILY OF FAITH

Preface: Welcome to our 2nd LC Bible study in our new sermon series “Living God’s Story.” This year we will be working our way through the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. So fasten your seat belt, as it will be quite a ride. These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application.

Possible Starter Questions – Reflect upon a time where you sensed the Lord leading you/your family toward something beyond your comfort zone. Consider the complexities, the anxieties and stresses that were associated with it. Recall the excitement, peace and joy that were likely associated with it as well. What did you end up doing? How did you fulfill the call the Lord placed? What were the unexpected problems and what were the unexpected solutions? How has it altered your life? *(If your group is large, either just have several do this; or better yet, subdivide into small clusters of 4 or 5 so that everyone can get an opportunity.)*

Transitional Comment: **This study is focused on the nature of calling and sacrifice.** As we will see in the life of Abraham, they go hand in hand. We will also see that callings can only be fulfilled when we are willing to sacrifice our agenda and trust in the Lord’s leading.

Personal time to re-read: Take several minutes (2-3) to read this again on your own. What words and ideas are repeated or similar? What key contrasts do you note?

OBSERVATION

Who is Abram? (A descendant of Shem and son of Terah; husband of Sarah and, as father of Isaac, ancestor of the Hebrew nation and, through Ishmael, of other Semites (Gn. 17:5; 25:10–18). His life (Gn. 11:26–25:10; summarized in Acts 7:2-8) is taken as an example of outstanding faith in God (Heb. 11:8–12) by Jew, Christian and Muslim.³

Abram likely means, “the father is exalted.” After the covenant (Gen. 17:5), his name is changed to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude” of nations. As we continue through the sermon series, take note on how names are used, their meanings, and how names are changed, especially in Genesis, especially with the Patriarchs (examples like Jacob and Joseph).

The Land of Ur. (LC Leaders, note that Abram’s ancestry begins in 11:27). Abram’s family is from Ur and was among the finer cities in the ancient world blessed with wealth, a court system, libraries and culture.

It’s worth noting that it’s Abram’s father Terah that begins the migration out of Ur (11:31) but that they stop and settle in Haran. After Terah’s passing, Abram continues on to Palestine (Canaan) near Bethel, to Mamre near Hebron, and to Beersheba. At each place he set up an altar and tent-shrine.

The theme of “Blessing” – The language of “blessing” occurs almost 100 times in Genesis. It’s a “catchall” word including all the divine promises, a host of “creational” blessings (life, fertility), as well as prosperity blessings. While we can see that God generously blesses all of creation, the story of Abraham also demonstrates God’s particular intervention through a chosen people, ultimately for the purpose of redemption.

Compare the blessings God gave Abraham in Chs. 12, 15 and 17 – what is similar, what is different? (Note to LC Leaders, Ch. 15 contains the formal Abrahamic Covenant. It’s up to you if you would like to add a third chapter here. Whereas Ch. 12 is vague in the promise, it’s in Ch. 15 where God tells Abraham that he will have a son).

The theme of “Sacrifice” and the use of altars – Both passages make use of an “altar.” What similarities and differences do you see in the respective passages?

Significance of “Moriah” (vs. 2). Mt. Moriah is in present-day Jerusalem and the site where Solomon built the Temple (2 Chron. 3:1). At the opening of Ch. 22, Abraham is living in Beer-sheba which is about 50 miles away.

Did Abraham know that this was a test? 22:5 implies his trust in the Lord. However, the ancient world included child-sacrifice, which creates debate in this question. Abraham is confident the Lord will provide (22:8) and indeed, a ram caught in the thicket is offered in place of Isaac.

³ Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (4–5). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

THE APPLICATION

Return to our initial question. Describe a time in your life where you felt a calling from God ...

Why are the natures of calling and sacrifice so intertwined?

Abraham could have “played it safe,” stayed in Ur, enjoyed his inheritance, lived with less conflict, stress and likely enjoyed a more comfortable life. What would have been lost? Consider your life had you played it safer. What would have been lost? What do we learn about the value of pursuing calling in the life of the believer?

One of the recurring themes of Abraham’s life is that it is filled with moments of not trusting God (examples include: lying about his wife Sarah being his sister and not his wife with Pharaoh and Abimelech in fear of his own safety; the narrative of Hagar and Ishmael) and other moments exhibiting great faith (none greater than the offering of Isaac). As the story unfolds, Abraham becomes willing to offer what he and Sarah love the most to God. Often we reduce “offerings” as our tithe/financial giving but what are our greatest “offerings” we can give to God?

It’s a common reaction to think Abraham was a lunatic for even “going along” with the idea of sacrificing his son Isaac. Have you ever felt the eyes of others or actually heard the words from others describing your behavior as “crazy,” “peculiar” or “unwise”? How did you react? (A possible follow up is “How should we react to these ‘accusatory sentiments’ from others as we try to align our lives with the Lord’s leading?”)

We are often asked to imagine what Isaac must have thought (which is worth doing) but assuming that Abraham had not gone mad, what do you think he was thinking up until that dramatic moment when God commanded him to not harm Isaac? (LC Leaders, if you have time, it may be worthwhile to phrase the question from Sarah and Isaac’s perspective.)

It’s worth noting that God promises Abraham to be “the father of nations” but as Genesis unfolds, this is fulfilled through the family as opposed to the conquering of other tribes. What does this communicate to us about God’s idea of family versus the “world’s” understanding of family and success?

Our lives are filled with so many “voices” – how do we posture our hearts to hear the voice of God?

Prayer together: Pray for one another as we try to discern calling, seek the discipline to sacrifice and summon the courage to trust the Lord.

Text notes (you can access biblical texts via www.Biblegateway.com)

- a. BIG idea: The obedience of Abraham demonstrates that calling and sacrifice are intertwined.
- Advice to study leaders:
- b. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night. Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group.
- c. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- d. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- e. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- f. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- g. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.