

In reading the whole Bible—both the Old Testament and the New Testament—there’s just something especially unique about Abraham that’s timelessly relevant and practical to serious followers of Jesus. No, no, scratch that limitation—it’s not just *some thing*...no, not just *one thing* about Abraham and his journey with God. Instead, it’s a seemingly fantastical combination of choosings, circumstances, events, responses, encounters, promises, intervals, trials, disappointments, blessings, and fulfillments...you know, a whole lot of the depth of life! But more importantly, it’s a whole lot of a life following hard after God!

So, you might say, how’s that different from a number of folks who spent a lifetime following God? Well, it’s not supposed to be! But Abraham really *is* special, and a study of Abraham’s life in his time and place can indeed yield tremendous insight into *our* living a full life in Christ, a journey lived very, very well. Wait just one minute, you might think, are you saying that I should work to live to the level of Abraham?

Well, the first answer to that is this: not really, because you have an *even greater* understanding than even the great Abraham did about the things of God, because you know the crucified Christ Jesus...yeah, you enjoy a breadth, a depth, and an extent of knowledge and corporate history that Abraham did not.

But the second answer to that is this: yes, as believers, we should access Abraham and his story because we can see the inspired Word of God documenting an amazing life and individual responsiveness to God and His unfolding plans...and the nearly unimaginable, dramatic impact the serious follower of God can have on many others! So, let’s take a look at Abraham and his unique, inspiring relevance to us today.

First, from those rich stories told by generations of his elders, Abraham knew both *the good and the bad of humanity’s history with God*—from Adam and Eve engaging the serpent, Cain’s evil deed, and the great transgressions that led to the Flood...to Enoch who walked with God and the righteous Noah’s obedience.

Second, Abraham *knew, cultivated, and obeyed God’s voice in his life*, listening to and obeying God at the critical junctures in his life. For example, he simply left his family and homeland behind to venture into the unknown. Does that sound a bit unreal to you? But each of *us* should expect and cultivate and obey God’s voice in our lives, no matter the destination. Jesus said, “My sheep know my voice.” John 10:27 ESV

Third, Abraham was *called by God to places of great fruitfulness*. You know, it doesn’t matter to God where you start out...Jesus Himself was born in the remote village, Bethlehem! Yes, it doesn’t matter where you started or even if you are appointed to stay there, it matters that you are obediently where God directs!

Fourth, Abraham was *explicitly called by God out of his family’s daily presence and influence on him* at a specific time in God’s plan for him. Whether Abraham’s family was more godly or more *ungodly*, Abraham’s perfectly timely call to depart was clearly an imperative part of his journey.

Fifth, still, whatever his motive, Abraham brought his nephew Lot with him. Even so, Abraham *did not fall out of God’s favor and grace* when he acted in disobedience to God’s instructions about leaving his family.

Sixth, *earthly consequences of disobedience or preempting God’s plans*. Abraham paid a price for taking responsibility for Lot and then, later, his fathering a child, Ishmael, with the servant girl Hagar. God always loves His people. But He does discipline them, and He doesn’t always protect them from consequences.

Seventh, Abraham was *called without regard to a formal religious office*. Hey, much is rightly made by many when a person is called to what’s properly considered a vital church vocation, like a pastor...and that’s awesome, for sure! *But every Christian is called to full-time ministry, regardless of vocation!* Do you really think Abraham was called to a lesser or deficient destiny because he didn’t hold a formal religious office? Of course not! And neither are you “lesser”—no matter what vocation God has directed you to!

Eighth, Abraham *honored God in the immediate afterglow of magnificent personal victories*. Yes, right after Abraham's extraordinary defeating of several kings in rescuing his captured nephew, Lot, he honored God through Melchizedek, king of Salem and high priest of the Most High God. (Genesis 14 ESV)

Ninth, Abraham *chose to respond to God in faith...and God credited that to him as righteousness*. (Genesis 15:6) Wow, that statement—just sixteen simple yet powerful words—well now, that's the linchpin of faith in God, whether for Abraham or for us. Faith in the living God begets righteousness. Whoa!

Tenth, Abraham *slept while God forged a covenant, His provision for the future of Abraham and his descendants*. (Genesis 15) Yeah, that's exactly what happened. God secured His covenant with Abraham while he slept. Isn't that just like God? And doesn't that speak to us as God's New Covenant beneficiaries?

Eleventh, Abraham was *unencumbered by the Law of Moses*—he lived his entire life without being under the law! Yeah, Abraham lived centuries before Moses was even born and so before the Law was given. But Abraham was righteous before God! Similarly, we Christians are “not under the law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14) Yes, Christ fulfilled the law on our behalf! (Matthew 5:17) But each one of us lived under the law of Moses for a while, the very law that is the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). That is, *until* each of us chose to respond in faith to Christ and Him crucified! And then we, too, are counted as righteous!

Twelfth, Abraham has *faith-grounded family blessings well into the future!* Amazingly, God's provision in Christ and stunning stewardship of His creation and Abraham's persevering faithfulness in response to God ultimately worked to make Abraham the *human father* to many millions who followed as well as the *spiritual father* to still many more millions who believe in Christ...in the family of God! (Romans 4:12)

Hey, here's what can truly startle us: we are designed to *be just like Abraham* in these very same ways! How crazy is that? Yeah, the towering figure of Abraham who lived so faithfully for God about four thousand years ago is presented concisely yet fully both in the Old Testament and the New. And what we see written there is, by faith, a very accessible model *for us!* So, let's recap our commonalities with Abraham...and we find that our privileges as people reconciled to the Father through Christ are awesome!

- We too, like Abraham, know the good and the bad of humanity's history with God;
- We know, cultivate, and obey God's voice in our lives...indeed, Christians enjoy His very presence;
- We are each called by God to our vocations, often to different places and away from family;
- We are sustained by God's grace despite our disobedience...but earthly consequences still follow;
- We are invited to honor God in the afterglow of every victory...and every failure, too;
- We choose to respond to God by faith...and then joyfully bask in God's imputed righteousness(!);
- We were absent yet unfailingly remembered when eternal covenant was made of our behalf;
- We are unencumbered by the law of Moses—we are not under the law but under grace(!); and
- We will enjoy faith-grounded blessings as part of the family of God in Christ...for eternity!

Isn't all that very striking? Abraham is clearly one of the most remarkable persons in all history. His name is on the lips of millions of people this very day, about four thousand years after he lived! But we not only have all the conditions to be like Abraham, we have even more!

That's because Jesus Christ came, lived a sinless life, ministered to many, died a sinless man, rose, ministered again, then ascended to be at the right hand of the Father. And we know about God's provision for all who would call upon the name of Jesus to fullest benefit! And, yeah, the Christian life can look very much like the best dimensions of the spiritual journey and life of Abraham...and beyond! Yes, you can be like Abraham! That's because—then and now—the “righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Amazing.

A&A: Application & Action

1. Do the critical elements of Abraham's spiritual journey seem remote and inaccessible to you...or already fulfilled by Jesus and evident in your life in Christ? Discuss.
2. Famously, Abraham's faith in God was credited to him by God as righteousness. Similarly, do you totally, joyously live out the imputed righteousness from faith in Christ or do you find yourself striving in vain to attain a hoped-for but unattainable righteousness from the Law of Moses? Discuss.
3. Of course, as a mature follower of Christ, you are discipling others—sometimes even when it's a mostly observational discipling. Are you teaching them or showing them that they can be like Abraham...living in amazing covenant with God...living by faith?