

Case Study: Abraham – Muddying God’s Plan

Description

1Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2She gave birth to Zimr
5Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. 6But before he died, he ga

Genesis 25:1-5 NLT

Abraham is known as the father of faith, in addition to being the patriarch of the 3 largest faiths in the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In spite of these accolades, we gotta discuss some glaring issues in Abraham’s walk that not only negatively impacted his journey with God, but birthed long-lasting issues for the promise the God blessed him with. Starting with the verses above, Abraham displays a continuance of an issue that caused severe problems for he and his family previously, a lack of self discipline. Let’s be clear, Sarah was dead, and it isn’t mentioned that God instructed him not to remarry. However I see multiple red flags here; Abraham took a concubine. This is could be for multiple reasons, maybe Abraham felt that it would dishonor the legacy/memory of Sarah by remarrying, so instead he takes a concubine. This presents multiple issues from my perspective, the arrangement of a man and a concubine isn’t one sanctioned or permitted by God, and falls under the category of fornication, and it’s usually borne out of man’s desire to solely fulfil sexual desires. We’ve seen this previously with Abraham when he accepted his wife’s Sarah’s proposal to father a child with her concubine Hagar. I believe that Abraham struggled with two situations here; his staggering faith in God’s promise to him, and his unwillingness to hold strongly to God’s promise and his conviction in that in the face of his wife’s unbelief. How could the father of many nations, and one who was considered righteous because of his faith, waver on multiple occasions and put God’s plan at risk? We need to take several instructional points from Abraham’s life:

- Obey God – In Genesis 12 God informs Abram that he would bless his descendants with the land of Canaan. Yet in the same chapter, during a famine, Abram abandons the land of promise to travel to Egypt to escape the famine. Abram demonstrates the first instance in a pattern of behavior where he acts impulsively and moves without the direction and protection of God. This behavior triggers a serious of events that Abram could not have predicted, and puts God’s promise for his life in danger. Short answer, follow God’s directions without adding to or taking from them.
- Control self – This point goes in line with point #1, and the paragraph above, but we must be intentional in checking ourselves to ensure that we don’t cause ourselves unnecessary troubles through a lack of discipline. Abram’s responses to his feelings of fear led to his downfall because when he responded in fear, he left little to no room for God to act. Abram exercised faith to believe when things were going good and there was little resistance, but during God’s silence and adversity, Abram had the tendency to do what felt best in the moment. Part of controlling self is being aware of how you respond to the emotions and actions of others. For Abram’s situation, like others in marriage, we have to be emotionally mature and aware of what we do and how we act for the sake of our spouses, and/or children. Abram allowed fear to influence his actions in Egypt and with Abimelech where uncovered his wife to the mercy of another man in exchange for his perceived safety. We see it again in Genesis, when Sarah proposes that Abraham sleep with

Hagar to produce a heir. Rather than Abraham holding strong to God's promise, one could assume that he either gave in to his flesh or desire for Hagar, or was unwilling to stand strong against Sarah's impulsiveness and lack of faith in the moment. Regardless, Abraham had the responsibility to trust God while identifying and healthily addressing any feelings that he may have experienced during the course of difficulties.

- **Separate healthily** – When Abram and Lot began to experience turbulence in Genesis chapter 13 due to their accumulation of individual wealth, we see Abram demonstrate healthy relational intelligence. Abram did two things: identified and made clear that it was no animosity or bad blood between he and Lot, and sent Lot away with a blessing. An area of growth for me where I struggled previously, and continue to struggle is in the art of separation. When has a relationship or season of life ran it's course? What's special about Abram and Lot is that in the moment when Abram told Lot that they must separate, it makes no mention of God prompting him to do so in that moment. God had previously commanded Abram to leave his father's house and land, which Abram made the decision to bring Lot with him, but the Bible never mentions God revisiting the issue again with Abram. God gave Abram the responsibility to manage and decide on an issue that God had already addressed. Abram realizing that he and Lot were in a different season than when he originally departed, chose to give Lot the decision to choose which land was best for him, since of course it was because of Abram that Lot had left his homeland to begin with. You may be asking, where's the blessing? I would suggest that the peaceable terms of separation, and the fact that Abram didn't request anything in return from Lot, though it was because of that Lot was blessed in the first place is a blessing.

Reflection Time

In what ways have you made a mess of God's plan for your life, or his blessing in your life? I don't want you to think about this question in a way that you have made yourself unsalvageable or destroyed your relationship with God; but I want you to honestly evaluate instances where your actions have prevented you from experiencing God's will for your life. Assess areas of growth and room for improvement that not only improves your spiritually, but also relationally. Abraham is still considered the father of faith, and righteous man in spite of his muddiness, and I'd like for you to understand that God as a result of Jesus' actions on the cross sees you in that same righteousness.

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Author
guytonjj

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