



One Small Step

A Study of Great Men and Women of Faith: Abraham

Over the course of the last two years i have been obsessed with space, astronauts, and space travel.

The idea of it all is amazing to me; from the process of how space travel works and what humans are trying to do and accomplish in that field, as well as the possibility that exists for us to one day live on other planets. I joke with Kalyn a lot that i'm going to become an astronaut at some point and will become the first preacher in space. It's because of this small obsession that i decided to tie my lesson today in with space.

On July 16, 1969 the Apollo 11 spacecraft landed on the Moon. This was the first manned space mission to land on the Moon. On July 20, Neil Armstrong would be the first man to set foot on moon and say the famous line, "that's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Men like Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had to overcome different challenges and things to worry about just to get to this point. When asked about the trip Armstrong said, **"the unknowns were rampant," and "there were just a thousand things to worry about."** But despite the fear and worry of the unknown they were able to accomplish one of the greatest feats that mankind has ever set out to do, they walked on the moon.

Today, many people talk about faith and how it's a "blind leap of faith", that we take the risk not fully knowing what to expect. For those astronauts, though they knew that their equipment was tested and they'd studied as much as they could about the moon, they still had to take a "leap of faith" to step onto the moon. For a Christian when we're going into an unknown situation we're not taking a "blind leap of faith in God". But instead we can have confidence and assurance about what we're doing, we can have confidence in knowing that God will take care of us as long as we're relying fully on him.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The ESV says **“the conviction of things not seen”**; we can be **convicted as Christians in our faith in God**, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is real and that he will take care of us if we fully trust in him. In our convictions we can know that whatever the situation or circumstance we’re in or going into, God is going to take care of us. Even if we can’t see God, we can be convicted in our faith that he exists and that he is going to provide for us as long as we keep this conviction. If we’re convicted in our faith we know that nothing is going to stop us and we’ll do whatever it takes to make sure that our faith is the number one priority in our lives. Our conviction will lead us to act upon our faith, it’ll cause us to be committed to it.

Over the course of the two or three times i’ll be preaching this summer we’ll be looking at different **men and women throughout the Bible** that were willing to take that one **“one small step”** towards God and create **“one giant leap for mankind”** when we read and learn about them in the Bible. **Men and women** that despite the odds being against them and their being **thousands of unknowns**, they were so convicted in their faith in God that were willing to do anything to serve him. Today, i want us to look at a man who lived this out, **a man who was so convicted in his faith in God** he was willing to **pick up his entire family and go into the unknown.**

Abraham leaving his homeland

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father’s house,

To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

So **God speaks to Abraham** and gives him the command to take his family and go into the unknown, to leave his homeland and everything he’s ever known. **God doesn’t tell Abraham where to go**, how to get there, why he needs to leave, he is simply told to go into the unknown.

*Some scholars think that God told **Abraham to leave because of the idolatry** of his family and that land, that God didn't want Abraham creating his chosen people in an area where they could be easily swayed by the idolatry of the surrounding people. How much greater is Abraham's faith in God when it's possible that he was the only **one in his family that worshipped the one true God**, that he was the only one that followed God.*

*Notice that this is one of the more **positive things** that has been written about after chapters 3-11 were so negative. After the fall, death of Abel, the flood, the tower of Babel, this the beginning of **God's plan to redeem his people from sin**, to bring his people back to him. Abraham doesn't fully realize the "giant leap for mankind" he's creating, the effect that his faith would have on the people of the earth for the rest of the time that there is an earth.*

Genesis 12:4-9

So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebith tree of Moreh.[fn] And the Canaanites were then in the land.

7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. 9 So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.[fn]

We see that **Abraham's response** to God's command is **immediate and without any questions**. Though the unknowns were rampant, Abraham still chose to put his faith in God. He knew that God would show him the way, it wasn't a blind leap in the dark. **Conviction isn't a blind leap of faith**, for Abraham it was knowing that God would be there to provide for his family and that he would be blessed because of his faith. The reason Abraham chose move his family into the unknown wasn't because of a blind leap of faith, but because of his conviction.

Even with everything that God promised to **he has to make the choice to either commit to God and put his faith in him, or to stay with what's comfortable**. He had to decide for himself if he was convicted in his faith or willing to give up on his faith. Hebrews 11 speaks about this event as well

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Abraham would go on to face many different unknown situations and struggles; from lying about who Sarai was in Egypt, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, having a son - Ishmael - by Hagar, just to name some of the bigger situations in his life. He would deal with the fact that in this time **God has promised to have a great nation** to come through him, but while **Sarah is barren and unable to have children**. But, God tells them that they'll have a son in chapter 18 and then grants them the ability to have that son in Genesis 21. It's because of all this that we see **the true test of Abraham's faith in Genesis 22.**

Abraham sacrificing Isaac

Genesis 22:1-19

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here I am."

2 Then He said, "Take now 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 of which I shall tell you."

God was going to **test Abraham to see if his conviction was still strong**, to see if Abraham was still willing to do whatever God commanded of him. **If he was still willing to sacrifice everything he had for God**, if Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son; the son that he'd been promised by God, the one that he'd waited on for 25 years, and the one that he loved.

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad^[fn] and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

Again **Abraham's response is immediate and without question** or argument. He knows that this is what God has asked of him and he is convicted in his faith enough to trust God through this.

⁶ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷ But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!"

And he said, "Here I am, my son."

Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?"

⁸ And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

So he said, "Here I am."

¹² And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, 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 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide;^[fn] as it is said *to* this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Abraham is fully committed to sacrificing his son on this altar. He's got Isaac tied up and is about to kill him when the angel stops him. The angel recognizes that Abraham fears God because of his willingness to give up his only son to God. And

because of this Abraham was provided with a ram to sacrifice instead. **He knew the Lord would provide for him, because has not ceased to provide for him since he left Haran in chapter 12.** Hebrews 11:17-19 gives great commentary on this moment

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Abraham knew that God could do anything. **He knew that God had given Isaac to him in his old age, a time when it should have been impossible, and that God would be able to even raise him from the dead.** He knew that God wouldn't forget the promise he'd made with him, he knew that God would provide for him and he did.

I researched the question of **how old Isaac was when he was sacrificed**, though we don't have an exact answer, an article from apologetics press thought that he was anywhere from around **20 to 30 years old**. I would think it would be even harder for Abraham after raising his son, seeing him grow, and seeing him finally get to that age of being a man that will help to bring about the nation that was promised to Abraham.

Application: the 3 ideas we can learn from the astronauts and apply to Abraham

Now we're going to tie our three points in with looking at the astronauts we discussed earlier, i think there's three comparisons we can draw from the astronauts and the life of Abraham that we can apply to our lives.

Point 1: faith takes action (stepping out of the spaceship)

Those astronauts had to be willing to get out of the ship, their trip would've meant nothing if they hadn't been willing to take action and get out of the ship.

Abraham's faith would have meant nothing if action hadn't been involved.

Abraham would have to take action and prove that he had strong faith in God. God wouldn't have blessed him the way he did if Abraham hadn't taken any action. From the first step that he took out of his door all the way up to his death, he used his faith to help and guide him.

James 2:21-23 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." [fn] And he was called the friend of God.

God expects us to take action if our faith is going to be pleasing and made perfect to God. We cannot be a Christian or have faith in God only on Sunday's and Wednesday nights and be found pleasing to God. If we want to be found pleasing to God then we must constantly be acting on our faith and constantly serving him. Our faith can take action when we serve others, live like Christ, when we fight against sin, when we evangelize and reach out to people. Our faith in God will be seen in our works for God. Because of his faith and his works he was counted as **righteous and he was called a friend of God.** What a great thing to be known for.

Point 2: faith takes commitment (becoming an astronaut)

To be an astronaut it takes a lifetime of commitment, no one can be an astronaut if they're only partially committed. A great deal of training, study, and sacrifice is necessary for someone to be able to become an astronaut.

To have this kind of faith in God takes **full commitment.** We can't rely on God or be convicted about our faith in God only when it's suitable or easy for us. Abraham's commitment to God is seen in that he **never goes back to his homeland**, he never once tries to return. He waits for God to fulfill his promise to give him a son and after that God **tells him to kill him**, and he doesn't **waver in his conviction.** God wasn't wanting him to kill Isaac, but he wanted to know that Abraham was committed in his faith. God wants us to be committed in our faith. **If something is hindering us from having this kind of strong faith then we need to be willing to sacrifice that and focus solely on God.** If we're going to be faithful to him like Abraham then he expects us to be **willing to give up the things that are important to us to follow him.** Whether that's your job, family, friends, hobbies, God expects us to be committed enough to him to sacrifice those things so we can focus solely on him. Now, those things aren't wrong; there's nothing wrong with loving and taking care of your family, or working hard, or enjoying your hobbies, but they shouldn't be hindering our commitment to God.

Sin should never come before our commitment to God, if sin is something that we allow to hinder our commitment to God then we should definitely get rid of it. A great

example of this is Lot, particularly **Lot's wife** when she looked back at Sodom and became a pillar of salt in **Genesis 19**. She was focused too much on the city and its sin and she wasn't fully willing to commit to God she lost her life. **She wanted to hang on to the sin of the city and it cost her life, sin will cost us our lives today if we commit to sin over God.**

Point 3: faith takes you through difficult situations, but we will be rewarded for it. (the reward of being someone that's walked on the moon)

Those astronauts had to endure some difficult circumstance on their trip; but they were rewarded for it when they finally got to step foot on the moon, something very few people in history have ever accomplished.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

Though we **go through difficult situations for God**, but we seek after him and are committed to serving him then he will reward us. Just like Abraham, **if we seek after God he will reward us**. Though that may not always mean he'll bless us in this life, he does promise to bless us when our lives are over if we're found faithful to him.

Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Abraham had **no desire to go back to his country**; because **he knew that Haran wasn't his home**, he didn't have an earthly home. Instead he was **looking forward to being in the homeland that God was preparing for him**, the city whose builder is God.

Through the God's covenant with Abraham, the same hope of being in heaven with God, through his Son Jesus Christ. This was the **beginning of God's plan to bring about the messiah** and free his people from their sins. We have the same promise today through Christ. **If you're not a Christian** you can study, be baptized, and live your life committed to serving God, to be convicted in your belief, and to begin that journey looking to the homeland that God has prepared for those that have served him.

If you are a Christian but have lost that commitment; do something about that tonight, have the elders pray for you, ask this congregation for help, and recommit your life to the service of God, and regain that conviction you had before.

Come forward now if you have a need.