

Q2 L06 - **The Roots of Abraham** - 2022-05-07

Shawn Brummund: Good morning, and welcome to another edition of the "Sabbath School Study Hour." For those of you who are watching livestream, welcome to you here this morning. For those of you who are watching on the various broadcasts, nice to have you join us as we come together once again in the Granite Bay Hilltop Seventh Day Adventist Church to be able to study the Word of God.

In this case, we're coming back to study the more positive chapters in the first part of the book of Genesis. Over the last few weeks now, we've been looking at the first few chapters, and sadly, many of those chapters are not all that positive. There's some very tragic realities that took place during those first centuries. But now we are going to see a light that is going to begin to shine in the darkness through a man by the name of Abraham. And so we are going to be looking at the life of Abraham starting today. And so we're looking at lesson number six in your quarterly, and this quarterly is just simply entitled, "Genesis." And so, again, lesson number six, which is "The Roots of Abraham," and so our teacher today is going to be Pastor Luccas Rodor, and we're going to be studying that together.

It is always good to be able to offer you our free gift offer, which today is "Determining the Will of God." This is no small question that many of us, as Christians and believers ask is how can we determine the will of God in my life in this area of that area or overall? And so this is just a great little book that is written by our lead pastor, Doug Batchelor, "Determining the Will of God." If you'd like to receive a free copy of this, go ahead and dial 1-866-788-3966 and ask for free offer number 778. Again, that's 1-866-788-3966, and that's available in the North American countries, as well as the different various US territories.

If you would be interested in a digital copy of this, we also have that available for you, as well. If you want to download it on your phone, and you're in the US, you can go ahead and text the code SH025, and you want to dial that to 40544. If you're not in the United States, and you'd like to receive a copy of this and digitally download it on the Internet, just simply get on your computer, whatever way you access the Internet, and go to the website, which is study.aftv.org. That's study.aftv.org/SH025. Again, that's study.aftv.org/SH025. And so I want to make sure that we get that audio really for those who are listening to this program via radio, as some people are blessed in that way.

So, again, it's nice to be able to have you join us here today. I know that I'm looking forward to learning the insights and understanding that God has given to our teacher today. But before we actually get into the study, we have some very special people that are behind me already, and that is our local church choir. And so they're going to sing and lead us in song even right now.

♪♪

♪ When I survey the wondrous cross, ♪
♪ on which the Prince of Glory died, ♪
♪ my richest gain I count as loss ♪
♪ and pour contempt on all my pride. ♪

♪♪

♪ Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, ♪
♪ save in the death of Christ my God. ♪
♪ All the vain things that charm me most, ♪
♪ I sacrifice them to His blood. ♪
♪ See from His head, His hands, His feet, ♪
♪ sorrow and love flow mingled down. ♪
♪ Did e'er such love and sorrow meet ♪
♪ or thorns compose so rich a crown? ♪

♪♪

♪ Were the whole realm of nature mine, ♪
♪ that were a present far too small; ♪
♪ love so amazing, so divine, ♪
♪ demands my soul, ♪
♪ my life, my all. ♪

♪♪

♪ My all. ♪

Luccas Rodor: You know, Pastor Shawn said something very interesting in his introduction. He said that up to now, we've seen, you know, some stories that are, they're not the most agreeable when it comes to the book of Genesis. There are a lot of things, unfortunately, that happened that really portray the, well, the negative effects of-- well, I wouldn't say the negative--the only-- sin only has negative effects, right? So, Genesis really goes into portraying the negative effects of what happened after the fall. We find a lot of death. We find horrible events. Truly, when you look at Genesis, chapter 1 through 11, you will only find three major events, which is the creation, then you have the tower--the flood and the tower of Babel. And so you really see that during those years of history portrayed in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. A lot of bad things happened. Many bad things happened.

But luckily, today, we get to study the life of a man who had many positive things happen. Yes, there were bad things that happened during his lifetime and in his life, but we really see a brighter side of Genesis and what it means to follow God. You know, growing up, reading the Bible, studying the lesson, hearing sermons, just going to church, you hear a lot about the seed of Abraham, right? The seed of Abraham, the seed of Abraham. This is a recurrent theme in the Bible and in sermons, the seed of Abraham. So, when I saw the lesson title, "The Roots of Abraham," I was like, well, maybe they--was it a typo? Did they get something wrong? You know, is it supposed to be the seed of Abraham? And, you know, they wrote down the "Roots" wrong. But when I started studying the lesson, I saw that truly it makes sense. And the question is why? Why is the title of the lesson "The Roots of Abraham"?

Now, the reason for that is because the appearance of Abraham in the narrative of Genesis is simply put, arguably, the most important, at least one of the most important events in the Old Testament story. And the reason why I say that is because it has a very seminal nature. It is seminal in nature which means that every other thing, all the other events that you find, they kind of stem, they come from this one event, the calling of Abraham, and it's here on out that the story, the real story unfolds, all the way until we get to who? To Jesus. So, that's why I'll say that the calling of Abraham is the most important, you know, event in the Old Testament. It's because it's from this event that everything else comes out from.

When you really study the book of Genesis, it seems as though the author of Genesis is, you know, he's speeding along in those first 11 chapters. It's like he's rushing to get somewhere. Because truly, when you look at it, you have about, you know, 2000 years of history that go from chapter 1 to chapter 11, and then again, just three major events. You have the creation, you have the flood, you know, creation and the fall, then you have the flood and tower of Babel. And, you know, 2000 years of history, and here I'm rounding, okay? It's not--I know there are going to be those that are going to say, "Well, Pastor, it wasn't exactly." Yes, it wasn't exactly 2000. But, you know, on broad strokes. And then when you get to chapter 12, it's like the author, he slows way down. Because what had taken 11 chapters and about 2000 years, then for the rest of the book you have, you know, several chapters, and it's only about 200 years of history. And so a lot of things happen.

Now, this event, the calling of Abraham is the root of all subsequent events, as I have already said, until the Messiah, who is truly the true seed of Abraham and through whom all the blessings that are promised through the Old Testament come through. Galatians chapter 3, verse 7 through 9 tells us this. It says, "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you, all the nations shall be blessed.'" Then when you jump to verse 14, it says, "That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through the faith."

And that's why, friends, the Bible makes it clear here in the last verses, Galatians 3:28-29, it says in very famous verses, it says, "Therefore there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." And so the promise, it goes way beyond the Old Testament Jewish dream of a nation. This promise, the blessing of Jesus Christ, the blessing of the

Messiah, of the Redeemer, of the Rebuilder, that promise extends to everyone. And so that misunderstanding that so many had in Abraham, that is made clear in Jesus Christ.

Now, the book of Genesis, as I've already built up to, it's divided into basically two sections. You have chapter 1 through 11, where you have the origin story, and then chapter 12 through 50, where you find the story of the origins of Israel or the patriarchal period. That's what we find in the rest of the book. Since its very beginning, Genesis confronts us with this God that is invariably personal. He's a personal God. If there is one attribute of God that we see from the very beginning is that God is a relational, personal being. God exists inside of an eternal relationship. When humans are created in the image of God, when the Bible says, "Let us go down and create mankind in our image," God is saying, you know, some people try to make that an exclusive thing. This only means one thing.

Friends, we are made in God's image in multiple ways, and one of the most transparent, one of the clearest ways in which we were made in the image of God is that we, just like God, are relational creatures. We exist within relationships: relationship with parents, with siblings, with spouses, with friends, with children. We are relational beings. And so this God revealed in the Bible is invariably personal. That is particularly portrayed during the creation of humankind with His personal care and His personal touch for relationships.

He is the only God. He is the sovereign God of all. The history of creation decides the matter, and all subsequent history confirms that God is the ultimate commander of events, the ebb and flow of history, of the rise and the tide and the fall of nations. We see that, for example, in the conception of the child, of a child, Isaac. Who was foretelling that? God. We see that in the calling of a follower, Abraham. Friends, time, space, sin, even death are no rivals for him. He works through supernatural events, obviously sometimes, and sometimes providentially subtle. He is the Creator, He is the judge of all. His purposes are irresistible. God is perfect. His dealing with sin, with disbelief, with presumption, with covetousness, with betrayal.

The book of Genesis reveals God as the supreme judge of the universe. Even in His wrath, His judgments are tempered with His mercy and are delayed in being dealt. His care for sinners is moving. His justice is altogether intertwined with love, and His love is branded with moral demands. Throughout his experience, Abraham came to understand that the calling that God extended to him, his relationship with this God would demand everything and everything that he had, because God reveals Himself in command, in communication, and above all else in a willingness of entering covenant with humans. He suffered in His choices, always.

Just look at Romans 9:6-12 that says, "But it is not that the Word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham. But in Isaac your seed shall be called. That is those who are the children of the flesh, those who are not the children of God, but the children of the promise and counted as the seed, for this is the word of the promise. At this time, I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac, for the children not yet being born nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works but of him who calls. It was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved but Esau I have hated.'"

Now, one thing that's important to note here at the beginning is that the choice of Isaac and Jacob before their birth and the corresponding rejection of Ishmael and of Esau, these were explicitly related to their role within the plan of redemption. This had nothing to do with their personal salvation. So, some people say, "Well, God was here. He was predestining Isaac and Jacob to be saved, and then He was also predestining Esau and Ishmael to be lost."

Well, we don't believe in that. What we understand is that Isaac and Jacob, they were called, they were predestined for a role within the plan of redemption, but Ishmael and Esau, were they-- was salvation available to them? Absolutely, of course it was. Look at what Genesis 17:18-22 said. It says, "And

Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before you.' Then God said, 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly, and he shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, and Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.' And he finished talking to him, and God went up from Abraham."

And so you see that election in Genesis has to do with the role of those involved in the lineage of Christ, with a covenant that would bring the Messiah, the seed through whom all the nations would be blessed. So, since the very beginning, friends, since the fall, the moral effects of sin are a great theme in Genesis, revealing the immediate separation of God and man. Its progressive effect in human nature, it culminated in universal depravity. That's something that we don't have to look very far to see. We see that in our days, and we see that throughout history. We see that demonstrated in the flood and the subsequent events that were evident manifestations of arrogance. You see that with Babel. You see that with Sodom and Gomorrah. That's also reflected within the very families of the patriarchs. You see that in the family of Abraham, in the family of Isaac, in the family of Jacob. You see the effects of sin that spread as a disease, moving from generation to generation.

If there's one thing that is observable throughout the Bible, throughout history, throughout life itself is that the problem of sin has come to all of humankind. However, God has a plan. God had a saving plan that is no less evident. His way of dealing with the problem further reveals that God is always in control. And so the lesson moves in that introduction over to Sunday's lesson, Sunday's day, where the title is, "Abraham's Departure." Here we find the calling of Abraham.

Now, Hebrews 11, especially, it's chapter 11, verse 8 through 16, it focuses on the theme of pilgrimage, Abraham's pilgrimage. It portrays Abraham's experience of the patriarch of faith. Look at what it says, Hebrews 8--11, verse 8. It says, "By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going." So, what the text is telling us is that being called, he went.

Now, I don't know about you, but if I heard a voice just come out to me and say, "Luccas, you've got to leave everything behind, all your family, your friends, your relatives, and you've just got to go." The first question I would ask, I would make is, "Am I sane? Am I going nuts?"

The second question I would ask, after I came to terms with whatever the implications of that reality were, the second question would be, "Where am I going?" That's the second question. But you don't see either of these questions appearing in the mind of Abraham. Being called, he went. And God didn't submit a plan for Abraham's approval. He just went out, not knowing where he was going. His unrestricted faith firmly planted in the God of time, in the Lord of the future.

So, reading this story today at a comfortable distance of that event, we kind of lose sight of what it involved, what was involved in this act of obedience. Friends, Abraham left Ur, one of the cradles of ancient civilization, away from his comfort zone. He cut ties. He left without having a clue about where he was going. And it's curious that even in the promised land, Abraham, according to verse 9, Hebrews 11, verse 9, it said, "By faith, he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents."

And so even when he left, into this land that God had promised that He would give him, he didn't dwell in this land with a spirit of permanence. He dwelt in it knowing that it was not permanent, and this was his legacy. This was his manifest. He understood that his permanence was temporary. Abraham arrived in the promised land. Did he not? He arrived in Canaan, and yet he didn't. Because as verse 10 says, Hebrews 11, verse 10, it says, "For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He cut ties with his past. He cut ties with his connections in Ur. He cut ties with relatives. This is a fundamentally patriarchal society, where family connections were everything. Abraham cuts ties with everything. As the lesson emphasizes, Abraham cut ties with himself. He left himself to free himself of everything that would and could hold him back in Ur, in the past.

The problem, friends, that we find many times with God's calling of leaving, of departing on a pilgrimage, and I'm sure that many here can relate to this, because in everyone's life, in one moment or another, we're all called to leave. You know that. We've all been called to leave. The problem is that many times we'll leave Ur, but we will not allow Ur to leave us. That's what you find in the story of Mrs. Lot. She left Sodom, but Sodom did not leave her. We'll get there.

Later on, we know that Abraham left for Mount Moriah toward the sacrifice of his son. You know, leaving Ur, that was a very difficult experience in his life. Leaving Ur, friends, was the initial test that prepared him for a greater test yet ahead. Those who failed to obey the smaller tests cannot expect to gain approval on the final exam. Abraham was conscious of his call to be a blessing, to be a part of God's design plan for the salvation of the world. He understood what was at stake. He understood what was happening. And while he did have a few hiccups along the way--and we'll get into one of them--he understood that reality.

We are also called to leave the fortress of self, leaving Babylon with its rival system against the Most High, with its lifestyles and conveniences, its connections, its comforts, that seemed very attractive at times. But it's our decisions, our interests, our habits; by them, we are day by day sealing where our heart lies. Doesn't the Bible say that where your treasure lies, there your heart will lie also?

So, the true question is here, is where does your heart lie? What would be too much to give up? Abraham was confronted with this reality several times, starting in Ur. What did he have to give up? A lot, everything, and go live in tents.

Monday's lesson gives us a glimpse in a very strange, a very weird moment in Abraham's life, because this man throughout the Bible is portrayed as a hero of faith, as a giant of faith. You know, the story here in Monday is one of those stories of the bards of history of literature would want to hide of their heroes, and this is part of the beauty of the Bible, because the Bible does not hide the failure of its heroes. You know why? Because the Bible does not have heroes, except one: Jesus Christ. All these other people are men and women just like yourself and myself, that encountered Jesus, that encountered God in the experience of life, and react to him. In a way, this is our biography. And so the people that we find are people in their real-life experience with God.

You know, the journey of faith can never be underrated as a walk in the park, underestimated as a walk in the park, without any kind of purpose. The dangers of the journey lie at every turn. They are, firstly, many. There are many dangers: spiritual stagnation, detours, rebellion, discouragement, setbacks, losses, accidents along the route. In the book of Revelation, Egypt, just as Babylon is a symbol of deceit, of the traps of the devil, the land of enchantment, and Pharaoh himself is a type of Satan. The question isn't only leaving Egypt, but staying away from it and from its illusions. Abraham faced these dangers, and the story is well known. He tried to help God help him. This is a weakness that Abraham had.

Several times you'll see Abraham trying to help God help him. We see that here. We see that later on with the whole story with Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham helping God helping him. Whenever we attempt to help God help us, with our reason, with our logic, with our means, with our resources, we're doing nothing less than playing God. And friends, that is very dangerous, because that is a form of idolatry.

When you try to help God help you, you become a god unto yourself, and that is extremely dangerous. Egypt is a type for humans that trust in humans, faith in what is visible. Later on, the Israelites will taste the temptations of Egypt with its resources, with its ease, to the point when even when they had left Egypt, the land of their bondage, of their slavery, some of them wanted to go back. How many times in life does that happen with us? When we are finally able to tear away from the problems, from the temptations, the sins, sometimes we'll leave, but always with our mind on that thing, on that habit, on whatever it was. Egypt is that type of humans that trust in humans. The Israelites on that occasion, they left Egypt, but Egypt, once again, had not left them.

Abraham, during his time in Egypt, demonstrated that even he, the father of faith, was not free from human frailties, from falling, from imperfections, and the paradox between Abraham, the Abraham that

left Ur and the Abraham that left towards the promised land--sorry--towards, that left Egypt is very evident. In the first case, he was an agent of obedience, right?

The Abraham that left Ur was an agent of what? Obedience. He was obeying God. But the Abraham, the Abraham that left for Egypt, he acted on his own. Hiding the fact that Sarah was his wife, he not only revealed his fear of Pharaoh, but also his lack of trust in the one that had promised to protect him. Abraham who throughout his lifetime walked through unrestricted faith, at this moment he reveals a very basic weakness that all of us have in one moment or another.

You see, to the Jews, Abraham was so important that according to the rabbinical tradition, when God was creating the world, He consulted Abraham. But here we see the real Abraham, who during this incident in Egypt reveals the stuff that all of us are made of. But inadvertently, that also reveals what God is made of, because Ephesians 2, verse 8 says, "By grace you are saved." It's no wonder that that text, such a famous text, says, "By grace you are saved." By grace through what? Through faith. And this comes from God. Abraham knew that.

Grace is precisely that, friends: hope for those who are prone to failure and that do, in fact, fail. What would Abraham be without grace? What would David be without grace? What would Moses be without grace? What would Paul, Peter, all of these big characters in the Bible, what would all of them, David, what would they be without grace? How could we say that these people were anything more than just men and women like you and like me? By grace.

In Christ, friends, we're all comforted. Abraham was comforted. Because according to Philippians 1:6, the Bible says, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it in the day of Jesus Christ." A bigger failure than falling is to conclude that the Lord abandons us in our failures, in our weaknesses, in our trepidations. A bigger failure than actually falling is allowing the enemy to convince you that you cannot get back up. That's when you fall. You don't lose when you fall. You lose when you're convinced that you can't get back up, and that's something that Abraham didn't do. He got back up. He was not convinced that he couldn't seek out God's grace.

Another powerful perspective about God, the God that always provides second chances, is given in Tuesday's lesson, Abraham and Lot. We see that God here is giving Abraham multiple chances. The lesson puts it this way: Abraham returns to where he was before, as if his trip to Egypt were a mere unfortunate detour. God's history with Abraham starts again, where it had stopped since his first trip to the promised land. Abraham's first station is Bethel, just as in his first trip to the land. Abraham had repented and is back to himself. Abraham, the man of faith.

So, at this moment, right here in this story, we find a very practical problem that was assailing his camp. You see, Lot, his nephew, had followed him from Ur, and this says a lot about Lot. He was willing to leave everything behind to go with his uncle, and their flocks and herds were becoming so big that the herders were beginning to bicker among themselves.

So, Abraham, who was the elder of the two--and above all else he was the one that God had called--it would stand to reason that he would get to pick where he wanted to go, right? Anyone would do that. Anyone would reason that. The elder, the more important one, you know, the patriarch of the family, but in a great revelation of his character, he allows Lot to pick the direction. Genesis 13:8-9 where we read, "Please let there be no strife between you and me and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left I will go to the right, or if you go to the right I will go to the left."

Here we see the gentle diplomatic spirit of the patriarch that stood above all the petty, greedy commercial interests that most other people would have. The Pathfinder law--I really appreciate the Pathfinder club. If you have kids that aren't in the club, put them in. It'll be good for them, I promise you this.

The Pathfinder law could very well be applied to Abraham, who was a servant of God and a friend to all. Lot makes the decision, and the biblical text tells us that he, according to chapter 13, verse 10, he lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of the Jordan, and that's apparently all that he saw. He must've thought, "This is my opportunity. This is my chance." The land was plentiful, it was beautiful, it was well-watered, and so he, according to verse 11, "chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan," and Lot journeyed east. And verse 12, "Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom."

He let himself become attracted to the luxury, the beauty, the wealth of the land, and he did not pay attention to the fact that according to verse 13, the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord. On that day, Lot had no idea what awaited him in Sodom. He didn't consider the risk to which he was exposing his family, because the next time we find Lot in chapter 14, he was well-established in Sodom.

Friends, small decisions, small concessions with evil lead to more significant decisions and concessions. And in the process, we lose our spiritual sensitivity and authority. Old reservations are overcome. Walls are brought down, and we become accustomed, we become used to a lifestyle that couldn't even be imagined before. And so the word hedonism comes in, the pursuit of pleasure. Hedonism, you know what the word etymologically means, what it means in its root? It means to grow numb, and that's what happens to Lot. He becomes numb.

What about you? In the process of making decisions, remember that if done on the wrong grounds, decisions can lead to disaster and tragedy. What we find in this story is the representation of two kinds of people: Abraham and Lot. Our own biography, people like Lot or like Abraham, that is the distinction that all are confronted by at one point or another of their life. We're all confronted by this reality. Everyone is confronted by the recurrent decisions that lead them to opposite directions and ends. We either pitch our tents in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or we pitch our tents in the direction of Hebron, as Abraham did.

The danger of becoming like Lot is that we arrive at Sodom progressively. We arrive there progressively. It's not all at once. Almost unnoticeable steps. Lot starts out with good intentions to provide for his family; however, his end is disaster and tragedy.

People are not lost in an instant. It's gradual. Families aren't broken in a day. Fathers aren't broken in a day. Mothers are not broken in a day. Churches are not broken in a day. It's progressive, it's gradual. The environment that he chose ended up dividing and even destroying his family. It's not only the personal risk, it's not only the personal risk that must be considered in our choices, but also the indirect risks that end up affecting others.

Lot was not responsible for the existence of Sodom, but he was responsible and guilty of pitching his tents there. It's no wonder that when his hour of judgment arrived, since he had been in Sodom for so long, he had lost his spiritual authority. He was unable to take his family and remove them. He had lost his authority. Just read Genesis chapter 19 later. Now, what this means for you and for me is that in the moments of life where decisions need to be made, the main questions are not, "Is this advantageous? Will this bring me more success, more money? Will this be more pleasurable? Does it please me?"

Those are the wrong questions. The right questions are, "Is this correct? Is this right? Does it please the Lord? Who am I putting at risk?" Those are the real questions. Parents especially always ask the question, "Am I putting my family, my little children at risk with this job, with this move, with this house, with this community? Am I placing my children at risk?"

The segue into this story that the lesson gives us is it comes on Wednesday's lesson, "The Babel Coalition." This is the story of the first reported war in the Bible. And it's also connected to Abraham. It reveals more of his character here. We're really getting to the roots of who this man was. In a very ironic twist of events--and ironic because as we see it, God had given Abraham the land. Had he not? The land was Abraham's. And yet we find many nations staking their own claim and trying to enforce it by force.

The lesson puts it this way. It says, "The involvement of so many peoples from the country of Canaan suggest that the issue at stake in this conflict was about sovereignty over the land. Ironically, the camp of Abraham, the truly interested party, because he is the only true owner of the land, is the only force that remains outside of the conflict, at least at first."

So, this is where we see Abraham's character once again, because he had no reason to fret or to worry, did he? God had promised. God will fulfill what He had promised. He didn't really have to worry. He didn't have to fret. The Lord was his legacy. The Lord was his legacy. But again, according to the lesson, the reason for Abraham's neutrality is that for Abraham the promised land was not acquired through the force of arms or through the wisdom of political strategies. Abraham's kingdom was God's gift.

The only reason Abraham will intervene is the fate of his nephew, Lot, who was taken prisoner in the course of the battles. So, when he does decide to become involved in this conflict, in this coalition of armies, it's for a much nobler reason. He's not doing it to claim land, to stake property. He's doing this because he heard that his nephew had been taken, and here we see this man's greatness again. Because contrary to what many people would do, many family members would do, he doesn't hold a grudge against Lot.

Many people would say, "Well, you know, now he's reaping the rewards, you know, he's reaping what he sowed. He went to the more comfortable place. He was greedy. This is what happens. God is judging him. I know many people that would react that way, unfortunately. Not Abraham. He doesn't smirk, saying, "Well, he deserves it." Abraham forms a coalition of his own: him, the men of his household, and God.

And here's the truth. Those who have God are never, ever outnumbered. Those who have God on their side are never outnumbered. Have you ever felt outnumbered? Does it seem that your coworkers, your schoolmates, your family, perhaps even your fellow church members are up against you? I promise you, with God by your side, you are the majority. It's interesting that before everything else, Abraham consults his partner. He consults the Lord. "Patriarchs and Prophets," the book, page 135 says, "Abraham dwelling in peace in the oak groves of Mamre, learned from one of the fugitives the story of the battle and the calamity that had befallen his nephew. He had cherished no unkind memory of Lot's ingratitude. All his affection for him was awakened, and he determined that he should be rescued, seeking, first of all, divine counsel."

Notice this, "Seeking first of all divine counsel, Abraham prepared for war." This is a very big lesson. Every time when you are faced by a big decision, a big choice that has many implications, consult God first, always. Lay your problems before the Lord. Be like King Hezekiah. Bring the enemy's letters into the house of the Lord and lay them out before the King of the universe. Because before the King of the universe, every other giant appears in its true form, paper giant. Most of the times, you don't even need to tell God your problems. You need to tell your problems about the God that you have. The promise was made by God, that Abraham would be the owner of that land. God would fulfill. So, what that means is that eventually, when he did prepare for war, he went out only to rescue his nephew, not to face an entire coalition through conquest.

Thursday's lesson, we did talk a lot about this in the last lesson--not last week--the last lesson about Hebrews. The title of the lesson is "The Tithe of Melchizedek." So, if you want to hear more about this subject, the subject of Melchizedek, go back to last quarter's lessons on the Internet, and you'll find a lot about that. But here we see that having rescued Lot, an interesting event comes to pass. This mysterious figure, Melchizedek, he appears, and he receives a tithe from Abraham.

Now, we don't know much about this man, and that is precisely why the Bible uses him. It's because we don't know that much about him. He appears, he receives the tithe from Abraham. We do know that he was both a priest and a king. And as he appears in the narrative, he was above even Abraham, because here Abraham returns tithe to him. Now, we find this additional insight in the book "Selected Messages," book 1, page 409. It says, "It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High

God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken. Christ has led His people and has been the light of the world."

So, the focus here isn't really Melchizedek. He wasn't a divine being himself--far from it. That wouldn't make sense within the scope of the Bible. Here he appears as a symbol, a type representing the qualities of Christ as our mediator, different in that sense than anything that had ever occurred before.

Now what's curious in this story, that it is also the first mention of the word "priest." It's the first time the Bible mentions the word "priest." And in fact, Melchizedek, he serves as a priest to Abraham. The lesson puts it this way: "Melchizedek officiates indeed as priest. He serves bread and wine, an association that oftentimes implies the use of fresh-pressed grape juice, which reappears in the context of giving the tithes. In addition, he extends blessing or a blessing to Abraham." So, we see that he does officiate to Abraham.

Friends, the calling of Abraham is considered, again, one of, if not the most important event in the Old Testament. Here we find the first steps of the plan of redemption that had already been provided in the book of--in Genesis chapter 1, 2, and 3 in the garden of Eden. The first 11 chapters of Genesis demonstrate that the Lord always desires to relate to humans. With the story of Babel and the division of the nations, Genesis makes it clear that sin became a universal matter.

In chapter 12, as you consider, as you continue studying the lesson this quarter, pay attention to these things. According to chapter 12, we find a strategic shift in the pace of the author, where to deal with the universal problem, God provides a universal plan by choosing a specific man, Abraham, through whom a nation would come, by which the Great Restorer would eventually come. Abraham is the central human figure of the book and one of the most important figures in the Bible. Moses dedicates 11 chapters to everything that happens before Abraham's life, but regarding the life of this one man, 13 chapters, just about him and everything that happened in his life.

The story of Abraham is one that inspires us to follow God in absolute faith, while also understanding that the main character isn't, in fact, us. You're not the main character, friend. It's not you. The main character is God. He is the one who fulfills His promises. It's not us. It's not you. It's not me. This is something that took Abraham a while to understand, that it took him a lifetime to understand, but that he did put into practice the moment that he left Ur. He left Ur within God's calling the moment God called, but it took him a lifetime to understand that it's God who fulfills His promises.

Friends, our God is the God of covenant. The story is about Him. He will fulfill His promises to you. Now, sometimes in life it's hard to determine and to understand what is God's will for our life. Don't you think that Abraham felt this? I'm sure he did. I'm absolutely positive that during several moments of his life--we don't have time for this, but later on just you go check, Genesis chapter 15, verse 8, where God appears again and confirms the covenant that He had provided in chapter 12. He confirms it to Abraham, but this time Abraham, he asks, Genesis 15, verse 8, he says, "Lord, how do I know that I will receive it?" So, sometimes even Abraham had some hiccups, how to determine God's will. It's hard for us. It was hard for him. It was hard for David. It was hard for all these heroes of faith. So, don't feel alone sometimes when you feel that you don't know what God wants from you.

If you do want some help, you can order this. It's a free offer. You could call 866-788-3966. Ask for study number 778. In the US, you can ask for--you can text SH025 to the number 40544. If you're outside of continental North America, you could go to study.aftv.org/SH025, and you can get this little book. It's called "Determining the Will of God." It won't give you all the answers. No one can. But it will point you in really good directions to where in the Bible you can find some of this. Of course, the real way to determine God's will, it's always going to be being in prayer, reading the Word, and living within God's will. And you know how to do that. That's not very difficult to understand, how to live within His will. May God bless you. I'd like to finish with prayer.

Dear Father, thank you so much for this beautiful day. Please allow us to continue walking in your will, Father. We see through the roots of Abraham, his life events, we see a man that was just a man; but as a man, he did live an ideal life, Lord, throughout the hiccups and the problems and the failures and the ups and downs, Lord, we want to live by faith, just as Abraham did. Allow us to do that, Lord. Give us that grace. Bless those that are here in person today. Bless those that are watching online. Bless those that will watch in the future, Father. I ask you these things in the name of Jesus. Amen and amen. May God bless you.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544 or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want, and most important, to share it with others.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts, Changed Lives."

Male: I met my ex-wife, and her family were real big into drugs. And it started out with them wanting me to go to the doctor to help get them drugs. And you know, I'm noticing they're going to the doctor, they're coming back with, like, 60 pills, and they're selling these pills for like 1,000 bucks. And I'm thinking, "Wow, this is a lot of money I'm giving these people, so I'm just going to start selling it myself."

My problem with that was now we had all this money but we was absolutely miserable. She would go out and sleep with other guys to get drugs, and that ended my marriage. But during this time, I have to get a job to build back up to where I was at, to open my shop again, so I get a job at Food City. And when I get this job at Food City, there's my wife now, Rebecca, she's a cashier there. And when I walk in, she's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen in my life. I was like, "Man, I could never have a girl like that. Wow, she's so beautiful."

But as I'm working with her, she's actually kind of mean to me. And she's saying, "I don't want anything to do with you. Get away from me," stuff like that. But you know, I just keep being nice to her and keep trying to give her my phone number. And it's around Christmas Eve, we'd just been dating for a little while, moved in together, my ex-wife shows up with my three children that I had by her. And she's like, "Here's your kids, here's their birth certificates, here's their Social Security cards. I'm done." And we were starting a family, we already have three kids.

During this time, we spent the next year watching nothing but Amazing Facts on YouTube. I didn't even know they even had a website at this time. I just knew that this little guy on YouTube was super smart, was teaching Bible, and I wanted to follow him, I wanted to be a Christian. I gave my life to God now because of these truths that I'm learning from Doug Batchelor.

Just because Doug taught it didn't make me real sure about going to this church. I really didn't want anything to do with it, but I called the guy up and I'm telling him, and I'm not very nice about it actually. I'm telling him, "Look, we was thinking about coming to your church." And he's really nice, and he's like, "Well, you're more than welcome to. We'd like to have you come." And I'm like, "Well, hold on, I'm going to lay down some ground rules." I'm telling him, I said, "Look here, I'm covered in tattoos and I'm a tattoo artist." And he don't say, "Well, you know, wow, I didn't know all that; don't come to my church." He says, "You're more than welcome. We would love to have you. Please come."

He asked me what I want to do, and I said, "Well, I want to preach." I said, "I have all these truths, I have all this knowledge, stuff I've never known before, stuff if I'd have had when I was younger that would've been life-changing to me." I said, "I got to share this with the world." I said, "I want to preach, I want to teach." He gives me the book, says, "Study that."

Well, now that I'm a Bible worker, I'm able to go reach people that most of the normal churches wouldn't even bother to even speak to. I'm able to go out and reach the people who have lived the life

that I've lived. I'm able to let them know that I am like you. I've been there, I've done that. I want to show you what my life is like now. I want to teach you this Bible. I want to show you what Jesus can do for you. It's not too late.

Scarlet Varley: I'm Scarlet Varley. I grew up in a military home. Both my parents were in the Navy, and my mom left fairly early, and then my dad stayed for 15 years, and so he was deployed a lot. We would read the Bible every night together as a family, and, I mean, I knew, like, that God was there, and, like, I knew that He, like, died for me, but it wasn't something that, like, you know, stuck in my head. Any time I went to church, I never got enough information. You know, you're there for just like an hour. I was super, super hungry for knowledge, and I wasn't being given it.

Even though I accepted Christ, my faith, like, really wasn't all that strong. I mean, I lost my first friend in high school, you know, my first boyfriend, to suicide, and that was really hard, and I didn't understand it, and I was just really, really depressed. I was also, like, abused, and so I was just really confused, and I was like, "Lord, why was I put in that situation where I had no control over anything?"

I was suicidal. I was developing an eating disorder, so, like, all these things were just coming into play. You know, I don't feel loved. I knew that's not something that would happen if I was loved, or that's not something that happened if--maybe I must've done something wrong if I went through that, and I just blamed myself for everything. On the outside, I was sort of, like, super-happy and outgoing, and I'd give everyone a hug and compliment them and try to put the attention on other people, and so people didn't know what I was going through.

I was just super-confused about life and "Why am I here? Like, I don't think I have a reason to even be alive." And I was really confused with God. Like, why would You let this happen? Like, why wouldn't You intervene?" I just wanted to change it. I wanted to change it so bad, and there was nothing I could do. I quit choir because I was around too many people. Choir was a big thing. I just isolated myself because I couldn't stand being around people, and I was like, "Oh, well, if I don't have any friends and something happens to them, well, then it won't affect me because I'm not part of their lives." And so I was just really scared of just losing people, and so I thought if the more I pushed them away, the easier it would be to just go through life. The problem was I didn't turn to God, and that's when I needed Him most.

My sophomore year in high school, we went on this thing called Fall Weekend, we went on a retreat for, like, the weekend, and they showed this clip of Jesus Christ on the cross, and that broke me. I mean, I was crying, crying so much, and after they showed the clip, you know, everyone's just super-quiet, and they're like, "All right, go out on the campus, and we're going to do this thing called 'Twenty Minutes.'" And so I'm sitting out there, and I'm just, like, praying. I gave my life to Christ, and it was just such, like, a beautiful moment.

Right around that time, my dad found Doug Batchelor on the TV, and so he's like, "Scarlet, come watch this." And I'm like, "All right," like, I watch it. And so we started watching it, like, all the time, and he's like, "You know, this is like the Bible truth." I was like, "It definitely is." He's like, "Scarlet, you should go to AFCOE." And I was like, "That's not really my cup of tea." I was a very spirited person, and AFCOE was structured, and I knew, as a person, I wasn't too structured.

But, you know, the more I thought about AFCOE, the happier I got, and it was like a two weeks' notice before AFCOE started. She's like, "You got accepted." Like, we e-mailed you your letter," and all this stuff. And I was like, "Oh, no, oh, no, I have to pack up my entire life." And so I'm, like, frantically packing up everything, and me and my dad, like drive cross-country. And AFCOE was not what I expected at all. They've definitely loved me and helped me and talked to me and taught me and, just, loved me and accepted me as who I was and just helped me grow as a person. It showed me different ways of life and just how to live like a better life in all sorts of areas.

Without the help of the Lord and without, like, people who love the Lord and love me, I wouldn't be where I am today. Even when I didn't want him, you know, I kind of shoved Him away, He didn't let go, and so I'm super-grateful.