

Shawn Brummund: Good morning, and welcome to another edition of the Sabbath School Study Hour right here in the Granite Bay Hilltop Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Greater Metropolitan area of Sacramento, California. My name is Pastor Shawn Brummund.

It is my privilege to be able to welcome you to this particular study session as we continue to make our way through one of the most fundamental, important Bible books that we can find. It's the first one in the Bible so it's an easy one to find. It's entitled "Genesis" and our quarterly that we're continuing to go through is entitled just simply, "Genesis." And that really says it all. The origins of all things. And so today we're going to be looking at Lesson number 8. That is Lesson number 8 which is entitled "The Promise."

Now, again, put your seatbelts on because we have a lot of material to cover. We're looking at four chapters. Last week we looked at five; today we're looking at Genesis chapter 22 through Genesis chapter 25, and so we have a lot of material to be able to look at. Looking forward to being able to hearing what Pastor Luccas, our teacher here today, is going to share with us as we review for those of us who have gone through our quarterly over the week, and also for those of us who perhaps are just looking at this material together this morning for the very first time. So again, very special welcome to all our guests, all our members that are with us here today locally, and again, a special welcome to our friends, both in the area here of California as well as across the country and around the world.

Now, if you are in the United States or the various United States territories, we have a special gift offer that we'd like to offer to you here today, free of charge. It's entitled--the booklet today is entitled "The High Cost of the Cross." And this is written by the founder of "Amazing Facts," Joe Crews, and all you have to do is dial the number 1-866-788-3966. Again, that's 1-866-788-3966, and you want to ask for Free Offer Number 156. Now, if you'd like to have a digital download on that and you are living in the United States, that also is available. All you have to do is text the code "SH080," and you want to dial that to the number "40544."

Now, I know that some of you are not in the United States and you can't get either of those offers, but we do have this also available for you as a digital download on the Internet anywhere you can get onto the website, which is study, that's S-T-U-D-Y dot [aftv.org/SH080](http://aftv.org/SH080). And so that's available for all our friends across the world, so please take advantage of that. You're going to learn a lot about the high cost of the cross and how much Jesus loves us and how much he paid that price for you and me.

So before we open with prayer and look at our study, we have a very special group that is with us. It is one of my favorite universities, the University called Weimar. I'm a graduate and alumni there for 1997. We have their choir that is visiting us today, and they're going to lead us out in worship through song. God bless you.

♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world, ♪  
♪ the troubles of the world, the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Going home to live with God. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world, ♪  
♪ the troubles of the world, the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Going home to live with God. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my mother. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my mother. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my mother. ♪  
♪ I'm going to live with God. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my mother. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my mother. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my mother. ♪  
♪ I'm going to live with God. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world, ♪  
♪ the troubles of the world, the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Going home to live with God. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world, ♪  
♪ the troubles of the world, the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Going home to live with God. ♪  
♪ No more weeping and a-wailing. ♪  
♪ No more weeping and a-wailing. ♪  
♪ No more weeping and a-wailing. ♪  
♪ Going to live with God. ♪  
♪ No more weeping and a-wailing. ♪  
♪ No more weeping and a-wailing. ♪  
♪ No more weeping and a-wailing. ♪  
♪ No more weeping. ♪  
♪ No more wailing. ♪  
♪ No more weeping. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world, ♪  
♪ the troubles of the world, the troubles of the world. ♪

♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Going home to live with God. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world, ♪  
♪ the troubles of the world, the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Soon we'll be done with the troubles of the world. ♪  
♪ Going home to live with God. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my Jesus. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my Jesus. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my Jesus. ♪  
♪ Going to live with God. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my Jesus. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my Jesus. ♪  
♪ I want to meet my Jesus. ♪  
♪ Going to live with God. ♪  
♪ I'm going to live with God. ♪  
♪ I'm going to live with God. ♪

Shawn: I want to invite you to join me as we pray and ask the Lord to bless our study. Father in heaven, we want to thank You so much for the opportunity to worship You here this morning. Want to thank You so much for the inspiration of song and for our special guests and, Lord, as we also want to thank You for our teacher today as well. We want to pray that the Holy Spirit will be the ultimate teacher that guides us and leads us into all truth. And we thank You for listening, in Jesus's name we pray, amen.

Luccas Rodor: It's good to see you all. Good-looking group. And I'm sure that our friends that are online are also a beautiful group. You know, one of the beauties of the gospel and God's saving grace is the intricate canvas in which He works. You know, sometimes when you look at it, I don't know if you've ever seen a canvas upside down. It's all messy, right? It's weaved and--I don't know if that's a word. Weaved and woven in different directions and different ways, but then when you flip it over and you see the design, you see what is actually going on, you see this beautiful design of God's grace. And so I just love seeing the diversity of his people and being able to be a part of that is a blessing. So thank you for being here this morning. Thank you so much for tuning in and investing this time here with us. We do have a very beautiful study.

Just like Pastor Shawn mentioned before, there's a lot going on in this week's lesson, and it's going to be somewhat difficult to actually get everything, so we're going to focus, really, we're going to focus--the majority of our lesson is going to be focused on Sunday and Monday's lesson. And then we're going to talk a little bit about Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday also. But really, to me, the most beautiful part and really the latter days, they're kind of details that revolve around these first two days of the lesson.

Now, we've been building on Genesis, and Genesis is such an interesting book because when you read it, you know, it's--the first 12--I mentioned this before. The first 11 chapters, it's like the author, he is just flying through history, right? He's writing so fast, there are so many things that are happening, but really, you only find a few events mentioned. In the first, basically, 2000 years of history, you only find, you know, a few major events. You have the Creation, right? You have the Fall, and you can kind of put those together because they happen, you know, together in the first three chapters.

So you have the Creation, you have the Fall, then you have the flood and everything involved there. Then you have the Tower of Babel, and that takes, you know, centuries, it's so much time, but at the same time it's only 11 chapters. And then it's as if the author and we know it's Moses, he slows way down when he starts writing in chapter 12, because he gets to this point that is so important.

I mentioned this in Lesson 6, that the calling of Abraham is, you know, arguably the most important event of the entire Old Testament, and the reason why I say that, it's not, you know, I'm not excluding any of the other very important events, but it's because the calling of Moses is--it has this seminal nature. Everything else, everything that happens afterwards, they all find their beginning, they find their origin, with the calling of this man and everything that that involved.

So this week's lesson that has the title, "The Promise," it's the unfolding of what was studied last week in chapter--in Lesson 7. Last week's lesson was all about "The Covenant," right? The Covenant. You had this great plan that God put into motion by calling Abraham, and the promise that one day all the nations of the world would be blessed by Him. And why is God saying that?

Why is God saying that all the nations of the world would be blessed? Why is there a need of such a blessing? Well, it's because the world found itself in this emergency, the emergency of sin. And so God, putting into plan the eternal plan of redemption, we know that Jesus was the Lamb slain since the foundation of the world. What does that mean? That Jesus was killed before the foundation of the world, before the world began? No, Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, in essence, in motive, in motivation. Because God knew once Lucifer was

created, all the unfolding, all the latter part of the story would come to happen and the ultimate price would be His Son laying His life down or being laid down. And so, here we have God putting into motion this plan, and this week's lesson speaks about the ramifications of that covenant story. And here we have a very strange story in the first two days of the lesson.

So, again, here in this moment of Scripture, in this--in these moments of Scripture, we find glimpses of how God dealt with the patriarch--how He dealt with Abraham, with his family, and we find the lessons that He taught him. And again, one of the beautiful parts of the Bible, one of the few beautiful aspects of the Bible, is that while we're dealing with, you know, very real, very live, personalities, in a strange way, in a providential way, there is this transcendence to the Bible where, again, these were real people but, at the same time, here we have the biographies of ourselves.

In the Bible, in the Bible stories, you find your biography, I find my biography. In how we meet and how we encounter God. The lessons that these people learned are lessons that are applicable to you and to me today. And so here with Abraham, we find how God is dealing with this man in his ups and downs and his doubts and anxieties and his victories and losses. And one thing that becomes very clear in Abraham's story is that while, yes, he is known in the Bible as the father of faith, he was human. This was a human being and what that means is that sometimes he had to go through some very difficult lessons, some very difficult moments.

He had to learn how to allow God to be God and to understand that this whole story, friends, this whole story that you go through, that I go through, that we see these people in the Bible going through, this whole story, is all about God fulfilling His promises. It's not primarily about you and about me. It's about Him. God is the God that fulfills His promises. And this is a lesson that took quite a long time for Abraham to learn, because there are many moments when Abraham is trying to help God be God, right?

We talked about this before and it's been discussed. There are moments in Egypt, there are moments with Ishmael and Hagar where Abraham is trying to help God, and very painstakingly, he had to learn to let God be God. And that is a very hard lesson to learn for anyone, because we, as humans, like to be in control, right? We like to have control of things, of events. We like to know what is going to happen, when it's going to happen, how it's going to happen. That's the kind of creatures that we are. And so, learning submission, learning how to allow God to be God, friends, this is one of those difficult of the Christian virtues to learn and to acquire.

Another difficult lesson that Abraham learned the hard way is that God doesn't always make sense. Have you ever had to learn that lesson before? That God doesn't always make sense, at least, not to you or to me. There are moments when our logic, when our way of thinking, our reasoning, our way of understanding the world around us, simply isn't enough. It's just not enough.

Now, the lesson is accepting that this isn't about God being logical, because my question to you is, is God illogical? No, God is not illogical. God is super-logical. He's above our logic. When the Bible says--when God says there, you know, "Just as the East is far from the West, just are My thoughts far from your thoughts." Distant from your thoughts, way above your thoughts. We cannot think on the same level as God. We can't comprehend. We don't have that perspective. And so we need to learn to let God be God, and that's something that Abraham had to learn.

There are occasions, friends, where all the pieces of the puzzle seem to fit, and you seem to think that you--you have God figured out. There are those moments. But then, all of a sudden, the winds of circumstance change and they blow us in a completely different direction from what we would have imagined, what we would have expected: one that we could never have thought that we would be going to. Circumstances in which God truly does not make sense. Circumstances in which God seems to demand from you burdens that you deem too heavy, that you can't really know why

God is asking you to carry that. Occasions where you have a great difficulty in making sense of the direction or even understanding the love of God in your life, understanding God when the tragedies knock on your door.

We might even know the theological answers. That's something that people have gotten really good at, giving answers to other people's problems. We might know the theological, theoretical answers, but it's too hard to depend on these theoretical justifications when we are confronted with loss, with suffering, with despair. And look, sometimes, we go through situations that defy reasoning and logic and explanations. Where God seems to downright contradict Himself. And this week's lesson, the stories of this week's lesson, they are testament to this reality.

You might be asking, "Well, why is he speaking about this right now in this lesson?" Well, it's because this week's lesson is all about that kind of circumstance. It's about this story. It's one of the most confusing stories and the most difficult to understand, at least if you try to put yourself in Abraham's shoes, in his experience. At least from the human standpoint.

Now, as we saw last week, God made with Abraham a covenant. This is found in Genesis chapter 12 and Genesis chapter 15. You have a repetition of the covenant. This is called the Abrahamic Covenant in, you know, in theology. You find many different forms of this deal throughout the Bible. You know, in the Bible you have these different words for another, right? You have the word "heteros" and you have the word "allos." And these two words, in Greek, they define the nuances of the covenant in many ways because God, really, He doesn't give us a new covenant in the sense where the promise changes.

The promise has always been: He's going to save us. He's going to redeem us. That's always been the promise. Since the very beginning in Genesis chapter 3, you have the promise that the head of the serpent would be crushed. And throughout the entire Bible, the promise has always been that. The covenant, the deal, has always been that God would take us out of the situation.

Now, since you have different people involved and since you have fallible humans involved, God has worked with us in our different situations. And that's why--where you find the different covenants, or the new covenants, that come along but they're not new in the sense that God is just reshaping the entire promise. They're new in the sense that God is making room for us to be part of this.

So, last week, we found God coming into this covenant, coming into this deal with Abraham and, apparently, it happens at the very beginning of the story with Abraham, when he's not yet an old man. Now that's kind of--it's kind of relative, you know, it's kind of subjective, what I mean by "old man" here, because when God calls Abraham, he was 75 years old. Now you know, when I get to 75 years old, I'm thinking that, you know, "Well, you know, I did a lot. I can rest now. I can do a whole bunch of, you know, cool stuff, stuff that I've always wanted to do, you know? You're getting ready for retirement or you're probably already in retirement at that age. And Abraham here, I imagine that he's at that point, and then God just appears and says, you know, "Abraham, you've got to get out, man. You've got to leave." And if it were me, if it were me, in my mind, I would be going, "Now? At this point?"

But the interesting thing and the reason why I said it's subjective is because Abraham lives to about 175. So he still had 100--he had most of his life left. He had--Abraham had most of his life ahead of him at 75 years old. Seventy-five years of age. He still had no children. And so a lot of things happened, but God appears to this man at the beginning of this whole covenant story, and He says this. This is Genesis chapter 12, verse 1 through 3. He says: "Abraham, do you see all these stars? This will be the number of your descendants, more numerous than the stars, more numerous than the sands of the sea. Abraham, I will give you countless generations and even kings will come from your lineage." Again, it must have been strange, if not confusing to Abraham, because he still didn't have any children. And his wife was presumably sterile, which since the Bible

includes this detail, what that means is that they had tried, but she was sterile. They had not borne children.

Now, what really makes--and I really want you to try to include yourself in this story, okay? Put yourself inside the story as someone that is really seeing what's going on here. Try to feel what's happening in this story, okay? What makes this event even stranger is that after saying all of this, after coming to Abraham and saying, "Abraham, look at all these stars. These will be your descendants. Multitudes and nations, kings and rulers, will come from you." After saying all these things, these incredible promises, God becomes strangely silent about the matter. Again, we know that Abraham was 75 when the promise was made, and the years just started going by.

Has someone ever made you a promise and then taken their sweet time to deliver on the promise? Has that ever happened to you? What about waiting for 2½ decades for a promise? Does that sound fair enough? I'd be downright grumpy if that were the reality. Because, look, at this point, Abraham and Sarah, they weren't spring chickens anymore. Time had been passing, and nothing. God doesn't appear. God doesn't show up. Nothing more about this whole issue, ha, ha. There is nowhere in the whole of Scripture where we find that God has another conversation with Abraham where He says, you know, where He treats about this subject, He talks about the subject and just like that, 20 years, 25 years, went by.

Now, if she hadn't already, at this point, certainly, Sarah had gone into menopause. And they knew that what was before difficult, at this point had just become impossible. I can see old Sarah in resignation, her head droopy, her shoulders droopy, downcast, disappointed, perhaps feeling guilty, perhaps feeling that it was her fault. Poor thing, what could she have done? Knowing that she couldn't have a child. Abraham was 100, Sarah was 90, and still no child, no promise fulfilled. And I imagine that at this point, enormous questions, enormous questions and doubts must have flashed through the mind of the old patriarch.

He must have thought, "Lord, what was that conversation that we had so many years ago? What was it that you said at that time? Did I hear you wrong? Did I get it wrong? I remember that You said something about my posterity, about my descendants." But still, no answer, nothing. Have you ever felt the silence of heaven? I mean, we expect that God would either say "No" or "Yes," but that He would inform us. Don't we think--isn't that what you expect from any good friend? At least let me know what Your answer is.

But the thing is that with God, sometimes that silence is the lesson, because I'll tell you something. The silence of God speaks volumes. Imagine the huge obstacles for them to have a child. The New Testament, with the apostle Paul, says that they were already mortified, they were already dead in their flesh, already dead in their flesh. Have you ever imagined a 90-year-old woman having a baby? It's no wonder that Sarah found this funny and laughed about it. And to be honest with you all, I find it funny. I can imagine her finding it funny.

But the miracle did happen, and we know the story. A child was born, a child that foreshadowed the very birth of Christ, the Coming of the Messiah, contrary to the rules of anatomy, the rules of nature. And there's a whole story in there that, unfortunately, we have to jump over because otherwise we'd take way too long and we wouldn't have time.

But now, with the child, after all the questions, all the problems, all the obstacles, after all the lessons that Abraham had learned, I mean, here we're kind of jumping over the whole story with Ishmael and with Hagar, where Abraham, he tried to help God be God, and God had to institute circumcision to remind Abraham and his--the generations later on that God is the God that fulfills His promise.

God is the God that fulfills His promise. That's a lesson that it took a while for Abraham to understand. But here we're jumping over all of that and, finally, the child of promise comes, the child that foreshadows Jesus Christ, the birth of the Messiah. Here we find the guarantee of all the

subsequent promises. All of the other promises, the following promises, were guaranteed in the birth of this child. They praised him, they worshiped him because of it. Promises about the future were ensured.

But you know that the story doesn't stop there. The story doesn't end there. In chapter 22 of Genesis the Lord's--the Lord returns to Abraham and, without any warning, without any preparation, without any kind of introduction, prolog, or explanation, out of nowhere, out of the blue, He gives Abraham a very simple order. Genesis 22, verse 2: "Abraham, take now your son." Friends, imagine God saying this to you. "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love," it's like God is twisting the knife in. Not only does God put the knife in, does--not only does He stick it in, He twists it. "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 of which I shall tell you."

Like I said, there's almost a touch of cruelty to God's order, as God reminds Abraham that this is his only son whom he loves. Can you imagine the mental state of this man? The formidable questions arising in his mind? This was Isaac, this was the son of the promise, the son upon which all the future promises depended. Everything seemed to lie on this boy, and yet God says, "Go and offer him as a sacrifice"? Did I hear that correctly? Am I getting this right? Am I losing my mind? Is this truly the voice of God? God would never demand human sacrifice. God is different from all the other pagan gods. And what's worse, nowhere do we find God telling Abraham, "Abraham, I know this seems confusing, I know that this is hard, I know that you probably can't understand it, but trust Me. I know what I'm doing. Just wait and everything will turn out all right."

Nowhere do you find God saying anything of the sort, nowhere. There is nothing like that in the entire Bible. On the contrary, it seems as though God just left Abraham to his own confusion and despair. It seems that God left Abraham alone with his questions. It seemed like God was downright contradicting Himself. Because God said, "I will give you future generations, I will give you nations and peoples, and all the people of the world will be blessed," and God said that there was Isaac. He didn't say that there was going to be another son. It's Isaac. This is the one that God gave Abraham and Sarah in their old age, and yet now God is saying, "Go and sacrifice him."

How do I understand that? First, He had said, "Yeah, the future is guaranteed, but now sacrifice the child." I can only imagine. I certainly could never comprehend, but I can imagine the mental anguish, the inward struggle. Apparently he didn't tell Sarah, and by studying the Bible, you kind of know the personality of Sarah by now. Who knows what she would have done. We're going to give sacrifice.

But you know what? In one of my favorite portions of the entire Bible, we find a glimpse of the character of this man that bears witness to the difference between Abraham and most of us, because while I would be caught up on all the questions, the Bible says in Romans chapter 4, verse 2, it says that "Abraham believed in God." Abraham believed in God. It made no sense, he certainly couldn't understand the mystery behind the Lord's request, but God had said that the promise would be fulfilled, and so Abraham believed.

Do you see the lesson that God is trying to teach Abraham? And by consequence, do you see the lesson that God is trying to teach you and me today? What God is really telling us here, what God was really demonstrating here to Abraham, is that the future truly and absolutely does not and did not depend on Isaac. The future, as always, depends on God.

Friends, I am sure that there have been occasions, all right, in your life. I know there have been occasions in my life, where God apparently contradicts Himself. Situations where He makes no sense. You cannot fathom what's going on in the mind of God. Moments where God seems to break the line at the last chain of the cord, the last link of the chain. Moments where He seems to cloak Himself in impenetrable silence, and the question that is left for us, living here in time and space, isolated from the understanding of eternity, the question that remains is: what to do when



God doesn't make sense. What does He want of me? What does He want of you? He wants the same thing that He wanted from Abraham.

Abraham believed in God. And the question that you might ask yourself is why is God doing this to me? Why is this happening to me? I try to be good, I try to do the best. Abraham could have certainly said that, couldn't he? "I left Ur, I left my family, I left my connections. I left everything behind. I have suffered the loss of many things. I'm living as a wanderer in a land that was promised but not given to me yet." Abraham could have justified all of this, but the Bible says none of that. Abraham believed in God, because many times, friends, the question is "Why me?"

And in other moments, the question is "Why not me?" Why not? We are all here. We are all subject to this disease of death, to this great controversy. The question isn't really what's happening? The question is how will I react? Because this patriarch, how did he react? Here, he believed in God.

I want to remind you that God rarely decides to answer these questions on this side of eternity. He doesn't expose His plans or purposes, awaiting our approval. We must never forget that He is God and, as such, He expects us to trust and believe in Him, despite the situations that we do not understand. You see, the Lord did not provide complete answers to Abraham or to Job or to Paul or to Moses or to Peter or to any of these men and do not think that you're going to be the exception.

Because my dear friend, if you aren't able to accept the simple fact that God is God and that He knows perfectly well what is best for you, then you are destined to walk through life with weak faith, with immature and impatient and impotent faith, which is the same as saying no faith at all. And if this is the case, what that means is that you will have to build your castles on quicksand, on some other foundation. And that is--that is going to be your greatest challenge, simply because there is no other foundation.

This is the lesson that Abraham learned throughout his life: in several moments, through various circumstances, he learned to allow God to be God. And in this case, we see that he did learn his lesson. Because when Isaac noticed that there was no sacrificial lamb and he questions his father about it, the man's answer revealed a deepset trust in the friend that he had come to know. Genesis 22, verse 8, he says, "My son, God will provide for Himself a burnt offering." The translation could also, and this was mentioned in the lesson, it's very proper. The translation is quite ambiguous because it could also mean, "God will--God will provide Himself for a burnt offering."

It's incredible how Hebrew works that way. That didn't mean that Abraham did not have questions or that he had all the answers. It did not mean that he wasn't afraid. It certainly didn't mean that he could say that he understood everything about God. What this reveals is that this man had learned and was putting into practice the very simple biblical truth that God always fulfills His promises, always. Maybe not in your time, maybe not in your way, maybe not in the place that you imagine or the way that you imagine, but God always fulfills His promises. And here, he finally understood that the future absolutely did not depend on Isaac.

Friends, the future does not depend on your job, doesn't depend on your health, doesn't depend on your family, it doesn't depend on your mental--on your mental stability. The future does not depend on any of these things. The future always depends on God. And God is the firm foundation of our faith. So the future is always guaranteed. And finally, perhaps, in this story, the greatest lesson that Abraham learned is one that had to do with the very heart of God. Because Abraham felt firsthand what the God of the universe was feeling, what was going on in God's own heart by laying down His own Son.

Patriarchs and Prophets, page 154 says: "It was to impress Abraham's mind with the reality of the gospel as well as to test his faith that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony which he endured during these dark days of fearful trial was permitted that he might understand from his

own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man's redemption."

And so here we see many different lessons that Abraham learned and that, friends, we are called also not only to mentally, abstractly, theoretically learn, but to put into practice. Let God be God in your life, and understand that He will fulfill His promises. The continuation of the lesson this week on Tuesday with the death of Sarah is very interesting because it plays into the nuances of this main story. The death of Sarah, it adds some details. She is one of the only women mentioned as part of the lineage of the Messiah.

Now, we know that there were just as many women as there were men, all right? We know that for a fact. But unfortunately, in the patriarchal society that they had in that time, and a negative point at this point, the women weren't usually included in the lineage. But you do find God breaking that tradition. You find that God, He doesn't care for human traditions in that way, because He includes several women, women of faith, women of grandeur, and Sarah, she is one of these women that we learn about in the Bible that she participates in this descendancy or ascendancy of the Messiah.

Now, she, just like Abraham, is portrayed in the Bible as flawed. We know that. But at the same time, never underestimate this woman, because just like her husband, she left Ur of the Chaldeans as a pilgrim. She also experienced the life of exodus, and the Bible mentions the doubts and anxieties that she had, the flaws and failures that she had, and to be sure, most of us would be having the same kinds of doubts that she had, under the same situations that she was exposed to.

Right after this incident in Mount Moriah, the Bible describes the burial, the death and the burial of Sarah. So you don't really have, you know, what happened next. You don't really have: did she figure it out? Did she learn about it? How did she react? Did she get angry? Did she--we don't know because the Bible goes right into the next step which was after this incident, Sarah died. Maybe this is what did it. We don't know. Maybe the stress, the--I don't know.

But you see, she was the first of Abraham's family to die and to be buried in the Promised Land. And that, coupled with, you know, that detail that she's the first and she's buried in the Promised Land, and we find it coupled with the details around Abraham acquiring the plot of land where she was going to be buried, not, you know, just burying her anywhere. No, it was thought through. That fact confirms that Abraham knew that this was a permanent stay. While he lived the life of a wanderer, while he lived the life of a pilgrim, while as, again, we discussed in the previous chapters, in the previous lessons, that there were many nations contending for dominion over Canaan, Abraham knew that God would fulfill His promise. Abraham knew that that stay was indeed permanent. This was, after all, the land that God had promised him, and Abraham knew by now that God always does what? Keeps His promises.

Sarah's significance in this story is very big. And as the lesson puts it, on Tuesday's lesson, "the focus on the purchase of Sarah's burial place which covers most of the chapter, rather than on her death, emphasizes the connection with the Promised Land. Already, the specification that she died "in the land of Canaan" underlines the rooting of Sarah's death in God's promise of this land. Sarah is the first dead of Abraham's clan to have died and be buried in the Promised Land. Abraham's concern about himself, a foreigner and a visitor, and his insistent argument with the sons of Heth, show that Abraham is interested not only in just acquiring the burial place, but he is primarily concerned in settling in the land permanently."

And the next day's lesson which is "A Wife for Isaac," it additionally adds details to this reality, because Abraham, while he knew that he was going to stay in Canaan forever, right? That's where he was supposed to stay, he also knew that he couldn't get one of the women of the land to marry his son because the land was extremely idolatrous. And so there is a care, there is a worry, in Abraham's mind to provide for his son a wife that would allow him to--or it would enhance his

ability of remaining faithful to God.

You know, one of the--when I graduated from theology, I wanted to come directly to the U.S. to continue my studying. And I asked my dad for advice, you know, should I go? My father, he went through a very similar path, you know. He ended up coming to the States and studying more, and so I asked my dad, you know, what should I do? What would you do? And he said, "Look, I think there are two things that you should do before you leave. Marry a woman from your own people, and be ordained as a minister." And in fact, that's what I ended up doing.

And you know, the reasons--there's nothing wrong with marrying someone from a different land if I believe she has the same, or he has the same, belief as you. But in this case, you know, Brazilian culture is so specific, that sometimes if you marry someone from a vastly different culture, sometimes you can have some difficulty. So I saw my dad's wisdom there. Again, nothing wrong, if you're marrying someone from a different land than yourself. There's nothing wrong with that. That is perfectly fine. There are people that make that work brilliantly, but I saw my dad's wisdom and that's exactly what I did.

And nowadays I see that a great--at least, in our case, Dani and myself, in our case, not speaking for anyone else, in our case, the fact that, you know, we speak fluently the same language, we can understand each other, you know, amazingly, and it really helps us avoid some arguments, especially with my stubbornness, let's leave it that way. With my stubbornness, it ends up helping, right? Dani is an extremely patient human being. Those that know that--know her, know that. She's extremely patient, very calm, very--she's an angel on earth.

And so I saw the wisdom in that and I see here that Abraham, more so even than my father or, you know, more so because not only was--it wasn't really a matter of, I believe, ethnic culture, it was really a matter of belief, of spiritual convictions. And so he sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac and there's a whole story there, friends. There's a beautiful story, filled with prayer, with devotion, and unfortunately, we don't have time for that, to go into the specifics.

But I do want to tell you that there is something to be said about marrying someone within your faith, especially here for the youth. Those who are not married yet, there is something very big to be said about marrying someone within your own faith. And the reason for this is because you might even find someone that is very good, that does not believe the way you believe. Good--there are many good people that aren't Seventh-day Adventists, of course there are. Many decent, moral human beings that are atheist. I know many atheists that are very good people, but let me tell you that the problem with that kind of union is that their reason for being good is different than your reason. They might be good, but their reason is different than yours.

Why do we want to be good and moral and reproduce the fruits of the Spirit? Why do we want to do that? Because we have a God that holds us accountable. We have a standard. God is the source. But for other people, God is not the source, not to them at least. Not in their understanding. And so, in that way, in that union, you'll have a hurricane on one side, you'll have a volcano on another side, and when you have the combination of that, you just have a hurricane of lava, and you don't want that in your house. So, there is wisdom in marrying within your own faith.

Look for someone that believes in what you believe in. Don't be like Samson, led by your eyes. Be led by the will of God. There is nowhere better to be than within God's will, nowhere. Even though you might not understand it at times. Now, what I've just said is the rule, because I know of some exceptions. I do know--I do know of exceptions of people who have married outside the faith and over a course of a lifetime and through many hardships, that unbelieving spouse comes in and starts believing. I know that there are those cases and those situations, but careful not to risk it. Because in most cases, that doesn't happen. And I say this with, at this point, ten years of pastoral experience, witnessing and counseling and hearing stories where the majority of the times where that happens, the believing spouse is who ends up going over. And that is a very sad reality.

But any case, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to tell the youth of my church: it is wise to find someone within your own belief, within your own faith. And that's what Abraham does here with Isaac, and that's what he finds. Because they knew, both Abraham and Isaac and Eliezer going to find, you know, Rebecca, we see that these people involved, they were all willing to submit their wills and their lives to God. That's what we find. The family had learned that lesson, that God will provide.

Not only will God provide a sacrifice, God here, He provided a spouse. And that's exactly what Isaac needed. He waited--he was 40 years old. That's an old single guy. So there's hope for you single people out there, right? Cool, right? Isaac was 40, but I've known stories of people, you know, at 70, you know, you'd be surprised. So, don't lose hope. God can always provide.

And finally, the last day of--or Thursday's lesson is "A Wife for Abraham." I would have thought that at this point Abraham had, you know, he was done. But no, Abraham here, he does marry again and some scholars, they agree that Hagar and Keturah were the same person. It's somewhat unclear who Keturah was, and the reason that people give is since Keturah's sons are associated with Hagar's and her name isn't mentioned in that association, many people are compelled to believe that they are, in fact, the same person. Another clue would be that Abraham treats Keturah's sons just as he treated Ishmael, sending them away to avoid any sort of spiritual influence, and that makes a contrast between them and Sarah's son and the others.

Another thing is that the firstborn blessing was given to Isaac, while the other sons received gifts. They didn't receive the first son's blessing. And literally, these sons are called the sons of concubines which implies the status of both Keturah and Hagar. So, to be sure, if they are or if they're not the same person, that's really not the central point. It doesn't really matter that much in the story. Of course, these sons did end up becoming great nations, part of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, just as the fact that, you know, God had promised that He would live up to a good old age which he did.

But the lesson this week, it ends by saying, "In the end, the Lord remained true to His promise of grace to His faithful servant, Abraham, whose faith is depicted in Scripture as a great example, if not the best example, in the Old Testament of salvation by faith." Friends, we are called daily to cut and to sever the connections with this world and to live, like Abraham, by faith.

Now, that's beautifully--that's beautiful to say, and it's harder done than it is said. But the great hope that we see in the story is that Abraham, after being called, after receiving the promise, did everything go well for him? Was everything perfect? Did he never trip, never fail, never fall? Was that Abraham's experience? No, this was an extremely fallible man, and yet the father of faith.

So that motivates me, that encourages me, to know that while God calls me daily, "Luccas, sever the connections, sever the ties, live by faith, stand in Me, I will provide." I also do claim the promise of Micah chapter 8, verse 7--sorry, 7, verse 8, where he says, "Oh my enemy, do not laugh over me because when I fall and when I abide in the darkness, the Lord will be my light." And we see that the Lord was Abraham's life--light in multiple occasions and instances. So know that God can do that for you.

Do not forget to take advantage of this free offer, "The High Cost of the Cross." We see that here in Abraham's story with Isaac on Mount Moriah, we see that Abraham understood what that high cost would be, and this little booklet, it will help us understand a little bit more what the high cost of the cross was. So take advantage of it. It's free. If you want it, you can call the number, 866-788-3966, and you can ask for the offer number 156.

If you are in continental North America, you could text SH080 to the number "40544." If you're outside continental North America, you can go to [study.aftv.org/SH080](http://study.aftv.org/SH080) and you can get a digital download and I'm sure that this will be a blessing for you and for your family, and a blessing for you to give to your friends. I'd like to invite you to bow your head and to pray with me right now.

Dear Lord, thank You so much for Your love. Thank You so much for Your grace. Thank You for being the God that fulfills His promises. Father, as we leave this place right now and we go out into our everyday life, I ask You, Father, both for those that are here today and those that are watching online and that will be watching in the future, I ask You, Lord, to please reveal to them that while You don't always make sense, You do always fulfill Your promises. I thank You for these things and I ask in the precious name of Jesus, amen.

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.

Jennifer: So as a teenager growing up, I was getting into all sorts of trouble. I was drinking, smoking. I would look for love in all the wrong places. I thought that those were ways that could make me happy and it didn't. It just made everything worse. I was very confused. I didn't know who I was. I had no identity whatsoever and just, I had such a hole in me, such hurt, that I would do anything and everything just to try to fill that void. I was making a lot of bad decisions, a lot of bad choices.

I got pregnant when I was 19 years old and I was a single mother. And to try to prove to myself and the world that I can make it on my own, I became an exotic dancer. My mom, she started sending me links to Amazing Facts Ministry just sermons and seminars and Bible studies and YouTube videos with Doug Batchelor. And I started watching it and beforehand I would delete them but now here I am watching and I couldn't get enough of it. My heart was on fire, I wanted more and more.

So instead of going to the club, I would go to the website, the Amazing Facts website, and then I would go to the Bible studies and I would go after one, study one, which would make me want to study another one. So I'd study another one and another one and I went through the whole set and that wasn't enough for me. I wanted more. So I just--I would do it again. I would read the whole set over again. And I was learning so much and I just couldn't get enough of it. And this made me where I didn't even want to go to work, I just had this fire in my heart.

And then it got to where I was on the interstate to go to work and I pulled over and God, He just-- He told me, like, He's, like, "Jennifer, we can't do this no--anymore." And so I told Him, I said, "God, I know this is You. I know that You're speaking to me right now." And for the first time ever my eyes were opened to the whole situation and how I was living my life. And I went home and I got down on my knees and I fell before God. I started to beg Him, "God, please take me out of this lifestyle and if You do, I promise You I will serve You for the rest of my life." And so, for the first time in my life I was healing and I was learning and I was coming to a knowledge of the truth, and that truth was Jesus Christ Himself and that He loved me.

So, as I'm going about these studies, Amazing Facts comes to my local church and Pastor Wyatt Allen, he puts on this evangelistic series and he makes a call for baptisms and I'm impressed, you know, that I need to do this, and I want to make this decision for Christ to rededicate my life to Him. My life has been completely changed in so many ways, just seeing where God has taken me on this journey where He took me from this to this lost confused girl, to this woman He knows who she is, her identity in Christ. My name is Jennifer. Thank you for changing my life.

Dee: My parents got divorced when I was three or four, and then I was basically unchurched most of my life. I had a girlfriend in high school tell me that she had to break up with me because I wasn't a Christian. I thought, "That's weird. I believe in God. Why would she say that?" Not realizing I was living a horrible life with foul language, was mean, and other stuff. And that kind of

challenged me initially.

And then my dad, 9/11 woke him up that he wasn't ready to meet his Lord, though he was a man that I valued and knew he loved me. Didn't doubt that. But he just knew he needed more so he started watching TV ministries first, Baptist preachers and others, and he was kind of intrigued by what he was learning. And so when he turned me on to this, this television station, first thing that I got access to was Doug Batchelor's "Most Amazing Prophecy" series that he did in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

And I remember when I first watched this, my background was Baptist-ish, of sorts, but I remember when I first watched this series, I remember thinking, "I've never heard that before about the state of the dead or about the Sabbath or the commandments or the Rapture," or other things. And I remember thinking to myself, "I've never heard that before but that's what the text says." And that kept happening.

And I had this experience of just wondering, like, "Well, what else have I believed that isn't as it is," you know? And the more I watched, the more helpful it became, but again, he kind of took a different perspective on the messages. It was fresh to me but I just--these things I'd never heard before and I just realized, like, there's so much stuff in the Bible that no one's talking about and that people need to know.

And so I ended up in this awkward situation that some of my friends who didn't believe what I was coming to believe. I didn't know how to communicate with them, and so one of the things that helped me initially was the SabbathTruth.com website, TheTruthAboutHell.com and TheTruthAboutDeath and some of those resource websites that Amazing Facts had put together that were just full of resources. If I needed an answer to something that someone brought up, there would be a 95% chance that Amazing Facts would have something that I could use. It makes witnessing even easier in that sense.

The Amazing Facts Prophecy Study Bible was my first real Bible that I had of a more trusted translation. The Bible Study Guides were in the back of it. They had a lot of other resources that were helpful. If you can hand a book to somebody and you can pick up a phone and call Amazing Facts, you have everything you need. And so I was just printing off stuff and handing it to people, you know? Like, "Here's what I'm coming to realize. This is true. It's in the Bible." And it was a huge blessing to me and a real help just to kind of help me to better understand what the message was and understand it for myself and have resources to put in the hands of other people. It was invaluable.

Some time went by. I eventually went to a school of evangelism and was baptized. And then I had this amazing opportunity that after being in ministry for about five or six years, Doug Batchelor was going to be the main speaker at a youth event and I was actually begin doing a seminar at this youth event. And it was just this amazing kind of full circle experience that the first person I came in contact with in Adventism, to hear the message, to have it make sense, to be able to do ministry together with him in whatever role possible, just meant the world to me. And to be able to tell him my story and tell him thank you was invaluable. And so God just gave me a precious gift in affording that opportunity and I'll never forget that. My name is Dee. Thank you for changing my life.