



**3 devotions and  
a Bible study  
from**

**32 DAYS WITH  
ABRAHAM**  
Stories to Change  
Your Life

**Mark R. Etter**

**This series of three devotions and one Bible study are from the book "32 days with Abraham which is currently available on Amazon as a print book and ebook for Kindle. I hope that you will enjoy this gift to you and that it will be a blessing to you as you look at these three events in the life of Abraham.**

## 2 God's Dreams for You

### Gen. 12:2-9

**Context:** The call goes out to Abram while he is still in Ur to follow the Lord. While Genesis 1-11 followed the story of God's dealings with the world, Chapter 12 begins the story of God's gracious dealings with one man and his descendants.

My children are grown now, but I remember as they grew, my wife and I had dreams for them all. We wanted them to stay close to the Lord, find a great spouse and work in an area that brought fulfillment to their life. I am sure that you have such dreams for yourself and for your children. Did you realize that God has dreams for you as well? Our heavenly Father has dreams for each of us. Often those dreams are greater than we can imagine. Such were the dreams that God had for Abram. Little did this man from Ur dream what he would become in God's hands.

The man from Ur seems average and yet God saw much more in him. The first promise seems almost daunting, *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you."* (v.2) A man and wife come to a strange land and God promises to make him great. Today, Abraham is a person that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all think about as their father. He is a model and life example for all of us. As we meet him, Abram is not yet that man. God will mold His servant and give him character. God will bless the foreigner and make him someone that his neighbors consider a mighty prince (Gen. 23:5). God will do for Abram and for us what no man can do for themselves. He will make us great by changing our character and our future.

God will take this stranger and make him a blessing to everyone that has or will ever live. Think about the scope of that promise, *"and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* (v.3) Surely, every American could say that we are blessed by the work of Washington or Lincoln. Yet, few in Africa or Asia could say that they were blessed by these men. Through Jesus who is the descendant of Abram, everyone in the world has been blessed. The death and resurrection of Jesus change the possible future of every living person. God will take this ordinary man and make him the beginning of a movement that will change the history of the world. Abram's faith and life will inspire many and be an example that many will follow.

Ur was a great and prosperous city. Archaeology has shown that the city was a great civilization. Canaan was more like the American West with few comforts and conveniences. Abram and Sarai gave up the luxury of Ur to follow God's command. Yet the Lord promises that as much as Abram has lost, his descendants will gain even more. *"To your offspring, I will give this land."* (v. 7) He has left a city, he will gain a country and a home. He has left the prosperity of Ur, but he will have great wealth and honor in this new place. All that Abram has left, the Lord will fill with new blessings. His willingness to follow God would open the door for the Lord to bless him in ways that he never imagined.

God's dreams for you and me are big, too. The plans that the Lord pours out for his people in scripture are amazing. Few Christians realize those dreams, however. The reason is that, like Abram, you have to follow God. You will not get to your destination if you do not follow the directions on the map or the GPS. Likewise, the Christian will not have God's plans for him if he is not willing to follow the Lord's ways and character. All of the promises given to Abram were possible because he left his country, people, and family. We must be willing to obey the Lord as He shapes us and removes the tarnish from our lives or the dreams will not come true. This may seem daunting, but the life of Abram will show that it is possible.

What would your life look like if it followed God's plan? Imagine if you had a charac-

ter that people around you admired and were willing to follow? Imagine being a blessing to your family, to your friends, and to your coworkers? It is not too late to start. Abram was 75 years old (Gen. 12:4) when the adventure began. He had come from a family that had worshiped false gods in Ur. You may think that God's dreams for you could never come true. Don't underestimate the power and love of our God. The life of Abram shows what is possible and it shows that it is possible because God loves you. New life is available to everyone. We have a God who can work miracles even with us.

Of the promises that God made to Abram, which would you long for God to give to you? Why?

## 17 Learning God's Will

### Gen 18:16-33

**Context:** The depth of God's relationship with Abraham is shown in God's desire to help Abraham understand how evil Sodom and Gomorrah have become. God uses dialog to teach Abraham that not even 10 righteous people live in this place.

What is the purpose of prayer? Sometimes, prayers degrade into God's "to do list". We come to the drive up window of prayer and place our order. Prayer can become a place where we tell God what our needs are and what He should do about it. Sadly, I know that I could never order my parents that way and I doubt that such orders work with a Heavenly Father, either. I have found that it is better just to tell the Lord my needs and ask for His solution. Prayer becomes part of a dialogue between God and me when paired with scripture. I don't want God to do my will since I often don't have a clue what is best. I want to give God my concerns and find out what His perfect and wise will is for my life and for others. I have come to learn that prayer is a place that I learn what God is doing, not order God to do what I want.

Having told Abraham that Isaac will be born within the next year, the Lord proceeds to tell Abraham that the time has come to deal with the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah. I picture Abraham being shocked by the news, yet he has the confidence to ask a question. *"Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"* (v.25) Abraham may have been thinking of Lot who lived in Sodom or just thinking about what this news from the Lord meant. What is amazing is that he never shies from speaking the question on his mind. He knows that the Lord will not destroy him or get angry with him for an honest question. Abraham trusts the Lord and is confident that the Lord will listen and give him an honest answer.

Abraham bases his questions for God on the knowledge that God is just and merciful. *"Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (v.25) He doesn't beg God to do anything. He doesn't claim that God can't destroy the city or claim that the city is not evil. He simply wants to understand why God is doing what He is doing. He wants to understand how bad things in Sodom are and what has led this merciful God to destroy the people that He created. Abraham knows that God always does the right thing. A shocked Abraham is trying to understand what God has planned.

As the exchange continues, Abraham knows that conversation with the Lord is a gift. He speaks to God with deep humility and with the knowledge that it is blessing to have a God who is patient and willing to listen. *"Then Abraham spoke up again: 'Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes,'"* (v.27) Abraham knows that he is a man, but he has a burning need that only

the Lord can help him with. Lot is down in Sodom and only the Lord can save him. As the exchange concludes, Abraham senses that the city may not even have 10 righteous people. In the conversation, God has shown Abraham how evil the cities are and why He must act.

I believe that the Lord initiated this whole conversation with Abraham as a means to teach His beloved patriarch. God revealed His plan and His reason for wanting Abraham to know (v.17-19). He could have destroyed the city without ever setting foot on earth, but He took the time to teach. God teaches a lesson of mercy and justice to His servant. He let Abraham work through all the arguments and come to the realization that Sodom must be destroyed. God can and will do the same for us in our prayers. As we pray for days or weeks about an illness or a job, God often lets us work through the arguments until we know what His will is.

The Bible encourages us to pray without ceasing. Some have asked why God needs to be persuaded and why God will not help us on the first request. It is not God that needs to be persuaded, but us. Praying next to a loved one who is suffering, God needs to let us see that a gracious God may need to take them to be with Him in heaven. Praying for a job, God may need to help us to see that this is not a good opportunity for us. Extended prayer is not to persuade God, but rather a tool to teach us. There are many times in life where the purpose of prayer is to learn the "what" and "why" of God's will in our life. God does know what is best for us. Those who know the character and wisdom of God will want His will for them and not their own.

If you could ask God any question about your life or about the future, what would you ask? What makes that question so important to you?

## **26 Entrusting Your Children to God**

### **Gen. 22:1-19**

**Context:** Isaac is a teenager and Abraham is well over 110 years old. God calls Abraham to do the unthinkable. The faith of Abraham and his trust in God is shown in his willingness to put the life of his son in God's hands.

As a pastor, I have always felt the strain of family versus ministry. There was the birthday party that I missed because of a funeral and there was the funeral I missed because of the birth of one of my children. Most people I know face the problem of balancing work with family as well. There are weeks where we just can't help working 60 or more hours. There are also weeks where one of the kids gets sick and your job has to take second place. How does service for the Lord fit in to all of that? How do we manage the times when God calls us to put Him first? It maybe that He asks you to take on a project at church or help a neighbor. Are we willing to sacrifice the things that are most important to us? Are we willing to give our precious time to God so that He can make life for us and others better?

Abraham had waited for 25 years for this son. He knew that all the promises of God depended on Isaac. If Isaac was gone, there would be no descendants as numerous as the stars and no one to inherit the land. Surely, Isaac's life was more precious to Abraham than his own life. God came to him with a command that no one wants to hear. *"Take your son, your only son, Isaac. . . sacrifice him there as a burnt offering"* (v.2) It was a test to see how much Abraham loved his God. Abraham was being asked to sacrifice the greatest thing that God had given him because he trusted the Lord. The birth of his son was a miracle from the Lord and now Abraham was being asked to put that miracle back into God's hands.

God didn't ask Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him immediately. It would have been easier to strike Isaac down quickly while you had your nerve. Abraham was called to make a long journey to the sacred mountain. It was *"on the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance."* (v.4) The three-day journey gave Abraham plenty of time to turn back and refuse what must have seemed to be a cruel request. Here, there would be no wife or servants to stop him from completing the task. Here he would have to fight only his own desires as he sacrificed his son. Abraham had to make a choice to go, to climb the mountain and finally to strike his son. No one could stop or encourage him in the task. This was a test of his faith and his love for God.

In the end, he was willing to give back to the Lord the greatest gift that he had received. *"Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."* (v.10) He believed in the promises of God so much that he trusted that God would give his son back to him somehow. What God would do with the sacrifice, Abraham did not know. He could only trust God and know that his God had always loved him and would keep the promises He had made about this son. How it affected Isaac to see that his father loved God more than his own son is hard to guess. Yet, that act spoke volumes to the young patriarch about what real worship was and how important God was to their future.

Abraham was willing to give up his most precious gift, his son, to the Lord. In that moment, God changed Abraham and Isaac. Abraham saw the love of the Lord and how important both he and his future were to the Lord. Isaac saw the depth of his father's love for the Lord and had a sense of what faith in God meant. As we give our lives and the lives of our children to the Lord; they will be forever changed as well. God will bless our lives as we dedicate them to Him so that they will be productive in ways that we cannot imagine. God will bless our children as we bring them to Him in faith. They will learn to respect and love the Lord as we have. He will build a lasting relationship with them and will give them character and purpose for their lives.

I imagine that the teenage Isaac walked down the mountain a different person. He had heard the voice of God, seen God's provision and seen the depth of his father's love for God. When we entrust our children to God, it changes them. They have a character and values that give them an edge in life. As parents show the depth of their faith in weekly worship and daily devotions, children set patterns that they can keep for life. When God comes before Sunday morning sports or evening television; your children will notice. The Lord becomes a greater part of their lives so that God has a greater opportunity to protect and guide them in life. Giving our greatest gift to God does not mean that we lose them. Such action entrusts our children to the care and protection of the only one who can truly help them succeed.

What would you like your children to learn about God? How would a closer relationship with the Lord impact their life and their future?

### **Bible Study: 26 Entrusting Your Children to God** **- Gen. 22:1-19**

John had known Tom for close to twenty years, but he still felt more than a little apprehensive. Tom was going to a remote village in Guatemala on a church mission trip and had invited four high school youth to come along including John's daughter Karen. John trusted Tom, but there were so many things that could happen. Karen could get hurt or even die in some accident far from a decent hospital. Saying good-bye as Karen

left the waiting area for her airplane was one of the hardest things John had ever done.

Abraham's life was bound up in his son Isaac. Now God was telling Abraham to sacrifice his son to show that Abraham loved God more than Isaac. How that must have torn this man of faith apart. How could the promises God had made to Abraham be kept if Isaac was dead? In one of the greatest acts of faith in the Bible, Abraham obeyed the Lord. In the end, Isaac was not killed, but Abraham and Isaac saw the depth of God's love for them and learned that they could trust the Lord for the rest of their lives.

1. What possession or person would be hardest for you to give up?
2. What command does God give to Abraham in verse 2? What is at stake for Abraham if Isaac dies?
3. How does Abraham respond to this command? (v.3)
4. What do you picture Abraham thinking as he hears and responds to this command? How would you feel if you were asked you to give up something precious to you?
5. How far away is Moriah (v.4)? How would this make the test more difficult?
6. Many think that Isaac is a teenager at the time of the test. What question does he ask (v.7) and how does Abraham answer (v.8)?
7. On the mountain, how does Abraham show the depth of his faith? (v.10) Do you think that Abraham would have really killed his son?
8. When does God stop the sacrifice (v.11) and what can we learn from God's timing?
9. How does God provide the sacrifice as Abraham said he would (v.13)?
10. What does Abraham's example teach us about trusting the Lord enough to obey Him in every situation?

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### **Leader's Guide: 26 Entrusting Your Children to God - Gen. 22:1-19**

#### **1. What possession or person would be hardest for you to give up?**

Answers will vary, but let them relate their situation to Abraham's decision to give up the most important person in his life.

## **2. What command does God give to Abraham in verse 2? What is at stake for Abraham if Isaac dies?**

God came to him with a command that no one wants to hear. "*Take your son, your only son, Isaac. . . sacrifice him there as a burnt offering*" (v.2) It was a test to see how much Abraham loved his God. Abraham was being asked to sacrifice the greatest thing that God had given him because he trusted the Lord. Abraham had waited for 25 years for this son. He knew that all the promises of God depended on Isaac. If Isaac was gone, there would be no descendants as numerous as the stars and no one to inherit the land. Surely, Isaac's life was more precious to Abraham than his own life.

## **3. How does Abraham respond to this command? (v.3)**

Trials can be used to teach us to obey and follow God's commands. "*Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey*" (v.3) If God is to teach us, we must be in the right place. Abraham could have refused to take the journey and the lesson would never have happened. Instead, he makes a painful journey to Moriah as the Lord commands. It was at Moriah where the lesson was to take place. We often think that we have a right to demand that God should solve our problems and help us with our needs on our schedule. Yet only when we have obeyed the Lord and are at His place and time will we find the real solutions.

## **4. What do you picture Abraham thinking as he hears and responds to this command? How would you feel if you were asked you to give up something precious to you?**

Answers will vary, but might include fear, doubts about God's love, and anger. Give them a chance to express how hard this would be and why it would be so difficult.

## **5. How far away is Moriah (v.4)? How would this make the test more difficult?**

God didn't ask Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him immediately. It would have been easier to strike Isaac down quickly while you had your nerve. Abraham was called to make a long journey to the sacred mountain. It was "*on the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.*" (v.4) The three-day journey gave Abraham plenty of time to turn back and refuse what seemed to be a cruel request. Here, there would be no wife or servants to stop him from completing the task. Here he would have to fight only his own desires as he sacrificed his precious son.

## **6. Many think that Isaac is a teenager at the time of the test. What question does he ask (v.7) and how does Abraham answer (v.8)?**

Isaac asks where the lamb is for the burnt offering. Abraham replies that God will provide the burnt offering. Remember that Abraham could not have offered Isaac without Isaac's consent and cooperation. Isaac, as the bearer of the wood, is the stronger of the two. As a young man, he is also faster than his father. Clearly, Isaac is strong enough and big enough to resist or subdue his father. In a way, this is a question of his obedience, too.

## **7. On the mountain, how does Abraham show the depth of his faith? (v.10) Do you think that Abraham would have really killed his son?**

In the end, he was willing to give back to the Lord the greatest gift that he had received. *"Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."* (v.10) He believed in the promises of God so much that he trusted that God would give his son back to him somehow. What God would do with the sacrifice, Abraham did not know. He could only trust God and know that his God had always loved him and would keep the promises He had made about this son. There may be people in the group who do not believe that Abraham would have killed his son. Don't argue with them, just ask them why they feel the way that they do. Such a strong faith is often hard to understand.

### **8. When does God stop the sacrifice (v.11) and what can we learn from God's timing?**

God chooses the time. Only at the last minute does the Lord provide for His servant. The lesson has had its full effect. God could have stopped Abraham after one day of the journey or even at the foot of the mountain. Yet, it was only when the lesson was complete that the Lord provided an answer. He wanted Abraham to know and act as if he believed that the Lord would provide the lamb for the burnt offering. God will not allow us to quit in the middle of His trials but wants us to grow fully from the experience.

### **9. How does God provide the sacrifice as Abraham said he would (v.13)?**

When the time and place are right, God often provides an ordinary answer. God could have sent an angel down from heaven with a lamb or miraculously made one appear before Abraham. Yet, God often does things in a way that seem ordinary. In this case, He simply allowed a ram to get caught in a bush by its horns. Some would call it coincidence, it was so unobtrusive. Yet we know that it was God's way of providing. Abraham needed an animal for the altar that he had built and God arranged for him to have one at the very moment that he needed it. God often uses the ordinary things of life to provide help at just the right moment.

### **10 What does Abraham's example teach us about trusting the Lord enough to obey Him in every situation?**

Answers may vary, but include the power of faith and the love and mercy of God. Life can be tough, but God can handle anything that the world throws at us. We just have to wait for His time and His solutions. If we stop trusting because God takes too long, we can keep the blessing and answer of God from coming.

**These devotions and bible study were taken from 32 days with Abraham by Mark Etter. The "32 days" book covers the entire life of Abraham and shows him as a man with strengths and weaknesses and shows how God raised him up to be the great patriarch that we remember today. The book is available Amazon. Com**

**If you have enjoyed these devotions, you can also find weekly devotions by Mark Etter on the internet at [www.32daysdevotions.com](http://www.32daysdevotions.com)**