


**A Five-Day Devotional Journey**
**March 23 – 29, 2008**
**Acts 7:1-8**

# Abraham

## The Faith Advent-ure of a Lifetime

### 1 One solitary man when I called him

**Read.** Acts 7:1-3 NLT

Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these accusations true?” This was Stephen’s reply: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran. God told him, ‘Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’”

**Read.** Isaiah 51:1-3 Message

Listen to me, all you who are serious about right living and committed to seeking God.

Ponder the rock from which you were cut,  
the quarry from which you were dug.

Yes, ponder Abraham, your father,  
and Sarah, who bore you.

Think of it! One solitary man when I called him,  
but once I blessed him, he multiplied.

Likewise I, God, will comfort Zion,  
comfort all her mounds of ruins.

I'll transform her dead ground into Eden,  
her moonscape into the garden of God,

A place filled with exuberance and laughter,  
thankful voices and melodic songs.

**Think.**

- Abraham was a 75 year-old city dweller being called into a radical change of both location and lifestyle. Putting yourself in his place, what thoughts and feelings would have gone through your heart and head? What kind of discussions do you think he had with his wife and family?
- When has God called you to make a radical change in your life? What did you do? What divine call might you be hearing now?
- What “dead ground” in your life would you like to see transformed into “Eden”?

**Pray.**

Lord, never let me consider myself too old or too set to respond to your call on my life. Give me a nimble faith to move to unexpected changes in the rhythm of life.

**Live.**

Spend time listening for new Divine directions.

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.

Hebrews 11:1-2, Message

His eyes squinted into the hot desert sun. Another high tide in the heat of yet another day. Another day, waiting, watching, wondering – wondering all over again what he was doing here. “Leave your homeland, your city, your father’s house, and I will make of you a great nation.” That’s what God said. And now days had turned to weeks, the weeks to months, and the months to increasingly unkind years.

And so he sat. Waiting...

Abram – “Exalted Father” – sitting in the door of a barren, black Bedouin tent shifting about in rootless existence across a countryside that God said would be his inheritance one day. Right now that day seemed no more than yet another mirage melting away as it approached. His own name seemed to mock him, as if he were at the center of some cosmic joke.

But still he stayed. He trusted. He waited...

Abraham’s story is one of three Old Testament tales upon which Stephen dwells in his answer to the Jewish High Court – the Sanhedrin. Stephen had been accused of attacking the Law of Israel, of undermining the Holy Temple itself, and subverting the entire Jewish way of life. So here he now stands, one man facing a panel of judges numbering 70 and perhaps more. “You will be brought before rulers and judges, but it will all work into an opportunity to testify about me,” Jesus had said. “Don’t worry about what to say or how to say it – it will be the Spirit of my Father speaking through you.”

Taking a deep breath, Stephen calmly but aggressively begins romping through their Old Testament heritage that he loves and embraces rather than opposes. Inviting them – and us – to join him in the journey.

## 2) No idea where he was going

**Read.** Acts 7:4 NLT

So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

**Read.** Genesis 12:1-4 NLT

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

**Read.** Hebrews 11:8 Message

By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left he had no idea where he was going.

**Think.**

- When have you heard really clearly from the Lord as Abraham did in this case...or are you one that's been waiting to really hear God like this? What would you say is the key to really hearing God in your life?
- How would you describe Abraham's embarking on this journey: Risky? Daring? Foolhardy? Ill-advised? Good career move? Or what?

**Pray.**

Whether they be baby steps or bold steps, Lord, give me the courage to take them today as I continue pursuing your call on my life.

**Live.**

If there's a divine call that's sat unanswered in your life, take the first step out the door this week.

## 4) Beaten down 400 years

**Read.** Acts 7:6-7 NLT

God also told him that his descendants would live in a foreign land, where they would be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. 'But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,' God said, 'and in the end they will come out and worship me here in this place.'

**Read.** Genesis 15:13-16 Message

GOD said to Abram, "Know this: your descendants will live as outsiders in a land not theirs; they'll be enslaved and beaten down for 400 years. Then I'll punish their slave masters; your offspring will march out of there loaded with plunder. But not you; you'll have a long and full life and die a good and peaceful death. Not until the fourth generation will your descendants return here; sin is still a thriving business among the Amorites."

**Think.**

- How do you think this "divine forecast" would have impacted Abraham? How would it affect you? With what part of it would you struggle the most? What would comfort you the most?
- When have you felt like an "outsider in a land not yours"? How at home do you feel where you are living/working/going to school now? Why?
- Where have you felt enslaved and beaten down in your life? What would freedom in this area look like for you?

**Pray.**

Lord, help me to remember that you are sovereign over all the twists and turns of history and time; to remember that my life — all of life — is ultimately in your hands. Let this fresh awareness bring me to a deeper place of trust in you.

**Live.**

Show kindness to an "outsider" today.

## 3) Keeping his eye on an unseen city

**Read.** Acts 7:5 NLT

But God gave him no inheritance here, not even one square foot of land. God did promise, however, that eventually the whole land would belong to Abraham and his descendants—even though he had no children yet.

**Read.** Hebrews 11:9-10 NLT

By an act of faith he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise. Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen city with real, eternal foundations—the City designed and built by God.

**Think.**

- What was really driving Abraham to stay and wait in the "promised land" all those years?
- What is the true, bottom-line, driving hope and motivation for your life? To what extent would you say that, like Abraham, your eye is on an unseen city with eternal foundations? Why is heaven real to you — or why is it not?
- What divine promises have you seen fulfilled in your life? Which are you still waiting to see take place?

**Pray.**

Abba, give me a fresh taste of heavenly realities — a renewing glimpse of the new heavens and new earth that doesn't call me to dreamy escape but to deeper investment in the living you would have me do here and now.

**Live.**

Spend some time today meditating on the images of Revelation 22.

## 5) You stubborn people!

**Read.** Acts 7:8 NLT

God also gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision at that time. So when Abraham became the father of Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day. And the practice was continued when Isaac became the father of Jacob, and when Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs of the Israelite nation.

**Read.** Hebrews 11:11-12, 17-19 Message

By faith, barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time, because she believed the One who made a promise would do what he said. That's how it happened that from one man's dead and shriveled loins there are now people numbering into the millions...By faith, Abraham, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God. Acting in faith, he was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him—and this after he had already been told, "Your descendants shall come from Isaac." Abraham figured that if God wanted to, he could raise the dead. In a sense, that's what happened when he received Isaac back, alive from off the altar.

**Think.**

- Why the covenant of circumcision? What was the point (so to speak)?
- Where are you feeling barrenness in your life right now? What notes can you take from Abraham and Sarah as you deal with this?
- What is the hardest sacrifice you have ever had to make — the hardest thing you have ever had to lay down? What happened?

**Pray.**

Father, increase my faith for the long haul, wherever the road leads

**Live.** Respond to God's call today, no matter what the cost.