



Walking Through the Scripture Together

March 23 - 30, 2008

Acts 7:1-8

## Abraham

### The Faith Advent-ure of a Lifetime

**Text** Amplified Bible

**Acts 7:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> And the high priest asked [Stephen], "Are these charges true? <sup>2</sup> And he answered, "Brethren and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our forefather Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia, before he [went to] live in Haran, <sup>3</sup> and He said to him, "Leave your own country and your relatives and come into the land (region) that I will point out to you." <sup>4</sup> So then he went forth from the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. And from there, after his father died, [God] transferred him to this country in which you are now dwelling. <sup>5</sup> Yet He gave him no inheritable property in it, [no] not even enough ground to set his foot on; but He promised that He would give it to Him for a permanent possession and to his descendants after him, even though [as yet] he had no child. <sup>6</sup> And this is [in effect] what God told him: That his descendants would be aliens (strangers) in a land belonging to other people, who would bring them into bondage and ill-treat them 400 years. <sup>7</sup> But I will judge the nation to whom they will be slaves, said God, and after that they will escape and come forth and worship Me in this [very] place. <sup>8</sup> And [God] made with Abraham a covenant (an agreement to be religiously observed) of which circumcision was the seal. And under these circumstances [Abraham] became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac [did so] when he became the father of Jacob, and Jacob [when each of his sons was born], the twelve patriarchs

**Genesis 12:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> Now [in Haran] the Lord said to Abram, "Go for yourself [for your own advantage] away from your country, from your relatives and your father's house, to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you [with abundant increase of favors] and make your name famous and distinguished, and you will be a blessing [dispensing good to others]. <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you [who confer prosperity or happiness upon you] and curse him who curses or uses insolent language toward you; in you will all the families and kindred of the earth be blessed [and by you they will bless themselves]." <sup>4</sup> So Abram departed, as the Lord had directed him; and Lot [his nephew] went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

**Hebrews 11:8-12**

<sup>8</sup> [Urged on] by faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went forth to a place which he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went, although he did not know or trouble his mind about where he was to go. <sup>9</sup> [Prompted] by faith he dwelt as a temporary resident in the land which was designated in the promise [of God, though he was like a stranger] in a strange country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was [waiting expectantly and confidently] looking forward to the city which has fixed and firm foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God. <sup>11</sup> Because of faith also Sarah herself received physical power to conceive a child, even when she was long past the age for it, because she considered [God] Who had given her the promise to be reliable and trustworthy and true to His word. <sup>12</sup> So from one man, though he was physically as good as dead, there have sprung descendants whose number is as the stars of heaven and as countless as the innumerable sands on the seashore... <sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was put to the test [while the testing of his faith was still in progress], had already brought Isaac for an offering; he who had gladly received and welcomed [God's] promises was ready to sacrifice his only son. <sup>18</sup> Of whom it was said, Through Isaac shall your descendants be reckoned. <sup>19</sup> For he reasoned that God was able to raise [him] up even from among the dead. Indeed in the sense that Isaac was figuratively dead [potentially sacrificed], he did [actually] receive him back from the dead.

**Thoughts**

Typically when we think of going on an adventure, we think of a path and a person who looks like anyone but Abraham.

Seventeen or twenty-seven rather than seventy-five would probably be the age that would come to mind.

And when it comes to a mission trip, we would probably be thinking in terms of weeks or perhaps months — but probably not a century.

He's the pioneer advent-urer. The first one to hear the call and leave everything no matter how foolish or upside down it all seemed just because when it came right down to it, he believed God. An "exalted father" who had no kids; a man who's non-existent children would own all he could see and bless the world beyond his wildest dreams. But all he ever owned of that land was his own burial plot. His promised land turned out to be a land of famine when he got there. But through it all he walked and waited and plodded — and had his share of stumbling.

Abraham was far from perfect. He lied. He didn't listen to his wife when he should have and listened to her when he shouldn't have. He often flinched when faced with the challenges of the day. But he steadily pressed ahead and finished well.

Which is the ultimate challenge for all would-be advent-urers.

## Small Group Discussion Guide

### Lean In

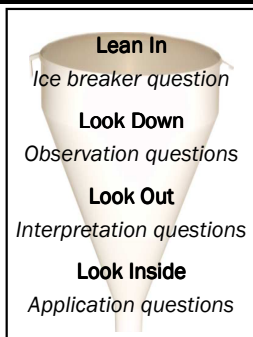
- Share about when you first had to leave home. Why did you leave? Who or what did you take? Was it something you dreaded or was it more like an adventure?

### Look Down / Look Out

- 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?
- How would you describe Abraham's embarking on this journey: Risky? Daring? Foolhardy? Ill-advised? Good career move? Or what?
- What was really driving Abraham to stay and wait in the "promised land" all those years?
- What was God's point in the covenant of circumcision?
- What do you see behind God's call for Abraham to offer up Isaac on the altar?

### Look Inside

- 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?
- 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?



## Family Discussion Guide

### Day One Acts 7:1-3 Isaiah 51:1-3

Have you ever had to move? For you, what's the hardest thing about moving: leaving behind old friends? Having to make new friends? Going to a new school? How hard do you think this move was for Abraham? Why does God call us to move sometimes?

### Day Two Acts 7:4 Genesis 12:1-4 Hebrews 11:8

Abraham really heard from God that he needed to leave everything and go to this new land. How often have you heard God's voice? What are some different ways we hear God's voice? How can we really know it's God and not just us?

### Day Three Acts 7:5 Hebrews 11:9-10

Abraham waited a long time (25 years) for the child God promised him. When have you really had to wait a long time for something? How hard is it for you to wait? Why? Why do you think God makes us wait sometimes for his promises to come true?

### Day Four Acts 7:6-7 Genesis 15:13-16

God said that Abraham's kids would be strangers in a foreign land and that they wouldn't be treated well there. When have you felt like an "outsider" at school or maybe even at home? What are some things we can do when we feel like we don't fit in?

### Day Five Acts 7:8 Hebrews 11:11-12, 17-19

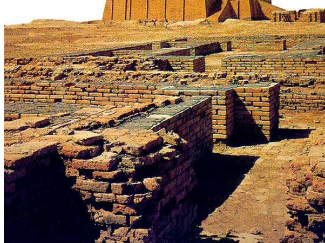
God asked Abraham to literally put his son Isaac on the altar. Why do you think God asked him to do this? What's the hardest thing God has ever asked you to do? What's the biggest thing you've ever had to let go?

## Bible Life & Times

### Ur Kasdim

Abram, son of Terah, a maker of idols, according to Hebrew traditions was born about 2,000 B.C. in the Ur of the Chaldees. Ur is a city of ancient Sumer in southern Mesopotamia on a site in present-day southeast Iraq. It was a principal port of Sumer, which traded with Egypt and India, was ruled by Queen Shubad, where it flourished into a brilliant culture under the Sumerians. It is one of the oldest cities in Mesopotamia, and became an important center of Sumerian culture after 3,000 B.C. The city declined after the sixth century B.C. Chaldees or Chaldeans were members of an ancient Semitic people of Chaldea who ruled in Babylonia and were versed in occult learning. Sumer was an ancient country of southern Mesopotamia in present-day southern Iraq. Archaeological evidence dates the beginnings of Sumer to the fifth millennium B.C. By 3,000 B.C. a flourishing civilization existed, which gradually exerted power over the surrounding area and culminated in the Akkadian dynasty founded (c. 2340) by Sargon I. Sumer declined after 2,000 B.C. and was later absorbed by Babylonia and Assyria. The Sumerians are believed to have invented the cuneiform system of writing.

Young Abram, from a notable family, must have basked in the sophisticated society and fertile philosophies of the age; he surely visited Babylon to marvel, like Herodotus many centuries later, at those massive walls eighty feet high and twenty feet thick and at the lofty Temple of Marduk where Chaldean astrologers plotted the stars.



Ruins in Ur of the Chaldees

W. Raymond Drake

## details, details...

### They set out for the land of Canaan

At a normal caravan pace of 20 miles per day, the trip from Haran to Canaan (about 500 miles) would have taken the better part of a month. There are three primary names by which we know the Promised Land:

1. *Canaan* (possibly meaning "low" or "lowland") because of the original inhabitants;
2. *Israel* (after the conquest led by Joshua)
3. *Palestine* (from *Philistine*) the name given to the land by the Romans



### Mount Moriah

The author of Chronicles identifies the "region of Moriah" as the temple mount in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1). The name *Moriah* might be associated with the Hebrew verb meaning to see or provide, a theologically significant term appearing throughout Genesis 22:1-19. In Jerusalem, as in no other place, the Lord would subsequently be "seen" and would "provide" for his people through the sacrifice he would ordain. Today Mount Moriah is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim structure erected in AD 691. A large outcropping of rock inside the building is still pointed to as the original site of the intended sacrifice of Isaac.