

## Faith's Role Models

### I. Slide#1,2,3 **Announce:**

- A. Slide#4 Interview Cotten's: Steve & Kristinea. FPU.
- B. Slide#5 TY for the 34 that showed up to place flyers in local businesses for RCAHT Task Force.
  1. Justice = care for the vulnerable. Children At Risk 3-5pm, finish planning JM4.
- C. KSDW - live Sun mornings only. [hope to eventually beef up our cameras/internet] *LiveStream*
- D. Prayer: Faith not a magical power but simply hearing from You God & obeying what You said.
  1. The life of faith is a life of risk, of stepping out into the unknown with nothing more solid before us than God's command.

### II. Intro:

- A. Slide#6 When John Bunyan was in jail (after the restoration of Charles II in 1660, it was illegal to conduct divine service except in accordance with the forms of the Church of England. Bunyan, who persisted in his unlicensed preaching, was confined to *Bedford county jail* from 1660 to 1672) He was thinking of what must happen to his family if he was executed. Especially the thought of his *little blind daughter*, who was so dear to him, haunted him: "O," he said, "I saw in this condition I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife & children; yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it."
  1. "The dearest idol I have known, Whate'er that idol be, Help me to tear it from thy throne, And worship only thee."
- B. Slide#7a The writer to Hebrews takes faith out of *religious theory* & clothes it w/*flesh & blood*.
  1. James said *faith without works is dead?* or, *Faith w/o deeds is useless*(NIV). 2:20
  2. *Meaning, if there is true faith, there will be consequent actions.*
  3. *Inward faith* always leads to *outward evidence*.
  4. **Faith** *assumes, presumes, supposes, & presupposes obedience.*
  5. Let's look at the next section of *Faith's Role Models*.
- C. One thing that you will notice w/each of the characters that we talk about, each is **unusual**.
  1. ie. it is *not the normal reaction* ordinarily expected of those who face such situations.
    - a) Faith makes some people **act differently** than others.
    - b) I also want to say, it *wasn't perfect faith*. With each of these characters & examples, they all *lacked faith at other times*. *So don't be disheartened*.
- D. Slide#7b Outline: Having Faith when you don't know *where*.  
Having Faith when you don't know *how*. Having Faith when you don't know *when*.  
Having Faith when you don't know *why*. And, Having Faith when you can't *see*.

### III. Slide#8 **HAVING FAITH WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE (8-10) Abraham**

- A. **Abraham** is one of the **greatest examples** of faith in the bible.
1. He is honored in at least 3 major religions of the world: Judaism, Islam & Christianity.
  2. Even our NT starts the 1st verse w/his name in it.
  3. Paul tells us to **Consider Abraham: He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.** Gal.3:6 (NIV)
  4. James said that he was **the friend of God.**
  5. The writer here takes us back all the way to Abraham's beginning, 19th century B.C. To the city of **Ur**, located on the Euphrates River (southern Iraq).
- B. **Slide#9** Abraham was promised by God: a land, a posterity, a great name & universal influence.
1. **Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.** Gen.12:1-3
- C. Picture military information being disseminated from the **Joint Chiefs of Staff** (the decision makers) all the way down to the tactical level...***under sealed orders.***
1. Whoever is "***boots on the ground***" may receive their orders **only when** they need them, **or in route, as they go.** So, they open their orders, and they are told where to go next. ***And that's the way Abraham lived.***
    - a) *Are you addicted to detail???* Can you **trust** when you can't **trace**?
- D. **Take a risk...*Having Faith When You Don't Know Where.***
- E. **Slide#10** Abraham reminds us, **faith** frees us to **venture confidently** into the **unknown.**
1. Risk, for the purpose of serving God.
  2. **Are you too fearful to pray aloud? To express your opinion on a subject? To witness to someone because you're anxious about how you might be received? To leave your old job?**
    - a) **Faith** frees us to step out, like Abraham, even when we don't know where we are going.
- F. **Slide#11a** **How does faith help us?** Faith reminds us that God, who **guides & directs** us, **also goes with us.**
1. No need to **fear risks** when **faith** tells us that ***the Lord is by our side.***
- G. **Slide#11b** (9) God had promised **the land of Canaan** to Abraham, **but** during his life time (& Isaac's & Jacob's) God gave him **no inheritance.**
1. The only thing Abraham **owned** was a little cave in **Machpelah** in Hebron where he buried his wife.
- H. (10) Here is 4000 years, or 40 centuries of **faith...so far.**

1. Abraham saw what John did, **Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.** Rev.21:2

a) He **saw & believed** the **last 2 ch's** of the bible, 2000 yrs before they were even written.

- I. Kent Hughes said, **To get a feel for what this was like, imagine God promising you & your descendants the land of Guatemala, & then in obedience traveling there & living the rest of your life in your camper, along with your sons' families in their campers families, moving from place to place. You remain alien for the remainder of your sojourn, without full citizenship rights, a perpetual outsider.**
- J. **Abraham never fit in.** His **religion** was different (monotheism vs. polytheism). His standards of **morality** were different. His **worldview** was continually colliding with the inhabitant's worldview.
1. **3 main ingredients make up one's worldview:** 1] Your understanding of **God**  
2] Your understanding of **mankind** 3] Your understanding of **the world**.
  2. **A life of *faith* is not anti-cultural, but countercultural.**
  3. Abraham was **not separate** from his culture; in fact he was deeply involved in politics of the land. **Yet, he was never *at home*.**
- K. There are many parallels w/Abraham's experience & the Christians.
1. **Do we feel *at home* here?** **or**, do we feel like our missionaries, as *ExPat's*?  
[expatriates = live outside your native country]
  2. **Would someone describe you as:** [a] A pilgrim, a sojourner, a camper, or an alien?  
**Or**, [b] A citizen, a permanent resident, an occupant, 1 who's perfectly at home here.
- L. **Slide#12** Let us **live**, as Martin Luther used to say, ***with one foot in the air*.**

#### IV. Slide#13,14 **HAVING FAITH WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW *HOW*** (11,12) **Sarah**

- A. **He as good as dead** (reproductively) – refers to Abraham's advanced age (99) when Isaac was conceived. (Sarah 90 yrs. young) [2 nonagenarians]
1. Parents trying to get pregnant...trust God for this.
  2. **I believe it is still **God** who *opens & closes* the womb.** God is in control of every child birth.
- B. (11,12) **Sarah** - Yep, she laughed at 1st, **but** God countered her skepticism w/a question, **Is anything too hard for the LORD?**
1. **Here is a most encouraging example of faith.** When Sarah 1st heard the promise, she **doubted** and **laughed**. ***But first doubts were overcome.***
  2. **Slide#15** Remember, she heard this inside the tent door, & laughed. When God confronted her She denied it saying, ***I didn't laugh***, for she was afraid, **But Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh, for she was afraid. And He said, No, but you did laugh**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen.18:15

- a) Ultimately God had **the last laugh**...for Isaac's name meant *laughter*.
  - b) Gen.21:6 **And Sarah declared, God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me.**
  - c) She must of thought **long & hard** on God's words, for it says, **And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, & the Lord **did** for Sarah as He had spoken.** Gen21:1
  - d) To fulfill a promise, God seems to **awaken faith 1st** in the recipient.
- C. Slide#16 "Abraham must have weighed the **human impossibility** of becoming a father **against** the **divine impossibility** of God being able to break His word & decided that since God is God, nothing is impossible." Kent Hughes

## V. Slide#17 **HAVING FAITH WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN**(13-16) *Unnamed People*

- A. **These all died in faith** – What an epitaph.
  - 1. It really doesn't matter then if they died...of natural causes, **or** of violent deaths; **of** old age **or** in their prime of life...*they all died in faith*.
  - 2. **They didn't die** resting in their own accomplishments or attainments, **but in faith**.
    - a) Faith is as precious to **die** by **as** to **live** by. Spurgeon May 2, Evening.
  - 3. *God makes his dying people to be like the sun, which never seems so large as when it sets.* Spurgeon
- B. Abraham & his descendants *didn't turn back* as the Hebrew leaders were tempted to do, **but** they kept their eyes on God & pressed on to victory.
  - 1. In what area is the Lord challenging **you** to keep your eyes on Him & press on to victory?
  - 2. How does the promise of a heavenly country help us to **keep our faith**, even when we **don't see** our hopes fulfilled immediately?
- C. Slide#18,19 (16) He has prepared a city for them - I go to prepare a place for you.
  - 1. This City (vs.10) is **designed** in God's mind & is **built** w/His hands.
    - a) It's difficult planning a futuristic city. Walt Disney said, "*right when we build Tomorrowland, it will be outdated.*"
  - 2. **Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**
    - a) Picture a **utopian city** of **peace & intimate fellowship** with God & all His family.
    - b) It is a **city**...thus it is *social, communal, community, shared*.

## VI. Slide#20,21 **HAVING FAITH WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHY** (17-19) *Abraham*

- A. Here is the **severest test** of Abraham's faith.
  - 1. **Be honest**...have you ever wondered **why** God would do something so cruel?
  - 2. And Abraham did it **the very next day**, he saddled the donkey & left to Mnt Moriah.
    - a) How do you **sacrifice** the embodiment (Isaac) of all your **hopes & dreams**?

- b) **And yet**, Abraham took out the knife & was ready when...he was stopped **by a voice from heaven**. **The same voice** that remained silent 2000 yrs later on the same hill called Calvary.
3. **But** here finally in vs.19 we find out that Abraham's faith, was in the loving character of God, which enabled him to **solve this crisis by reasoning that** God was in **full control** of both **death & life**; He could **restore** as well as **take**.
- a) **Slide#22a** This is Resurrection faith!
4. **Slide#22b** Key: **Concluding**/λογίζομαι (19) - a mathematical term where we get our english word **logarithm**, it means **to calculate or reckon upon the basis of firm evidence**.<sup>2</sup>
- a) **Abraham was mathematical in his deliberation, not faith w/o reason**...Abraham simply calculated GOD into the equation. [It's like having **a God key** on your calculator]
- B. **There comes a time in each of our lives when God will test us.**
- This is a test of full surrender**. A test to maybe give up **your heart's desire**, simply because God asks us to.
  - Maybe it's moving** to a distant land...away from family & friends; away from the creature comforts you are use to.
- C. **This takes a unique faith** - A faith like when **Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.**
- God has promised us **HIS very best** – He has assured us that, **all things work together for good to them that love Him**.
  - Slide#23** Elisabeth Elliot, **True faith** goes into operation **when** there are **no answers**.
- a) How **close** Abraham must have been to the Lord, to **trust** Him so.
- b) Let us stay **close** to the Lord also, **that** we too might have a faith that **surrenders all**.

## VII. **Slide#24 HAVING FAITH WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE (20-22) Isaac, Jacob, Joseph**

- A. All 3 of these guys exercised their faith by **seeing off into the future** what wasn't quite visible at the time.
- They all were convinced that **death** would not frustrate God's purposes.
- B. **Slide#25 ISAAC'S FAITH (20) FAITH IN BLESSING**
- C. Isaac understood by faith the program of God for **both** of the boys. (Jacob & Esau)
- D. Isaac believed the word, passed on to him from Abraham, **&** then conferred the blessing on Jacob.
- Even though Jacob tricked his brother for the birthright, Esau knew it was binding & that God would not let it fail.
- E. **Slide#26 JACOB'S FAITH (21) FAITH IN WORSHIPING**

<sup>2</sup> Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, pg.709.

F. In spite of his failures, Jacob had faith in God's Word & blessed Ephraim & Manasseh before he died.

1. He dared by faith, to transfer (hand switch) the birthright from **Manasseh**, the 1stborn, to **Ephraim** the younger.

G. **Slide#27 JOSEPH'S FAITH (22) FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION**

H. Joseph knew that Israel would one day be delivered from Egypt. For this is what God promised Abraham.

I. *It is amazing Joseph had any faith at all. He had so many **trials** in his life.*

1. *He had family problems: His father rebuked him for his dreams. His brothers envied him, hated him, & despised him. Then his brothers trafficked him into slavery. He was then re-exploited/trafficked again into Egypt. He had to live away from his homeland security, in a pagan land. He was framed with rape charges by Mrs. Potiphar which landed him in jail for 2 years. And, he was forgotten by the butler to whom he interpreted his dream.*

- a) Yet in all this Joseph says to his brothers after dad died, *Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but **God** meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.* Gen.50:19-21

J. He gave instructions to **carry his bones** into the Promised Land. *Moses did over 2 centuries later.*

1. By faith we believe in the final resurrection of our bodies also.

K. *Slide#28 Our **tomorrow** is **unknown** by us, yet our **future** guaranteed by God. me :)*

L. **\*\*\*\*\***

M. Christian faith **does not** rest on either our **sincerity** or our **fervency**.  
Christian faith stands or falls on **the truth** that the **Word of God** reveals.

N. **Do you like yourself at this point of your pilgrimage?**

O. **Faith** is to **believe** what we **do not see**; and the **reward** of this faith is to **see** what we **believe**.

Augustine