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CHURCH

UNDERSTANDING

# faith



# **Understanding Faith**

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**Lessons from the Life of Abraham**

## Introduction

The narrative in Genesis 18 presents one of the most remarkable moments in the life of Abraham. After years of walking with God, he experiences a direct encounter with the Lord — an appearance that reveals not only the depth of his faith but also how God relates to those who seek Him.

This chapter offers three central lessons about what it means to live by faith: **welcoming God’s presence, trusting His promises, and interceding for others**. By exploring these principles, one can understand how faith shapes decisions, sustains in times of uncertainty, and connects daily life to an eternal purpose.

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### 1. True Faith Welcomes God’s Presence

*“The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.”*  
(Genesis 18:1)

The account begins with an important detail: the word “Lord” appears in all capital letters, indicating **Yahweh**, the covenant name of God. In this scene, it is a manifestation of the Son — Christ in the Old Testament — accompanied by two angels.

When Abraham looks up and sees them, he immediately runs to meet them, bows to the ground, and addresses the central figure as “My Lord,” recognizing the divine presence before him. Rather than avoiding this encounter, he invites them to stay, offering hospitality and preparing a meal — a process that in his time required significant effort and attention.

Abraham’s eagerness to spend time with the Lord illustrates a faith that actively seeks God’s presence. It raises an important question for every believer: **Do we welcome God’s presence as Abraham did, or do we avoid it?**

## Understanding Faith

Avoidance can stem from fear of what God might ask, from unconfessed sin one is unwilling to surrender, or from a desire to maintain control over life. In contrast, strong faith not only accepts but desires God's presence daily, even when it means allowing Him to interrupt personal plans.

Walking by faith involves sensitivity to God's leading — being ready to speak a word of encouragement, to pray for someone in need, or even to give sacrificially when prompted by the Holy Spirit. Abraham's immediate and wholehearted response to the Lord's arrival remains a powerful example of faith that welcomes God without hesitation.

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### 2. Faith Trusts God's Promises

By the time of this encounter in Genesis 18, Abraham was ninety-nine years old. Twenty-four years earlier, when he was seventy-five, God had promised that he and Sarah would have a son and that through this son, a great nation would arise.

At first, Abraham believed — but as years passed without a child, impatience crept in. He and Sarah decided to take matters into their own hands. Following the custom of the time, Sarah gave her servant Hagar to Abraham, and through her, Ishmael was born. Yet Ishmael was not the promised son; he was the result of human effort rather than divine fulfillment.

Now, standing outside his tent with the Lord before him, Abraham hears an extraordinary declaration: **within one year, the promised child would be born to him and Sarah**. Sarah, listening from inside the tent, laughed at the thought. At ninety years old, the idea seemed impossible.

But the Lord's response cut through every doubt:

*"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"* (Genesis 18:14)

This question is the heart of faith. It demands a personal answer. Is there truly anything impossible for God?

## Understanding Faith

Faith requires believing God's Word even when circumstances seem hopeless. The lesson is clear:

- The marriage that feels beyond repair — God can restore.
- The prodigal child — God can draw back.
- The financial need that seems insurmountable — God can meet.
- The illness that defies medical solutions — God can heal.

Abraham's faith had matured over the years. Despite past mistakes, he had seen enough of God's power to trust His promise. By the following year, against every human expectation, Sarah gave birth to Isaac — the child through whom God's covenant would continue.

Faith that trusts God's promises holds to His Word even when logic and timing say otherwise. It rests not in personal ability, but in the unchanging character of the One who speaks.

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### 3. Faith Intercedes for Others

After sharing the promise of Isaac's birth, the Lord and the two angels prepared to leave. Yet before departing, the Lord posed a question:

*“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”*

Because Abraham would become the father of a great nation, the Lord chose to reveal His plan: the angels were going to Sodom and Gomorrah to determine whether the cities were as wicked as reported. If so, judgment would come.

Abraham's response was not casual. Knowing his nephew Lot and his family lived in Sodom, he stepped forward with bold humility and began to plead:

*“Will You sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”*

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What followed was a remarkable dialogue — a model of persistent, faith-filled intercession. Abraham asked if the city would be spared for fifty righteous people. The Lord agreed. Then forty-five. Then forty. Thirty. Twenty. Finally, ten. Each time, the Lord responded with mercy: if that number of righteous could be found, the city would be spared.

Abraham stopped at ten, perhaps believing surely there were at least that many. His prayer reveals two key principles for interceding faith:

### 1. **Righteousness Matters**

Scripture says, “*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*” (James 5:16). Abraham was counted righteous because he believed God’s promises (Genesis 15:6). The credibility of our prayers is strengthened when our lives align with God’s will.

### 2. **Persistence Matters**

Abraham didn’t ask once and walk away — he pressed in, appealing again and again. This kind of perseverance reflects both compassion for others and confidence in God’s mercy.

Faith that intercedes for others is marked by a deep burden for their well-being, a willingness to stand in the gap, and a trust that God hears and responds. It does not give up easily, even when the situation seems beyond hope.

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## Conclusion — The Greater Intercessor

The sobering truth is that all humanity deserves God’s judgment because of sin. Yet the good news is that **Jesus Christ stands as the ultimate intercessor**, greater than Abraham. On the cross, He bore the punishment we deserved, so that by faith we could receive mercy instead of wrath.

### *Understanding Faith*

Abraham's plea for Sodom foreshadows the heart of Christ — a heart that prays, pleads, and provides a way for the guilty to be spared. Just as Abraham stood before God on behalf of a city, Jesus stands before the Father on behalf of all who trust in Him.

To live by faith means to welcome God's presence daily, to trust His promises fully, and to intercede for others with persistence and compassion. In doing so, believers reflect the very character of the One who saves.

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