

Living by Faith

Lesson 4: Faith That Goes Without Knowing: Abraham's Call -- Hebrews

11:8-10

Imagine the moment the word came to Abraham. He was a settled man in a settled city, Ur of the Chaldeans, with family around him, the streets he had always known under his feet, and a future he could more or less predict. Then God spoke and told him to go. Not 'go to this address.' Not 'here is the map, here is the deed, here is what you will find when you arrive.' Just go. Leave the country, leave the kindred, leave the father's house, and head out toward a land that God would show him later. The destination was a promise, not a pin on a map. And the most astonishing line in the whole account is this: 'he went out, not knowing where he was going.'

We do not like that sentence. Everything in us wants to know where we are going before we take the first step. We want the plan laid out, the risks calculated, the outcome guaranteed. We will follow God, we think, as soon as He shows us the whole road. But faith, real faith, the kind Hebrews holds up for our admiration, rarely gets the whole road. It gets the next step and the character of the One who is calling. Abraham did not have a map. He had a God who had spoken, and for a man of faith that turned out to be enough.

Notice what kind of faith this is. It is not a feeling Abraham had on a quiet afternoon. It is a packed-up household, a herd driven down an unfamiliar road, a tent staked in foreign soil. 'By faith Abraham obeyed.' Faith here is something you can watch. It loads the wagons. It says goodbye. It walks out the gate of the only world it has ever known because God said so. And then it keeps living that way, dwelling in tents in the very land God had promised, holding the whole world loosely, like a traveler who knows this is not home yet.

Why could he do it? Because his eyes were fixed on something steadier than sand and stronger than circumstance. 'He was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.' Abraham lived in tents because he was waiting for a city. He could let go of the familiar because he had set his heart on the eternal. This lesson invites us into that same pilgrim faith: the willingness to follow God into the unknown, to hold this world with an open hand, and to obey His call before we can see how it all ends, because we trust the One who is calling.

Group Discussion: What makes it so hard for people to obey God when they cannot see where the obedience will lead? Where do you see our culture insisting that we know the whole outcome before we are willing to commit to anything?

Personal Reflection: Think back to a time God seemed to be calling you to step out before you could see the result. How did you respond, and what did that moment reveal about where your trust was really anchored?

Read Hebrews 11:8-10

Study Questions

1. Verse 8 says, 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.' What does it tell us about the nature of faith that Abraham's faith expressed itself as obedience, and what does it mean that he obeyed 'not knowing where he was going'?
2. When God has made His will clear to you, do you tend to obey promptly, or do you wait until you can see how the obedience will turn out? What does your pattern reveal about your trust in Him?
3. Abraham was called to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house (Genesis 12:1). Why does following God so often require leaving something familiar and secure behind, and what does this teach us about the cost of faith?
4. What is something familiar, comfortable, or secure that you sense God may be asking you to hold more loosely or even to leave behind for His sake?
5. Verse 9 says Abraham 'went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents.' Why is it striking that he lived as a stranger and sojourner in the very land God had promised to give him, and what does this reveal about how God's people are meant to relate to this present world (compare 1 Peter 2:11)?

6. In what practical ways do you find yourself living as though this world is your permanent home rather than a place you are passing through? Where do you most need to recover a pilgrim's outlook?
7. Verse 10 says Abraham 'was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.' How did this forward look enable Abraham to live in tents and let go of earthly security, and what does it teach us about the place that heaven should hold in the heart of a believer?
8. When you examine your own hopes and daydreams, how much are they shaped by 'the city that has foundations' compared to the comforts and achievements of this life? What would it look like to set your heart more fully on that city?
9. Abraham's faith was a trusting obedience that followed God's call even without knowing the outcome. Scripture calls this 'the obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5; 16:26) and presents it as the heart of how we respond to God. How does Abraham's pattern of leaving the familiar to obey God's call help us understand what it means to obey the gospel of Christ today, and why is faith that merely believes without obeying not the faith Hebrews is describing (compare Hebrews 5:9; Mark 16:16)?
10. Looking back over Hebrews 11:8–10 as a whole, name one place where God is calling you to step out in trusting obedience before you can see the outcome. What is one concrete way Jesus is forming a pilgrim's faith in you this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 12:1–4, the original call of Abram and his prompt obedience to go where God would lead; Romans 1:5, the obedience of faith as the goal of the gospel among all nations; 1 Peter 2:11, the believer as a sojourner and exile who holds this world loosely; 2 Corinthians 5:7, walking by faith and not by sight as the settled posture of God's people; Hebrews 13:14, here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.