

Faith's Credulity

Abraham—part 9

Genesis 18:1-15

August 2, 2026

Reviewing our series on Abraham:

- Week 1: Faith's Beginnings (Canaan)
- Week 2: Faith's Tent and Altar (Centering metaphors)
- Week 3: Faith's Choices (Considerations)
- Week 4: Faith's Fight (Core battles: inner/ outer)
- Week 5: Faith's Promises (Cementing: anchoring)
- Week 6: Faith's Covenant (Covenant)
- Week 7: Faith and Failure (Correcting grace)
- Week 8: Faith's Commitment (Circumcision)

God: the God of the seemingly impossible

Man: taking care of the seemingly mundane when you're overwhelmed with a trial

DAY 1: God in disguise

1. In the life of Abraham, we have seen Abraham's highs and lows, times of rejoicing and times of dejection, times of victory and times of defeat. But now the setting changes from a big picture setting to a small, homey setting.

*Genesis 18:1 **The Lord appeared** to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw **three men** **standing nearby**. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*

2. The writer tells us that "*The Lord appeared to Abraham.*" But, as the story will reveal, it only appears to Abraham that *three men*, three travelers had shown up at his camp.

3. Think "God in disguise."

Genesis 18:3 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord (a common word used like we use "sir"), do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

4. This is what theologians call a preincarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. One of the visitors is God "in disguise." Along with Him are two angels disguised as travelers who will visit Lot to warn him about the judgment to come on Sodom.

5. As we begin our week in this story, what intrigues you so far?

DAY 2: Abraham doing the “menial” work

1. God and life have ways of testing us to see just how real or deep the Lordship of Christ really is in us. Sometimes there are big public tests and sometimes there are small tests. This episode is one of those smaller tests. Just how real is Abraham’s commitment to being God’s man, serving God and people?

2. Suppose you’re watching an NFL playoff game of your favorite team, and your wife wants to talk with you. What do you do? What is your response?

3. When we are in some sort of turmoil, sometimes we let our normal duties, responsibilities, and relationships go stagnant. We just put our volitional automobile in neutral and just coast along.

4. Abraham has waited a loooooong time for an heir. He is ninety-nine years old, no spring chicken, or even a winter chicken. This trial weighs on him everyday.

5. What do you do when what you want to have happen – you can’t make happen?

6. Rather than sulk in discouragement, ask, what can I do? How can I serve God and the people now? What CAN I do toward my responsibilities and relationships? On these, get to work!

7. These are God’s daily mini tests. How did Abraham do with his test?

Genesis 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

8. Make a handful of observations about what Abraham did:

9. Notice, he responded to the service opportunity in front of him. He responded promptly. He responded personally. Without going into detail, the meal that Sarah and Abraham prepared for the strangers was world class for the time.

10. It’s as if God asks Abraham, “Even though the wait for an heir is long and now seems impossible, will you still serve me, and serve people?”

11. Abraham didn’t have to be guilted into fixing dinner or grudgingly serve! He didn’t give into today’s modern day idols: convenience, comfort and “What’s in it for me?”

→ Today matters, even in the mundane and menial

12. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Sarah doubts; God knows

Genesis 18:9 Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

Most of our study of Abraham has majored on him.

1. Why do you think Sarah laughed when she heard these words?

2. Notice the “kind” of laugh she laughed. She “laughed to herself.”

3. Notice her words: “...as she thought.”

Genesis 18:13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

4. How did the one “traveler” know that Sarah laughed to herself? How did he know *what she thought*?

5. Sarah was confronted with her laugh.

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

6. Up until now Abraham did not know who his three guests were. But Abraham was starting to understand their identity. Let’s look at the evidence. First, they ask, “Where is Sarah your wife?” If they knew Abraham and Sarah prior to this episode, they would have called her by her old name, “Sarai.” Only God would know of her recent name change.

7. Second, they bring up the promise of a son in spite of the advanced age of Abraham and Sarah.

8. Third, when Sarah hears the promise of a son and the time for the son to be born will be next spring, she “laughs to herself.” She can see some of her gray hair, can feel the wrinkles on her face, sees the arthritis on her hands and laughs cynically quietly. The travelers know she laughed even without hearing her laugh.

9. Fourth, they call her on her quiet laughter. They knew she laughed without seeing or hearing her. The writer tells us Sarah was afraid, and pictures for us Sarah coming out of the tent to deny that she laughed, and to minimize their message. We human beings are masters of denial. We see what we want to see and believe what we want to believe. If what we see and what we believe does not align with reality we deny what is true about ourselves, about others, and about life.

10. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: Laughing, scoffing, believing...

1. Back in Genesis 17, God spoke of the promise of a son for the fifth time. When Abraham heard this promise again, he fell on his face and laughed. “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred and a wife who is ninety?” However, this laugh of Abraham’s is a different laugh than Sarah’s. Sarah’s laugh was a laugh of cynicism. We would have responded with, “Yeah, riiiiiiight.” It was a laugh of scoffing and contempt.

2. Abraham’s laugh was a laugh of happiness, a laugh of delight in spite of the obvious signs of old age.

Romans 4:18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

3. What strikes you from this passage about Abraham and faith in Romans 4?

4. Returning to Sarah. After the travelers left, a seed they planted began to germinate in Sarah.

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

5. She had but to look up into the panoply of stars lighting up the midnight sky to ponder the question, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” When the sun predictably came up the next morning and predictably warmed up her world did she ponder, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” When she reflected back on God’s protection of her in Egypt did she now ponder, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” When they left Egypt with incredible wealth given her when coming out of Egypt, did she now ponder, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” When God protected Abraham in the rescue of Lot, perhaps she now pondered, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*”

At some point she answered the planted question with her own, “Of course not.”

Hebrews 11:11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: A page from this author's faith story

1. The lesson of faith is that there is something true even beyond contrary circumstances—it is the character of God. Faith is not just believing anything, a positive mental attitude. Faith is grounded on something solid, not wishful thinking. It is grounded on the faithfulness of God, true to His character and purpose and promises.
2. Your faith challenge may not be the same with Abraham and Sarah's, believing God when He promises a son, an heir, when it seems impossible.
3. Perhaps your faith challenge is one I faced decades ago. When I was twenty-three years old, a three-year-old Christian, I went to student week at Glorietta NM. Thousands of Christian college students were there. I had been under Harold's mentorship for almost a year and got the big head, the all-knowing Seth who was critical of the leaders of student ministries whom I met, critical of the bible teachers, critical of the worship team. Nitpicky, nitpicky, nitpicky.
4. On the last morning of the weeklong retreat, thousands of us were singing to the Lord. I was sitting on the front row and suddenly saw myself with no denial—Craig the Critic. It was as if the Seth you're looking at right now had morphed into this proud, ugly, self-centered creature whose heart had ossified into stone, whose very being was losing his very soul, a shell of a human being that looked more like a horrifying creature from a sci-fi movie.
5. I had not been verbally critical of anyone, but the relentless machine gun bullets of proud critical, nitpicky thoughts and accusations, a proud sense of superiority was seen for what it was, and in that moment as we finished singing our last song, as students were leaving the mammoth auditorium, I sat back down in my chair and wept like a baby.
6. I was broken over my sin. I was crying not just because I saw a very ugly part of myself like I had never seen me before, but I was sobbing because it seemed impossible to be able to turn off the nitpicky machine in me. Where was the on/off switch? It was nowhere to be found. The lyrics of a hymn I had sung in church came back to mind.
7. At that point, and not before that point, I, like Sarah, began to believe that that ugly part of me could change, that would come a time when I would discover the on/off switch of a critical, nitpicky machine inside of me.
8. I have talked to many a wife who has seen herself in my story, a critical, naggy, nitpick-ness in their soul, that no matter what her husband does, the first thought is what he didn't do, what he should have done, that what he said should have been said this way and not that way.... On and on and on, not only unable to find the on / off switch, but proudly assuming she knew better on virtually everything. A heart that is slowly ossifying to stone, a soul slowly shriveling up to look like the skin of a hundred-year-old woman, or as we hear every year around Christmas, "You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch." You're a mean one Ms. Grinch."
9. What resonates with you personally from my story?