

Lesson 2

Abraham—He Was the Friend of God

You can be absolutely sure of your relationship with God. You can learn from the experiences of Abraham how to submit yourself to God and receive the blessings He has promised. God chose Abraham to be His servant and His friend. God did this in order to put into action His plan to bless all who would follow His will.

In the account of Abraham's life you can find the principles necessary to turn your own life toward its true purpose. He recognized the nature and danger of sin. He believed that God was interested in him and his people. He accepted God's promise. He obeyed God's instructions. He submitted himself completely to the will of God, in obedience, and also in love.

In this lesson you will learn more about these principles and how to live by them as Abraham did. You will understand what it means to be a friend of God.

In this lesson you will . . .

Abraham Answered God's Call

Abraham Demonstrated Faith

Abraham Gave All to God

This lesson will help you...

Explain the nature of man's relationship with God.

Describe how Abraham demonstrated faith and submission.

Understand how you may respond to God's call.

ABRAHAM ANSWERED GOD'S CALL

God Works Through People

What can you do all alone? With no one else to help you or share with you, or be with you, what would you be able to accomplish?

You can pray all alone. But when you pray you acknowledge another presence. God is there.

You can read all alone. But when you read you acknowledge the presence of others. A writer is there, a printer, perhaps a careful scholar who translated into your own language symbols which otherwise would be only spots of ink to you.

There is very little that you can do alone.

What can God do alone? God is all powerful. He depends upon no one and from no one asks permission. *He is the sovereign power over the universe.* All creation is from His hand and has as its purpose to glorify His name.

Yet He created mankind because He did not wish to be alone. He created mankind to share the life and beauty of creation and to communicate with Him and worship Him.

We know that God had a plan for the people He created. He was displeased when they fell into sin.

He sent a great flood in judgment, to demonstrate how terrible sin is, for it separates man from God. After the flood God began anew to work with His people and to accomplish His purpose for them. He began to build a nation of faithful followers who would bring honor to God and blessing to all mankind.

Once again God demonstrated the nature of His relationship with people. The sovereign God chose to work through people. He could have done everything alone, but He shared responsibility and assigned man to be His agents on earth. This teaches us that our lives are entwined with the purpose of God. We cannot find peace if we do not do His will. And He does not abandon us without offering us mercy. It is part of His nature to desire our response to Him. He did not begin His new nation by working alone. He found a man through whom He could make known His will. He chose Abraham to be the father of the faithful. And He called Abraham His friend.

FOR YOU TO DO

1 Circle the letters which indicate true endings for the following statement. We know that people are important to God because

- a) He needs help from them.
- b) He called Abraham His friend.
- c) He desires worship from them.
- d) He shares responsibility and privilege with them.

e) He abandons them when they fail.

The Need for the Call

After the flood Noah built an altar to God. Undoubtedly he and his family worshipped God and meant to do His will at the beginning. But the condition of sin still had control in the generations following the flood. They were weak and unable to resist temptations. They rejected God. They felt a need in their hearts to worship, however, because all human beings have this need. Soon they began to worship the moon and idols which they made.

It seemed that the creation of God would be destroyed again because of the wickedness of mankind. But here and there on the earth were a few who remembered and understood the truth of the one Creator God. Abraham was one of those who believed in God. He refused to worship idols, even though his father did so.

God would not allow the people of the earth to be without hope. Even when they sinned, He was filled with mercy and compassion. He had a plan to guide people away from idols and show them the way of truth. His plan was to choose one man as a leader who would do God's will and bring blessing to all mankind.

God saw that Abraham refused to worship the idols of his people. "Leave your country and your people," God said. He wanted Abraham to get away from the evil and the idolatry and begin a new group of faithful followers of God.

Abraham traveled from Ur of the Chaldeans into the land of Haran, along with his father and other relatives. But still there were idols among them. God spoke to him again saying, “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”

You see, it was necessary for Abraham to leave the place of sinful influence. When you live with such influence all about you it is difficult to keep your mind and heart separated. The weakness of man and the condition of sin cause people to follow the ways of others, sometimes even when they feel that it is wrong to do so. God wanted Abraham to break completely with the past and devote himself only to carrying out the plan of God.

The purpose of this was to make of Abraham a channel through which blessing might come to millions of people. Of course, when God chooses to work through a person, He chooses one who is willing to Abraham-He Was the Friend of God obey Him. Abraham was not among the infidels. He refused to bow down to idols or to stroke them. He looked up to heaven, not to worship the moon, but to give honor to the one true God, the Creator of the universe. Abraham was a friend to God and God wanted him to lead His people.

Answer the following questions in a few words.

2 Why did people return to sinful ways after the flood?

3 Why did the people worship idols?

4 What did God do?

5 Why was it necessary for Abraham to leave his people?

Promises and Requirements

Do you feel a tremendous urge in your heart to please God? Do you find yourself reaching out to Him, with a great desire to know Him better? It may seem to you that you are calling out to God, but the truth is that God is calling out to you. The feeling you have of need and desire for a better understanding of God-this is a type of call which is the result of God's great concern for you. God reaches out, or calls in this way to all people. Some of them do not hear because they do not listen. Others hear plainly and are willing to obey the urge to put everything else aside and seek the will of God.

The call which came to Abraham was in some ways like this call which comes to all those who

listen for the voice of God. But, in another way it was a very special call, such as no other man has ever hear With this call to Abraham, God began a new day for all people. God said to Abraham:

I will make you into a great people and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

There were three main promises in the call of Abraham. God promised to

1. Show Abraham a land which would belong to his seed.
2. Make Abraham into a great people and make his name great.
3. Bless Abraham and through him bring blessing to all peoples.

When God calls people today, He gives them similar promises. He will show them a new way of life. He will make them into new persons with different and finer qualities. He will bless them and make them a blessing to their families, their friends, and many other people.

Along with the promises, God gave requirements. He asked Abraham to leave behind what had been familiar, traditional, and secure. He asked Abraham to trust God to provide daily needs. Most important, He expected Abraham to believe that a son would be born to him. Otherwise the promise of blessing through his seed would have

no meaning. Abraham had no son. His wife was barren. It seemed that she was not able to have children.

Therefore we see that the requirements were three in number also. Abraham responded to God's call in these three ways:

1. He believed only in the one true God.

2. He accepted God's promises completely for himself as an individual.

3. He acted in submission, obeying all of God's instructions. This meant leaving his country and most of his relatives, to go into a strange land and start a nation of a kind that had never existed before.

FOR YOU TO DO

6 Fill in the blanks with appropriate words from the list.

Abraham other people believed

nation acting call

a The urge to seek God is a type ofwhich comes to all people who listen.

b The call which came to included a promise that would be blessed through him.

c Abraham not only.....God, but he responded byin obedience to God's instructions.

ABRAHAM Demonstrated Faith

Abraham did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. This is why faith was credited to him as righteousness.

Abraham left most of his relatives and started out into a strange country to follow the call of God. He had no land of his own, and no children. Yet he accepted

God's word that he would be the leader of a great people, beginning with his own seed. He would be the father of the faithful ones.

Of course he took with him some people, including his wife, and his nephew whose name was Lot. He took also some equipment, tents for living a migratory life, and some animals, as was the custom in those days.

God appeared to Abraham, and on several occasions He talked to him, but also God allowed Abraham to learn some lessons on his own. The call was to go forth, and for a long period of time Abraham had to move about in strange places. God allowed certain troubles and tests to come into his life to teach him, prove him, and make him ready to be indeed the father of the faithful.

As God blessed him, Abraham's flocks and herds grew larger, and so did those of his nephew Lot. The herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot

began to quarrel over the amount of space and water allowed to each.

Abraham was a man of peace and compassion. "Let us not quarrel," he said to Lot. "There is enough space for us all. Let us spread out. You go one way and I will go the other."

Now Abraham was the elder and it would have been his right to choose the best land and water. But he said to Lot, "The choice is yours." You see, Abraham knew that God would guide him and protect him. He did not depend upon his own choices and try to do things his own way. He trusted in God.

Lot was a person of different character. He trusted in his own decisions and did not seek the will of God. He did not prefer his uncle in a courteous way. He was greedy and wanted all the best for himself. He chose what seemed to be the most beautiful and productive land. The plain of the Jordan River, with its cities, excited and tempted him.

His choice was based upon human selfishness and pride. It led him further away from God. The cities were wicked and later God destroyed them. Lot's family was scattered, some to die and the others to suffer hardships.

Abraham was left the high country of Canaan. To the eyes of men it was not so attractive. But Abraham went confidently into those hills, putting into action his faith that God would provide

whatever was best for his life. There God spoke to Abraham saying,

Lift up your eyes from where you are, and look north and south and east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.

So from the higher ground, where he walked in faith, Abraham caught the vision of God's purpose for mankind. He was blessed again by the God who counts man's faith as righteousness.

FOR YOU TO DO

7 Circle the letter before each statement which gives an example of putting faith into *action*.

a) Abraham believed that God would give him a son.

b) Abraham went into a strange country because God told him to go.

c) Noah believed there would be a flood.

d) Noah built an ark.

e) Abraham believed God would provide the best for him, so he gave Lot his choice of the land.

8 Pray that God will give you faith to believe His promises and submit yourself to His will in a

more complete way. You may wish to learn these words:

Oh God, full of mercy and compassion, praise be to You forever. As You reached out to the prophet Abraham and called him, may You be pleased to call me as I listen. You know what is best for me. Guide me in the way of truth and life.

Amen.

ABRAHAM GAVE ALL TO GOD

Abraham continued to develop in faith, and was blessed by God in many ways. Also, God tested him by giving him several special opportunities to demonstrate his faith. In each case Abraham acted as a friend of God. He did this by talking with God, showing love and concern for others, and in every case being completely obedient and submissive to God's will.

God repeated to Abraham the promise that a great people would come from his seed. Both Abraham and his wife Sarah were now past the time of life when they could expect to have children. They wanted so much to have a son! They almost gave up hope when the years passed by and none was born to them.

The word of God came to Abraham in a vision:

Do not be afraid, Abraham, I am your shield, your very great reward, I am God who brought you to this land to possess it.

On that day God made a covenant with Abraham. Abraham believed God and he credited it to him as righteousness.

God never breaks His promises. He knew how to guide Abraham and prepare him for the most important experience in his life. This experience was to be the greatest test of his faith. And it was to be more than a test of Abraham's faith. It was to be a demonstration and lesson to all mankind. God had planned a method of using Abraham to show all people the true relationship between God and man. This is how it happened: The promised son was born! The faith of Abraham was rewarded. He knew a great people would come from his seed and that all peoples would be blessed. He loved his son as a devoted father. In addition to this, the son was special because he was to be the hope of many generations.

Then God did something which men cannot understand. He told Abraham to sacrifice his son. God tested Abraham in this way, calling, "Abraham!" "Here I am" Abraham replied. Then God said, "Take your son whom you love, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Abraham's faith was so great that he began at once to follow God's instructions. Again he demonstrated his faith by action.

Early the next morning Abraham took his son, and two servants to carry the wood and fire for a sacrifice. In his hand he took a knife. A loving

father could do such a thing only by the strength of God. Abraham knew God would work out His plan in a way that was best for him and all mankind.

When they reached the mountain, Abraham put the wood upon the back of his son. The two of them walked on toward the place of sacrifice.

“We have wood and fire,” said the young man. “Where is the animal for a sacrifice?” “God will provide Himself a sacrifice,” said Abraham. When he said these words he was making known to everyone who will read them a great truth to all mankind. “God will provide Himself a sacrifice.” The son was obedient too, and filled with faith. He did not question his father any more.

Abraham built the altar, arranged the wood on it, bound his son, and laid him on the wood. Then he took the knife to slay him. Can you imagine the scene? The son feels the cruel bonds. Soon his blood will flow as that of a sacrificial offering. Abraham, looking down upon his beloved son, is aching in his heart. But he is committed to the will and purpose of God. The knife begins to lower.

“Abraham, Abraham!” A voice comes out of heaven. “Do not harm your son. I know you have not withheld him from me.”

Then Abraham saw, caught in the thicket, an animal suitable for the sacrifice. God had indeed provided as Abraham had predicted. Abraham released his son and placed the animal substitute upon the altar. The substitute then felt the press of wood upon flesh. The blood of the sacrifice flowed

down. God's purpose was accomplished. Abraham called the name of that place THE LORD WILL PROVIDE, since God had provided the sacrifice.

Why do you suppose God wished to continue with the ceremony of sacrifice even after Abraham had proved his faith? It is clear that this experience was more than a test of Abraham's faith. It was a beautiful picture of how God would one day provide a sacrifice to ransom mankind from the sword of judgment. It demonstrated how God shows mercy and yet carries out His will.

FOR YOU TO DO

9 Fill in the blanks.

a Abraham felt that his faith was rewarded when b God promised that from Abraham's seed would come.....

c Then God told Abraham to

d Abraham obeyed God's.....

c God provided a.....

At the beginning of this lesson you read these words: *You can be absolutely sure of your relationship with God.* That statement is true, because God has not changed. He is interested in man, the greatest of all creation, and God wishes all men to have a relationship with Him as Abraham did. Abraham enjoyed friendship with God for two reasons.

1. Because God cares for the people He created, and it is His will to have communication with them.

2. Because Abraham recognized the need to follow God in complete faith, submission, and love.

You may feel discouraged about conditions around you. You may feel uncertain and anxious. Perhaps you feel much as Abraham did when he first heard the call of God. You are part of God's creation just as Abraham was. God wants to guide you into a new life of faith. There are two practical steps you can take now. First, you can pray sincerely. You can ask God to direct your heart and mind into His truth. Then, you can continue to study the lives and teaching of great men of God. The next lesson in this series is JOSEPH-HE ACTED IN LOVE. In it you will learn more about how to receive guidance for your life.

FOR YOU TO DO

10 Read this prayer. If you wish to make it more personal, read it again, aloud, and then sign your name.

PRAYER

O God, full of Mercy and Compassion, Lord of the Universe, and Lord of the Soul. Praise be unto Your name forever; for it is in Your name that I humbly come to You in prayer. As You called the prophet Abraham, may You be pleased to call me also into Your submission. I surrender my life to

You and ask that You be my Companion and Protector, for You know what is best for my soul. Guide me in the way of truth and life, that I might experience a deeper relationship with You. Set my feet on a pilgrimage that will lead me into a greater awareness of Your concern for my personal life. .

Amen.

Signature

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

5 Because they worshiped idols. Because of sinful influence. In order to lead God's people.

1 b) He called Abraham His friend.

c) He desires worship from them.

d) He shares responsibility and privilege with them.

6 a call

b Abraham, other people c believed, acting

2 They were weak. Sin is the condition of mankind.

7 b) Abraham went into a strange country because God told him to go.

d) Noah built an ark.

e) Abraham believed God would provide the best for him, so he gave Lot his choice of the land.

3 They felt a need to worship, but they rejected the one true God.

8 Repeat the prayer given.

4 He called Abraham. He planned to work through a man.

9 a a son was born.

b a great people.

c sacrifice his son.

d instructions.

e substitute sacrifice.

LESSON TEST.

As you prepare to take this lesson test, please locate the *STUDENT REPORT ANSWER SHEET* in the back of your study guide for Lesson 2. Be sure to record your answers for multiple choice and true-false items in the spaces provided for them.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

If your answer to each of the following questions is

YES, blacken space A.
NO, blacken space B.

1 Have you carefully read Lesson 2?

2 Have you completed all the *For You to Do* sections in this lesson?

3 Have you checked the answers you gave in the *For You to Do* sections with those at the end of the lesson?

4 Have you reviewed the lesson objectives to see if you are able to do what they suggest?

5 Have you reviewed the material before taking this lesson test?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

6 In relating to His creation God chose to work through

- a) institutions and laws.
- b) spiritual mediators.
- c) people.

7 The feeling you may have of need and desire for a better understanding of God is a type of call which shows God's concern for you. You, like Abraham, must respond by

a) leaving your home, forsaking your friends, and going to a new country.

b) staying where you are and attempting to change the traditional ways of your people.

c) believing in the one true God, accepting His promises personally, and acting in obedience and submission to Him.

8 Abraham demonstrated his faith by

- a) accepting the life of a lonely nomad.

b) believing and acting upon God's instructions.

c) insisting on his own way to bring about God's blessings.

9 Abraham's example in offering his son is an example of faith and submission and teaches us that a) God has provided a sacrifice for our salvation.

b) we, too, must undergo a similar experience to merit salvation.

c) to be saved we must find a suitable sacrifice for sins.

10 God is interested in man, the greatest of *all* created beings, and wishes all men to

a) be prophets like Abraham.

b) have a relationship with Him like Abraham had.

c) develop some of Abraham's better characteristics.

TRUE OR FALSE

11 God's relationship with people shows that they are important to Him because He shares responsibility and privilege with them.

12 God allowed Abraham's faith to develop through his experiences, which meant that he avoided going through difficult times.

13 Abraham demonstrated his faith in God by showing his love for others and being fully obedient and submissive to God.

14 God's provision of a substitute reminds us that God has always provided a ransom, a perfect sacrifice for all of us, keeping us from the sword of judgment.

FILL IN

15 God's call to Abraham included three requirements and three.....

16 By his obedient response to God's instructions, Abraham showed his.....

17 Abraham's son was spared because of a suitable animal which God provided as a.....

18 As Abraham did, God wishes all men to have a..... with him.

19 Two steps you can take which will guide you into a new life of faith are: 1) you can..... sincerely and ask God to direct you into His truth, and 2) you can continue to study the.....of great men of God.

20 The substitute sacrifice for Abraham's son shows that God judges sin yet extends..... to the sinner.