

Abraham—Our Father of Faith



Christians believe he started the family of faith that eventually led to the birth of Jesus. (You can read about Jesus' family line in Matthew 1:1–17.) People of both faiths respect Abraham as a man who knew God personally and obeyed him even when it was hard. He wasn't perfect, but he was a faithful man who left an incredible faith story.

Even though he had no home, no children, and was not sure how God was going to keep His promises to him, Abraham chose to believe God. And because of that one decision,

God accepted Abraham's faith and gave him the gift of righteousness: "*Abram believed the LORD, and he [God] credited it to him as righteousness*" (Genesis 15:6).

And that is one important belief that Christians and Jews share—that we can have a relationship with God based on our faith in Him.

? *Why do you think Abraham is considered a great man of faith? How can you be known as a person of faith?*



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Abraham was a very important man. He lived in Israel thousands of years ago, and he had a special relationship with God. Both Christians and Jewish people consider Abraham one of the main people in their faith history. In fact, Abraham is known as the Father of our Faith. His special relationship with God and the promises they made to each other still are important to us today.



Obeying God

Abraham (who was first known as Abram) grew up in an area known for worshiping other gods. Jewish teachers believe that Abraham's father not only worshiped other gods but that he also created and sold stone idols for people to worship! But Abraham believed in the one true God.

One day when Abraham was seventy-five years old, God commanded him to leave the place where he had grown up and settle in an area that God would show him. Along with this command, God also promised Abraham three things:

- I will make you a great nation;
- I will make your name great;
- I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.

All of his life Abraham had heard about many gods, and he had lived in the big city of Ur. So it was not going to be easy for him to leave the life he knew, the family he loved, and the

faith he had been raised on to move to a whole new place. This was a tough choice for Abraham!

Not only that, but Abraham and his wife, Sarah (first known as Sarai), didn't have any children.

At that time Sarah was sixty-five, considered even at that time as too old to become a mother. But Abraham didn't let any of these things keep him from following God's call.

? *Think about something difficult you had to do. How did God help you through this tough time?*

Special Promises

Along with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, Abraham set out for an area called Canaan. As God led him, Abraham stopped often to thank God and worship Him. Abraham was blessed with so many livestock that he had to find a different area to live in than his nephew Lot so they could

(Continued inside)

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each find enough land to feed their animals. Abraham and Sarah then moved to Hebron and settled in an area called Mamre.

When they were deciding who would move where, Abraham allowed Lot to choose first. Lot picked the best land, but Abraham wasn't upset. He trusted that God would keep his promise to give



him *all* the land in that area—the land that was later to become the nation of Israel.

Once settled in their God-appointed land, God spoke to Abraham, reassuring him that God was his “shield” and “reward.” When Abraham told God that he was worried that he still didn't have

any children, God told him to look up at the night sky—Abraham would have as many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren as there are stars in the sky. That's a lot of family members!



years. He also told Abraham that one day He would rescue them. Then God promised the land to Abraham's family. Many people consider this the beginning of the nation of Israel.

? *When Abraham was worried about still not having any children, he talked to God about it. How did God respond? When have you talked to God about your worries? How did He answer you?*

The Promised Son

Ten years had passed since Abraham and Sarah arrived in Canaan and since God had promised they would have a child. But they still had no sons or daughters. So Sarah decided to find another way to have a child. She asked her servant Hagar to have a baby with Abraham. But when Hagar became pregnant, she was mean to Sarah and mocked her. So Sarah treated Hagar badly, and Hagar ran away. But

the Lord cared for Hagar, and told her that she would give birth to a son, Ishmael, and that his family would also be too big to count.

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the Lord came to him and made another promise. During this conversation, God changed their names to Abraham and Sarah. This was the first of many times

in the Bible when God would give His people new names. God also reassured Abraham and Sarah that even though they were old, Sarah would still have a child, a son they would call Isaac.

Abraham learned that God planned to destroy the nearby towns of Sodom and Gomorrah because the people living there were very sinful. But Abraham asked God to spare the town if fifty good people were found living there.

In one of the longest conversations we read in the Bible between God and a man, Abraham kept lowering the number of good people that might allow the town to be spared. (See Genesis 18: 16–33.) When not even ten good men could be found, God destroyed the towns by raining fire on them. Only Lot and his family were able to escape.

In their old age, Sarah and Abraham finally had the child God had promised—a son named Isaac. Abraham was 100 years old when his son was born!

When the boy was still young, God tested Abraham's love and loyalty by asking him to sacrifice Isaac on an altar. Faithfully, Abraham set out for Mount Moriah with his son. Can you imagine how Abraham must have felt?

When God saw that Abraham was willing to obey this command, He provided a ram instead for the sacrifice at the last minute. God blessed Abraham again for being willing to obey Him—even when it was very, very difficult. Again, God promised Abraham that because of his faith and his obedience, God would bless him greatly.



? *Did God keep His promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son? How long did it take for God to keep this promise? When have you had to wait a long time for something to happen? How did it feel like while you were waiting? What do you think helped Abraham while he was waiting?*

A Man of Faith

Sarah lived to be 127, and when she died, Abraham buried her in a cave he had bought. Abraham lived to be 175, and when he died his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave with Sarah.

Later on, Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac and his wife Rebekah, as well as the couple's son Jacob and his wife Leah were buried in that cave too. This place is now known as the Cave of the Patriarchs and is one of the most special and holy places in Israel.

Today Jews and Christians remember this great man. Jews consider Abraham the father of the nation of Israel, and



(Continued on back page)