

ABRAHAM: ONE NOMAD'S AMAZING JOURNEY OF FAITH

A Patriarch in Panorama

Genesis 11:27–32; Acts 7:2–4

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The man first known as Abram was born in a culture that had long ago replaced worshipping the God of Noah with worshipping the pagan gods of the rivers, stars, and wood. And yet, this man left his idols and came to know the one, true Creator so intimately that he was called the “friend of God” (James 2:23).

As we study this man of God, we'll discover much about the God he served. Abraham's fantastic journey of faith reveals a God who *loves* us infinitely, *guides* us unpredictably, and *blesses* us astonishingly. God loved Abraham by choosing him, guided him by calling him to a new land, and showered blessings on him through a special covenant.

Like Abraham, we don't have many assurances on our journey . . . save one: we can always depend on the grace of God. We don't deserve God's love, can't imagine His plan, and may not immediately see His blessing, but we know our divine Friend is with us . . . every step of the way. So, fellow pilgrim, are you ready to move forward your journey of faith? Let's go!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In this study, we're going to put into practice the basics of Bible study methods, beginning with observation.



Observation: Taking a Closer Look

Observation answers the question: What does it say? As we observe the text, we look for words, names, places, events, repetitions, comparisons, and contrasts. The chart on the following page lists the key events in Abraham's journey from God's covenant with Abraham to Abraham's death and burial. Take a few minutes to read the chart, noting anything that stands out to you.

Quotable

*The great thing
about studying the
life of a man of
God is we discover
so much about the
God of the man.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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A PATRIARCH IN PANORAMA—THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 12–25

Acts 7:2–3

Joshua 24:2

Genesis 11:27–32

Events	Ch.	Age	Covenant	People	Location
The Covenant The Departure The Famine	12	75 (12:4)	Affirmed (12:1–3)	Abram Sarai Lot	Ur Haran Shechem Moreh Bethel Ai Egypt
Return from Egypt Separation from Lot	13		Reaffirmed (13:14–17)	Abram Sarai Lot	Between Bethel & Ai Hebron
War Declared Lot Delivered Reward Refused	14			Various Kings Lot Melchizedek	Siddim Valley Hebron? Sodom Valley of Shaveh
Abrahamic Covenant Reaffirmed	15		Reaffirmed (15:1–21)	Abram God	
Birth of Ishmael	16	86 (16:16)		Abram Sarai Hagar Ishmael	Hebron?
Names Changed Circumcision Instituted Isaac and Ishmael Discussed	17	99 (17:1)	Reaffirmed (17:1–14)	Abraham God	
Promise of a Son Plans for Destruction of Sodom	18			Abraham 3 Men (Angels) Sarah	Hebron (Plains of Mamre)
Sodom Destroyed Lot Spared	19	Abraham 100		2 Angels Lot & Family	Sodom & Gomorrah Mountain Cave
Abimelech	20	Sarah 90		Abraham Sarah Abimelech	Gerar
Isaac Born Ishmael Cast Out Abimelech Reproved	21	(17:17; 21:5)		Abraham Sarah Isaac Hagar Ishmael Abimelech	Hebron Beersheba Paran
Isaac Offered Covenant Reaffirmed	22		Reaffirmed (22:15–18)	Abraham Isaac Angel of the Lord	Moriah
Sarah's Death & Burial	23	Abraham 137 Sarah 127 (23:1)		Sarah Abraham Sons of Heth	Hebron Field of Machpelah
Isaac's Bride	24	"Old and advanced in age" (24:1)		Abraham Eldest Servant Rebekah Isaac	Mesopotamia City of Nahor
Abraham's 2nd Marriage Abraham's Death & Burial	25	175 (25:7)		Abraham Keturah Family Isaac	Cave in Field of Machpelah

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Did you notice in the preceding chart Abraham's age when he began his journey and his age when he died? Remarkable! Write down in this space other observations from the chart.

Having surveyed Abraham's life, get to know him better by reading the following passages. Write down what you observe. List names and places, and look for interesting details about Abraham's family and background. Note when and where God first appeared to Abraham.

Genesis 11:27–32

Joshua 24:2

Acts 7:2–3



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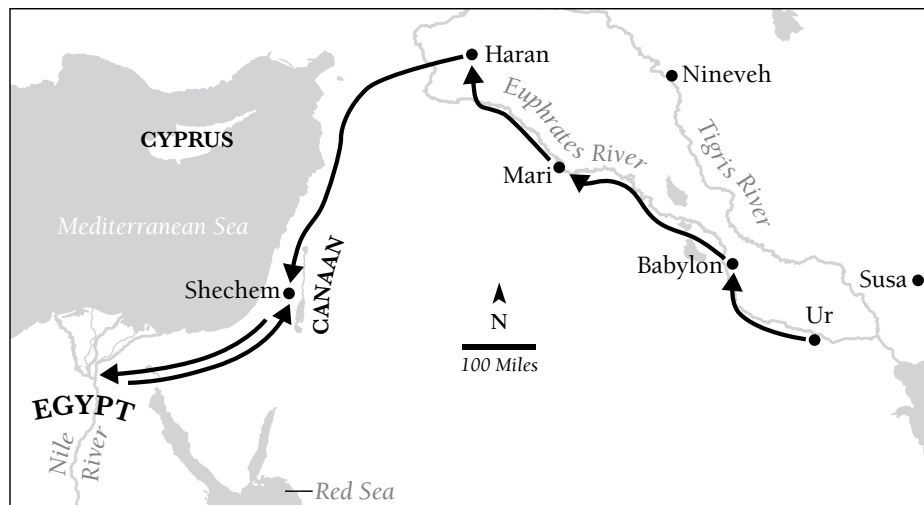
STUDY



Helpful Tools

Bible study tools make digging into the text easy. A Bible dictionary, Bible atlas, and concordance are available for purchase at the Insight for Living Ministries [online store](#). For a complete list of recommendations, read Chuck Swindoll's article "[Basic Bible Study Tools](#)" on our Web site.

Below is a basic map with which you can visualize Abraham's travels beginning in Mesopotamia, moving to Haran and then southwest to Canaan as he followed the Fertile Crescent around the vast desert to the west of Ur. This route from Ur to Canaan via Haran is about 1000 miles.



If you own a Bible atlas, find the map that traces Abraham's journey and includes historical information about Mesopotamia. Look up *Ur* in your Bible dictionary to discover what Abraham's life was like as an idolater living in this wealthy ancient metropolis. Record your findings.



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The New Unger's Bible Dictionary paints a picture of idolatrous Ur with its massive ziggurat, an ancient pyramid-shaped temple complex:

As a result of archaeological excavation, the city of Ur is now one of the best-known sites of southern Babylonia. Woolley in his *Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins* . . . gives a description of the worship of the city god of Ur, the moon god Nannar and his consort Ningal. Woolley describes in minute detail the sacred *temenos* of the city in which were the famous ziggurat and the various buildings erected to the moon god and his consort, with a description of the moon god ritual.¹

When Abraham converted from polytheism to monotheism, he launched a spiritual tidal wave that is still washing over the earth. Through Abraham came Isaac then Jacob and his sons. This small ripple grew and grew into the Hebrew nation from which came Jesus, the Savior of the world . . . and through Him, billions of worshipers of the one, true God.

In the coming studies in this series, we'll take a closer look at the following:

- The covenant that God affirmed and reaffirmed with Abraham that promised him descendants, a blessing, and land (Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:1–21; 17:1–14; 22:15–18)
- The flight to Egypt and Abraham's lie that almost led to disaster (12:10–20)
- The birth of Ishmael and the consequences of Abraham's sin (16:16)
- The birth of Isaac, the miracle son born to aging Abraham and Sarah (21:5)
- The offering of Isaac on the altar and the provision of the ram (22:9–13)
- Isaac's search for a bride to continue Abraham's line (24:1–67)
- And many other milestones on Abraham's inspiring journey of faith



Interpretation: Finding the Meaning

Now we'll take the next step in Bible study: *interpretation*. Interpretation is digging for meaning, and to do so, we'll use an additional tool of Bible study, *correlation*—which is the process of comparing Scriptures. Let's spade into the theology of Paul in the book of Romans, where we find Abraham as a prototype of “faith counted as righteousness”—a key doctrine of our salvation. Read Romans 4:16–22.



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What does Paul mean by saying, “Abraham is the father of all who believe” (Romans 4:16)?

Paul concluded, “And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous” (4:22). Abraham was righteous through faith, not by obeying the law. What is the implication for us? Read Romans 4:23–25 to find the answer.

Abraham played a central role on the divine stage of redemptive history. He was the patriarch not only of the vast Hebrew nation but also of our faith—our spiritual father!



Application: Bringing Home the Lessons

The final step of Bible study is *application*: “What does all this mean to me?” Begin answering this question by returning to our initial comments about God’s love, guidance, and blessings at the beginning of our study.

Like Abraham, we don’t earn God’s infinite love—we accept it. God knew us even before we were aware of Him, and He seeks us in our own godless Ur. Have you personally responded to God’s love? How can you surrender right now to His choosing and loving you? If you are not certain what it means to know God, read the article “[How to Begin a Relationship with God](#)” on our Web site.



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Like Abraham, we follow God's unpredictable guidance. When we follow God, we often later marvel at the unexpected ways God has led our life. You may be standing at the trailhead of a whole new path with God. Remember how God has led you this far—remember how God led Abraham! Are you ready for the next adventure? What adventure might that be? Write down how you desire to follow God wherever He leads.

Like Abraham, we anticipate God's astonishing blessings. At the center of blessing is closeness with God your friend, as you walk side-by-side with Him. Use the space below to express in prayer your desire to be close with God along life's journey and the steps you will take to build your relationship with Him.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for seeing value in me and knowing me so much better than I know myself. Thank You for lovingly choosing me as You chose Abraham, guiding me as You guided Abraham, and blessing me with blessings so wonderful I can hardly imagine them! Help me on my adventure of faith to trust You and to draw nearer to You each step of the way. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, rev. and updated ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1988), 1320–21.



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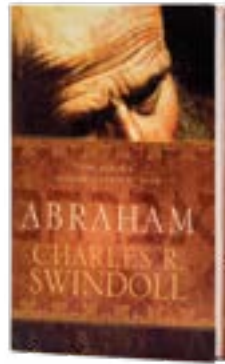
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Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2017–2018 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Searching the Scriptures Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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