REFLECTIONS with Andy Rau



Abram's Faith Challenges - Genesis 12-13

Is your faith walk a straight shot with no obstacles or challenges? Or does it tend to stop and start at every detour and bump in the road? We think of Abram's faith as an example of obedience – bravely stepping out to follow God's call to a new land and a new future. But when we look deeper, we find that his faith often stopped and restarted with each new challenge. And that's good news for us.

Separation - The Challenge of a Call

When God called Abram in Genesis 12, the command was clear: "Go from your country, your people, and your father's household to a land I will show you." But Abram only partially obeyed. He left his home in Ur but did not separate from his family. Then he stopped halfway at Harran and did not resume his journey until after his father's death.

When Abram finally continued to Canaan, he still did not leave everything, because he took his nephew Lot with him. And the consequences of his partial obedience unfolded naturally over the next few years. Abram's failure to separate fully from his past life shows us that, even when we begin with good intentions, we often respond incompletely.

Egypt - The Challenge of Fear

After Abram entered Canaan, a severe famine struck. Instead of trusting God in the land of promise, he headed for the safety of Egypt. Fear replaced trust, and he even put his wife Sarai in danger to protect himself. He asked her to say she was his sister. But God intervened to rescue them, and they left Egypt with a valuable lesson about God's grace.

Even when he failed, God never abandoned Abram. When he returned to Canaan, Abram went back to the place where he first built an altar and again called on the name of the Lord. Abram had stepped away from his relationship with God in Egypt, but he re-established it at the altar. Disobedience never disqualifies us from grace; it just reveals our deep need for it.

Lot - The Challenge of Control

Genesis 13 brings Abram and Lot's story to a crisis point. Their herds had grown too large for the land to support them, and their herdsmen began to fight. Abram recognized that they needed to separate. Although he led the family, he offered Lot the first choice of land. Abram had learned from his experience in Egypt that he could trust God to provide.

Lot selfishly chose the fertile plains near Sodom and Gomorrah, while Abram remained in the hill country. Abram's earlier fear-based decisions had given way to a deeper trust in God. Lot's choice ultimately led him into great danger. But God responded to Abram by expanding His promise that the land would belong to his descendants forever.

Overcoming Our Challenges

Abram's faith journey was not a smooth ride. It was a start-and-stop trek filled with challenges. Even so, God kept His promises to him, just as He keeps His promises to us. Here are some lessons we can learn as we face our own challenges.

Obedience is a journey, not a single moment. We may begin with good intentions that become partial steps of obedience, but God patiently leads us toward a deeper faith in Him. He never discards us when our faith falters. Instead, He continually invites us back to His altar to realign our hearts and minds.

Challenges grow our faith. Abram's tests in Egypt and with Lot strengthened his faith. Some challenges result from our choices, and others are God-arranged. Either way, James 1:2-4 implores us to "consider it all joy when you encounter various trials…" because when our faith is challenged, it becomes stronger.

God's faithfulness is dependable. If God's faithfulness depended on our perfection, we would fail. Abram stumbled, feared, and made bad choices, yet God remained true to His promises. This truth should comfort us, because our failures cannot cancel God's love for us, which has been sealed by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Abram's growth encourages us to keep moving forward in faith. Growing our faith does not happen instantly. God continues to work through our weaknesses and fears as we grow. What weakness or fear can you trust Him to turn into faith today?



Joy For Your Journey,

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