

Following an Unseen Path

"By faith Abraham" – Hebrews 11

Check all that apply to you:

- I am the kind of person that falls apart if I don't have the next ten years of my life scheduled out.
- I don't know what I should be doing with my life right now.
- I believe that God is directing me to step out on faith, but I don't yet have all the details, and am feeling kind of nervous.

We actually read of Abraham facing this kind of situation in Hebrews 11:8-10.

The retelling of this story (originally found in Genesis) is set in the background of a list of heroes of the faith and their accomplishments. In contrast to the feats of others, such as Moses' parents defying the law of the land in order to save their son, Moses choosing to suffer for what he believed was right, the Israelites passing through the Red Sea on dry ground, the walls of Jericho being felled, Rahab harboring the Israelite spies at great risk to herself, or others who endured mocking and torture and imprisonment (Hebrews 11), Abraham's "accomplishment" of setting out without knowing where he was going seems a little foolish. Wouldn't it seem to us that the more impressive thing would have been if Abraham had known where he was going? Would it not have been better if he had come up with some great plan for his life and how he would serve God?

Not only does this seem to be what the rest of the world expects of us, but knowing what we are doing, where we are heading, and every detail of life along the way is desirable to us as well. Sometimes we want to come up with our own plans that seem more logical or safe than God's plans, rather than stepping out into the unknown.

What would have happened if Abraham had chosen another option? Write your thoughts below:

What might your reaction be in this situation?

- Demand to stay where you are, near the relative familiarity and safety of home.
- Decide that setting out without knowing where you are going is completely illogical, and stay put until God fills you in on all the details.
- Come up with your own location to move to.

Do we not do those very things, thinking that we have a better plan than what God has in store for us?

What do you need to trust God for today? What area of your life is He asking you to let Him direct rather than controlling it yourself?

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." Hebrews 11:8-10

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”
Proverbs 3:5-6

Obeying God

- Be in close fellowship
- Get rid of distractions
- Be unbound from the world

What enabled Abraham to take this step of faith? It was his focus. Verse 10 says that "he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." He knew Who God was, God's character. He knew that God's word could be trusted. Abraham did not step out on faith without a promise underneath it. If Abraham had decided himself that taking off in a random direction was a good idea, it simply would have been foolishness. Likewise, we are not demanded to set out on our own venture without direction from God. Sometimes we are to wait until He gives us direction. Of course, during these times of waiting we are not to be passive or lazy. We are always to be acting in obedience to the guidelines laid out in His Word. These things He has already told us to do.

What area do you need to be obedient in while you wait for further direction?

One way to prepare yourself to be in a position for obedience is to be walking in close fellowship with Him and learning to hear and recognize His voice so that you will be ready to set out when He directs you to.

Another way to prepare is to loosen your hold on comfort and avoid distractions.

What are some distractions that you have in your life?

Sometimes we may get so bound up in our lifestyles, possessions and routines that we are not able to quickly and easily let go when God does direct us to go. Verse 9 tells us of how when Abraham reached the Promised Land he lived in tents. This is evidence of the fact that he was willing to uproot again at any time that God told him to.

Also, keep in mind that obeying God in faith when we cannot see the outcome is not always comfortable, just as we see that Abraham did not immediately feel comfortable in his new location. Rather, he was like "a stranger in a foreign country."

Your form of going may be short or long term missions, a new job, a change of major, witnessing to that person you don't feel comfortable with, or sharing a kind word with a stranger. Whatever your unknown is, follow the model of Abraham, who set us an example of faith and obedience, and demonstrated the truths of Hebrews 11:1, which says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?
