

A Life Defined by Faith in God

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[0 : 00] The richness of God's Word to speak to us by the power of the Spirit from a book that's thousands of years old.

! This is a powerful book because it's a powerful God who wrote it.

So in Genesis 17, I'll be dealing with this particular theme for this morning. It's a life defined by faith in God and it's something that Abram is desperate to hear.

Let me just read one verse. It's in chapter 17, verse 1. Now when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty.

Walk before Me and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and I will multiply you exceedingly. I had to do verse 2 because it's covenant relationship.

[1 : 26] But I'll only be dealing with verse 1 this morning. So the entire message from one verse and I want to establish you, given the review that I did with you last Sunday, I want to establish with you what God is doing in verse 1 before we launch into the remainder of the chapter and then begin to move our way through all that's going to be wrapped up in what God says in this one verse.

This is kind of a hinge moment in Abram's life and where God is taking him. Folks, we are living in a world today with recent events rocking the faith of many people.

And a life defined by faith in God is the only way for us to navigate the uncertainties and the fears that's happening all around us and in your world, in your little sphere that you live in, that I live in.

We face trials and temptations and sufferings. We face the temptation to worry and to anxiety and to doubt and to fear.

And then on the more macro level of our world, we can't trust governments to keep the peace. They don't have a clue what they're doing on the whole. And so what is a life defined by faith?

[2 : 53] When Charlie Kirk was brutally and savagely murdered, a premeditated act of cold-blooded murder and assassination, it rocked and sent waves across this world.

It was amazing for me to see. I knew who Charlie was. I knew about his ministry. I'd seen him in the news in recent times.

But I didn't know he had such a global impact. I don't even know if Charlie knew that. But he did. And it's coming out. And you know, God is making use of that.

And He will go on making use of it for some time. Not to glorify Charlie because Charlie would want me to glorify His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But God is using His death to accentuate the life that He lived by faith in Christ.

That's the issue in all of this. People do not know who to believe. People do not know what to believe.

[4 : 01] believe. Another way of saying that is people do not know who to look to for their authority. And it is our natural bent to look to ourselves to be our own authority.

To look to self to make meaning of and interpret world events to interpret the events and situations that are coming at us on an hourly basis. authority is a big deal.

Let me tell you what a bigger deal is in the mind of Almighty God, particularly toward His people. Saving faith is a big deal to God. Jesus Christ gave His life to bring saving faith to God's people.

That's what it took for saving faith to change this world. And whether people recognize it or not, it is changing this world.

Saving faith is sustaining this world. Because it is by God's grace through faith that we are able to live. Let me ask you this.

[5 : 13] As I think about Abram's faith and what sets Abram apart in living for his God. Living in the midst of paganism.

Abram's faith living in the very middle and heart of people who sacrifice their children in bonfires to the God of Molech. This is the kind of thing that he lives in.

Abram living amidst a people who gather together in grotesque aspects of what they call worship and we call immorality.

Now, let me ask you, what sets you apart in life? What distinguishes you from people who are unbelieving?

People who do not have a saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. What distinguishes you from them? Abram is distinguished by this.

[6 : 24] He is distinguished by living out his belief in God. It doesn't stop at his profession of faith. It moves forward in how he actually lives his life.

And we get to see, because Scripture is real and true, failures in his life of belief. The Bible doesn't hide that from us.

But Abram, nevertheless, is distinguished by living out his belief in God, living out the promises of God in his life, and living out God's ways by God's wisdom.

People can see that in his life even though he stumbles and falls. In his promises is how he lives.

Now, as we look to Genesis 17, I want to begin by defining some biblical terms that are relevant to Abram's walk with God because we'll see these themes, these two in particular, over and over again as Abram is called on to relate to God as God.

[7 : 30] Relate to me, Abram, but relate to me as the God who is revealing Himself to you. Don't make me a God of your own making. Relate to me by how I am showing myself to you in terms of what I'm saying to you, what I'm giving to you in the way of what you're to live like in relation to me.

The first term I want to deal with is the term faith. Faith. Now, friends, this is more than just belief. It is more than just trust in the way that we might think of it or in the way other people, unbelievers in particular, might think of it.

If we were to ask them, what do you think of when you think of the word faith? Some of them might say something about religion, but what I'm talking about this morning as it relates to Abram's life is saving faith.

Saving faith. And here's how the Bible describes saving faith. It is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

Now, it may not be immediately clear to you what that means, but it is vital to your life with God. So, I talk about saving faith, I mention it, then I give you a definition from Scripture and the definition doesn't exactly clarify, clear up everything.

[8 : 55] Well, what are we talking about here? We are talking about what God says about saving faith. And without faith, saving faith, it is impossible to please God.

For he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him. So, this is more than just believing that God is.

That is certainly a part of it. But it takes you beyond the fact that God is to the point where God is a rewarder of those who seek him.

God is a faithful God, a God of loving kindness, a God who freely gives of himself that others might live. When Jesus died on the cross, he gave his life the ransom for many.

For many. And that sacrifice is the difference. Now, since Abram came on the scene in chapter 12, we've seen God teaching him to live in a loving relationship with the Lord.

[10 : 03] And all of that has been based on this. The assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. Now, can you think about why that's true in Abram's life given what God's promised him?

What has God promised him? An heir from his own body. Has that happened yet in our text? No. And we're going to talk about how many years it's been.

And so when you think about this definition of saving faith, the faith that Abram is to have in his God, it is all about the assurance. Where does that assurance come from?

The assurance of things hoped for. Where does that hope come from? The conviction. Where does that conviction come from? Because conviction is more than just belief.

Conviction is something that defines the way you live. The conviction of things not seen, not yet manifested, not yet shown, not yet revealed.

[11 : 07] That's what Abram is called to live by. This is what saving faith does. It's an active force in your life. Abram is to live, not just believe, but live out of that conviction and belief.

In a growing, growing relationship with God, as God shows Abram his goodness to him by his promises. So that all that Abram thinks, all that he says, all that he does, reflects the character and wisdom of the Lord.

That should sound very, very familiar to you, because that is exactly what the Apostle Paul wrote throughout his letters in the New Testament, that as we live in the goodness of God, we reflect the character and goodness of God to other people at work in our lives.

We deny self, we take up our cross, and we follow the Lord to reflect the character of Jesus to others. It's why we're still here and not up in heaven where worship is perfect and there's no sin.

Worship is important here, but we have been left here to reflect the character of God to others and glorify him in the way we live. Now, since saving faith leads us to worship the same God that Abram worshipped, what we need to realize is that we too are called to live, live in a growing, unbreakable belief.

[12 : 34] In what? Well, in what and in whom? In the goodness of God. In this God who is and is a rewarder of those who seek him.

We are to live by faith. Look at what the scripture says. I'll put it up here on the screen for the sake of time. But the righteous man shall live by faith.

You have a couple of scripture references there where that is quoted in those verses. It's actually from Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4. Now, the second term that I want to introduce to you and define this morning because it, again, is something that will be throughout our teaching in Abram's life is this.

Covenant. Covenant. You've heard this word before. You've seen it and read it many times in the scriptures. A biblical covenant is a clear statement.

statement. It's not ambiguous. It's a clear statement of God's purposes and intentions expressed in what? In terms that bind God by solemn oath to perform what He has promised.

[13 : 46] So, God is binding Himself in this solemn promise to do what He says. And that's exactly what He's done with Abram. Saving faith and covenant relationship come together as we believe and live according to God's truth.

That's the key. That means according to God's purposes, God's plans, and God's promises. You can live your way, but your way is not the way of covenant relationship with God.

The only way you can live in covenant relationship with God so that His plans and His purposes are at work in your life, His designs, is for you to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ who makes covenant with you so that you can be right with God.

And then Jesus keeps His promise to bring you into eternity with Him. That's the only way. Now, we know that. Most of us know that. But one of the reasons that we consistently make a big deal out of that reality of relationship is because so many pulpits and places today do not preach that with boldness, with love, with compassion.

If it gets any mention at all, it's a quick mention, and then don't talk about sin because that's offensive. And we need the customers to come back. But we're not customers.

[15 : 13] We're sinners. And we need a Savior. And we need to hear the truth about who He is and about what He did and what He's doing and what He's promised to do.

And that frames how we live. Does that sound simple? It's pretty straightforward, isn't it? And while it isn't rocket science, it sure is profound because no man could have come up with that.

But God did. And God is faithful. Our life of saving faith in God must be understood and must be lived out according to covenant relationship with God.

You cannot live in the promises of God and in the blessings of God and in the goodness of God if you are not in Christ. If you don't have a relationship with God through His Holy Son.

That's the only means that God has made. That's where saving faith comes in. You cannot know God unless you know Christ. You cannot know Christ unless you have saving faith in Christ.

[16 : 27] Saving faith's object is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There are lots of people out there who have faith, but the object of their faith is not the Savior and Lord of the universe.

It isn't Jesus. But they have faith and they worship. They worship all day, every day. And if they're unbelievers, if the object of that faith isn't Jesus, then let me tell you who they are worshiping and exalting every hour of every day.

Who is it? Self. Self. Were you there at one time? I was there at one time. The only thing that keeps me from being back there on a permanent basis is the grace of God.

The divine favor of God working in my life and in your life. This is Abram. This is no different. Abram was saved. He was released and rescued from the sin and self that was dominating his life.

I mean, remember, this is a man whose dad moved them hundreds and hundreds of miles out of their city to go to another city where the moon god temple was built.

[17 : 40] Ur was built on the moon god, but they went to another place where this giant temple was being built to the moon god because they were moon god worshippers. Abram was a moon god worshipper and God saved him out of that and brought him to the true god and made him all these promises.

Imagine that. He took him from where he was and brought him to where he needed to be because he decided to put his love on him. Abram was saved by faith in the same way that we are.

Abram believed God's promise of a deliverer, a messiah, one who would come, and he taught Abram that. Now let me ask you a few more questions as we get ready to dive into the text together.

Look at this. How important then is your relationship with God to you? And before you answer that, you need to think about the way you live your life, particularly the way you face tough situations in your life.

Things that challenge you, things that sadden you, things that bring doubt and fear and whatever else, jealousy, envy, resentment, bitterness, impatience, unkindness.

[19 : 00] How important is your relationship with God to you based on how you live? What value do you put in knowing God through your faith in Jesus Christ?

And how often and how much do you consider what is pleasing to Jesus and what you think, say, and do? Again, particularly when you are faced with the trials and challenges of life, whether it's in your marriage or in your job or in your parenting or some aspect of a relationship in your life, whatever.

Saving faith, whether it's saving faith in the Old Testament or the New Testament, is always by God's divine favor. It's by God's grace.

Through a faith relationship with Jesus Christ, grounded in Jesus' character, His promises and His purposes. So again, saving faith, the object of saving faith, listen now, it's not an idea.

It's not a concept. It's not a plan or an ideal. We can talk about the gospel like that as long as we come over here and we finish that with this.

[20 : 25] Saving faith object is a person. And that person is alive and ruling the universe today alive. You will give an account.

And to him you will give an account. To him you will give an account. And that matters.

And the only thing that will matter when you give that account to this great Lord of all creation will be saving faith. Saving faith.

God. It's a big deal folks. I said at the beginning it's a big deal to God. Now here's how some of this that we've been talking about is applied to our study in Genesis 17.

The first thing that we're confronted with in Genesis 17. 1 is this time gap. I'll say more about it in a minute but I want to mention it to you now.

[21 : 22] This time gap. Will you look at it with me? In verse 16 of chapter 16. The very last verse. Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore!

Ishmael to him. Now for those of you who've been here you know how that came about and what that story entails. It entails sin in Abram and Sarai and Hagar.

It was a bad plan but Ishmael is born and God isn't punishing Ishmael for the sins of his parents and all that. No. He's promised to bless him.

But now go to 17. 1. Now. So that was 86 years old when Ishmael was born to him. Now fast forward when Abram was 99 years old.

The Lord appeared to Abram and said. So we have 13 years to consider as we apply it to our understanding of Abram's current situation.

[22 : 24] We can't blow by that. That is a very important reality that the text reveals and it would be easy to skip over that. So let me show you my outline overall for this chapter.

This is where we're headed. Look at this. It's very simple. Look to God. Listen to God. Labor for God. Now today we'll just deal with look to God.

and then we'll see how much time I need to finish the others. Okay. So look to God. The first verse. This is an emphasis on God's character.

This is where God starts. When he comes back to say something to Abram after 13 years, as far as the scripture tells us, that's all we have. So we're assuming that it's been silent.

When he comes to talk to Abram, the first thing that he emphasizes is his character. Not all the stuff he does, but his character with Abram.

[23 : 24] That's where he grounds Abram's faith as he speaks to him. And what we're dealing with as he looks to God is what I'm referring to as situational silence.

You've had this in your life and I have too. Situational silence. Now what do I mean? Alright. Hear me on this now. What I'm about to explain to you, the situational silence doesn't have anything to do with the fact that God has not spoken because he has.

He's spoken in the past. And it's been very clear. But it's been a while since God said anything else. That doesn't negate and that doesn't diminish what he has said in the past.

And yet, this silence has left Abram in kind of a quandary. Situational silence. This is a condition where you find yourself uncertain about God's specific will, his specific direction for you, his clear instruction about how you should move along in a definite course of action.

So it's as if, it's as if the Lord was silent on the subject. but the question is, is God truly silent?

[24 : 44] Now the answer is no. God hasn't been silent with Abram. He's given Abram clear direction and purpose and promise. But now, 13 years later, there's no fulfillment.

And so what does that feel like as a human being, to go more than a decade like that? You see? Because we're human. And I'm letting Abram be human. I'm not jacking Abram up way up here and expecting Abram to be any more of a man than I expect you to be or you to be or me to be.

He's a guy. And he's living in the dirt and dust of everyday life. Stinky camels? How do you do that? Yuck. I'm so glad I don't ride a camel, Jeremy.

I wouldn't have a clue. Thank God for modernization. Now, I want you to do something with me, beloved. I want you to zoom out just for a sec.

Zoom out and don't forget the bigger picture of this chapter because we're getting down into Abram's nitty gritty here. But remember that this is a bigger picture. It concerns its original hearers.

[25 : 56] Can you keep that in mind with me? Through the prophet Moses, God is using Abram's life to teach Israel that they must live by what God has said.

And in their case, what God will be saying. We're all past tense. We live in the past tense of what God has said and bank our life on his promises.

So what we're talking about here is Abram needs to live according to the promises and the covenant made to him and what God has already told him in very clear, clear terms.

If you look back at chapter 15, he couldn't have been more clear. He says down toward the end of verse 4, 15-4, but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.

Very clear. It's unfortunate that Abram and Sarai and Hagar tried to concoct something that would bring that to fruition without consulting the Lord.

[27 : 09] I have to believe in my heart of hearts that had they consulted the Lord about this, they would have felt the sting of conscience and conviction that says we don't need to adopt the world's ways and the world's wisdom to get God's purposes done in life.

That's the wrong direction for sure. But they didn't do that. And they created a mess. Nevertheless, this is how Abram is supposed to live.

Now, in terms of living by his promises, I want to show you this because this kind of hinges on what we're talking about. God has made promises which serve to define and govern Abram's life.

I just read one to you. Abram has just failed to trust those promises made to him by the Lord. Now, the question is this, how has Abram's sinful failure affected the covenant relationship between him and God?

Now, if you base that answer on 13 years of silence, you're going to crash and burn, right? If you base it on what God hasn't said, and that's what you do, I shouldn't point, that's what I do, we get into these fixes, and we fixate on what he hasn't said instead of what he has, and we get in trouble.

[28 : 30] Why? Because we want an answer. We want a solution. We want relief. Well, what if it doesn't work that way?

Do you mean I can read the Bible and I can base all of this on this book where all this stuff was written so many thousands of years ago and that can help? Well, folks, why is that important to us?

One answer, saving faith. You know, when you do your apologetic, when you evangelize people and people come up with all these hairy questions for you about this and that and the other and try to show you how the Bible contradicts itself or ask questions, ridiculous questions like can God make a rock so big he can't pick it up and stuff like that.

That's because they don't know. They don't know, right? So you find yourself getting to a place sometime where you have to say to people the difference between you and me right now and what I'm telling you from the Bible as I quote it to you or as I open it and read it to you and you want to argue, you don't want to ask legit questions, you want to argue.

The difference between me and you is saving faith. I am able to take this on faith because God has given it to me as a gift and I believe it because of the gift that he has given me to believe.

[29 : 59] I'm believing but it was a gift that I can do that. Right? Saving faith is the difference. I keep telling you and that's the same thing in the life of Abram.

How has Abram's sinful failure affected the covenant relationship between him and God? The answer has to come by what we rehearse from God in terms of what he said.

What has he said? What has he promised? What has he made clear? Not on the situational silence of 13 years. If I look at 13 years, I'm going to go, yeah, I don't know, man. You know, I hadn't heard anything.

Nothing's happening. I guess I blew it. I blew it so badly that it's a done deal. It's over. So I'm going to look to Ishmael and you know what?

That's what he's doing. I'm going to show you. We'll get there. He thinks Ishmael's the thing. God's going to have to actually tell him, no, no, no.

[31 : 00] Ishmael's not the one. I'm going to give you the one. Because Abram's going to tell him, no, if only you, he tells him, God tells him and then Abram argues back and says, no, but only if you would bless Ishmael.

I've been listening to you for over a decade now and it's not happening. So why don't we just deal with what's in front of us? Now, I'm setting you up here.

I'm getting you. I am. But it's a good thing, Ben. All right? I'm getting you to the place where when God finally decides to say something, it ought to part your hair. Because it is awesome.

It is awesome. It's so wonderful. Once again, just to set the tone, look at 1616 and remember what I said a minute ago, 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

It's been some time since God promised that an heir would come from his own body and by that God meant between you and your wife. wife. Don't go get another wife.

[32 : 08] Stay with the one you have and I will do marvelous things through you and through her. That's God's plan and design, not polygamy. That's the wrong direction.

God did not invent polygamy. That's man's invention. Now, when Abram was, look at 17 1, 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said to him, all right, so you do the math with me.

99 minus 86 is 13. That's where I get 13 years of silence about the promised heir. Now, here's the question that Abram's got to answer.

What does God's silence mean? Has God abandoned me? Did my sin with Hagar erase God's promises to me? Is this punishment?

Is God's punishment? Is he punishing me? Is there any hope in my failure? Well, where's he going to go to get those answers? If he goes to the silence, he's in trouble.

[33 : 12] Folks, don't go to the silence. Go to the light. The silence is the dark. Go to the light. Go to what God has said. Trust his word. Go to his truth.

Camp your soul in what God has promised. The apostle Paul wore himself out teaching this. What does all this mean? God spoke and Abram sinned.

And now, if you start at the point where God actually spoke the promise, we've got 14 years. 14 years have gone by since God spoke with no further word from God about any of this.

About nine months later, Ishmael comes along. When we seem to lack direction, friends, when we are insecure about our role and about our responsibilities, when our prayers feel shallow, when our relationship and fellowship with God feels strained, it feels strained, when our hearts are burdened with feelings of inadequacy and maybe fear, we can feel as though the Lord isn't listening to us.

we can actually get to the place where we feel like maybe He forgot us, like we're left to face things on our own. We try to tell ourselves things like this, we tell our hearts, no, God is up there, He's up there, somewhere, and He's in control, yes, He's in control, but it doesn't, listen, it doesn't feel like it.

[34 : 47] It doesn't feel like it. This is where we find this man, Abram. And it's remarkable because of this, where we find him, it's remarkable what happens next because of this, Abram was getting direct revelation from literally hearing God speak to him.

Can you imagine? God literally coming and speaking in an audible voice to Abram in direct revelation.

Now, that's amazing. And yet, look, look, that fact wasn't enough.

That fact wasn't sufficient as a deterrent from sin. Did you hear that? Even that. Even the prophets and people that God spoke directly to in the Old and New Testament, that reality of God speaking to them and appearing to them in the form of an angel or Jesus coming in a different form or whatever.

That wasn't enough to keep them from sin. Now, boy, think about that. The question is, why not, Pastor Jeff?

[36 : 08] Boy, if God spoke to me like that, be careful. If only God would speak to me like that. Look, the reason that that wasn't enough of a deterrent is this, because the issue is the receptiveness of our hearts.

We receive truth by saving faith. And we respond to God's truth with obedience from saving faith, beloved.

That's the difference between you and I. If I'm an unbeliever, and you're a believer, and you're following through on a response of saving faith to God in obedient living, and I read the same passage and see the same words, and I go and I live my life for self and sin, the difference between you and I is saving faith.

It's saving faith. It is the miracle-working power of God in the human soul. Now, why do we need to preach that? Well, number one, because it's true, and number two, because it exalts God and not man.

It exalts God and not man. You're not saved because of you. You're saved because of God. Aren't you glad? If my salvation depended on me, I wouldn't be doing this.

[37 : 31] I don't even know if I'd be alive. My mama would have killed me. She found out the things I was doing. I'd be dead. God spoke, Abram sinned, and yet, here we have this saving faith defining his life.

All of this, of course, you can see, it relates to us because we face the same kinds of challenges to our faith, just like Abram. So, let me ask you, what do you do?

Keep this in the relevancy of God's word speaking to your heart from the life of this man. what do you do when your walk with God seems distant, or cold, or strained, or when your faith stumbles, or you're uncertain, you're doubtful, what do you do when you disobey the Lord?

What do you do? How do you handle all of that? What do you do when someone comes to you and speaks the truth in love to you, or you sit down with your Bible yourself, and you genuinely and honestly start reading so that you can understand how you are to deal with some situation in your life, or you want to bolster your heart, and conviction comes.

The word of God, or someone speaking the word to you, reveals to you that there's some aspect of your life that is inconsistent with pleasing Jesus, that you need to repent of and deal with.

[38 : 56] How do you respond? See, don't tell me what you believe. Show me. Show me what you believe. Do you value your relationship with Jesus enough to repent?

To humble yourself before the Lord and let God change your heart so that you deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Him? This is Abram's lot right now.

What's he going to do? The most important question at the back of all of this is this question here. How do I look to God in faith and maintain an informed confidence in His truth to guide my life step by step through every situation I encounter?

I know that's a big question but it's important. The answer in short is this. You believe and live by what God has said.

We're just going to keep going there and going there. you believe and live by what God has said. You trust God's answers in Scripture to guide you in the moment by moment of the here and now based on what He's already said.

[40 : 12] Not based on your feelings. Did you hear me? Not based on your feelings. I can only imagine the kind of feelings that Abram had in 13 years of situational silence.

But those feelings are not supposed to shape and define what Abram does. It's what God has promised. Abram, do you want to trust in the dark and in the silence or do you want to trust in the light and in what God has revealed and made known to you?

Which one do you want to shape your life? Because this one over here is all about you and this one over here is all about God. Now you choose. You choose.

One of those ways is life and one of those ways isn't. This is where we find this man. By God's design, you and I are living in a relationship with the Lord Jesus where we have to look to God and what God has said and promised in the past to guide us in how to live in the present and how we're to think about the future.

Because the future, as we think about it, gives us lots of hope. Because God's made some awesome promises about our future. And nothing in this world can take that away from us. Now, what God has said, promised, and done in the past, and what God has said, promised, and done regarding the future, those two realities frame how we're to know and relate to Him in the present.

[41 : 45] Do you see that? That is what Abram has to live by. Faith in the Word, deed, character of this promise-making, promise-keeping God. I know that sounds terribly basic, but boy, is it so easy to get away from, especially when we're suffering.

Look, beloved, God's perspective on life revealed to us in Scripture in the past is what ought to shape, strengthen, and guide our faith in God.

Our saving faith is rooted in the truth, and its object is Jesus Christ. I'm going to read that again and tell you why this is so important.

God's perspective on life. Do you have God's perspective on your marriage? Do you know what His perspective is and what He requires of you in your married life? I say that because most of us are married.

Now, I'm going to look over here. You're not married, are you? You guys aren't married. I didn't think so. So, we have people in here who aren't married of different ages. Do you know God's perspective for you at this time in your life?

[42 : 57] Do you know how to think about what God wants of you at your age? How old are you? 14. 13. 17. Different ages.

Two boys, a girl. Do you guys know what He thinks of you being boys, young men, young lady? How does He want you guys to live differently because you're a girl and you're boys?

What does God think about you growing up? How does He want you to relate to your parents? Do you have God's perspective on life, no matter who you are, how old you are?

Look at these beautiful kids. See? Do you know how to go to work for Jesus?

Do you know how to come to church for Jesus? Do you know how to make plans for Jesus?

[43 : 58] Does the Old Testament and Abram's life have anything to teach you about God and how to relate to Him? If the answer is no, let's just close the Bible up and we won't meet anymore and I'll go find a different job, Mark.

No, the Bible is true. God's perspective on life, it's up on the screen, revealed to us in Scripture in the past, in the past, is what ought to shape, strengthen, and guide our faith in God now.

Now, here's the question. Look, why is this true? Why is this true? Here is the answer. You ready? Because there is no new revelation.

Now, not everybody believes that, but that's what we believe. There is no new revelation. God is not speaking new truth to you.

He's already done that. They were called the apostles and prophets. They wrote it down and it came to us in the Scriptures. And the Scriptures are what we live by, not your impressions.

[45 : 13] Not what you think God said to you. I'm not going to trust that and I'm not going to let you do it either. So don't come to me and sit down with me and say God spoke to me and God said to me, because I'm going to say, yeah, what chapter and verse?

You with me? That's how important this is. It's critical. If you ask me, well, then, Jeff, how does God lead us? He leads us by His word, like He's always led us.

But Jeff, the Bible doesn't always give the answers specifically to different things about life. So how do we know whether to do this or that or the other? You read it in principle form in the scripture and draw it out in principle form in the scripture.

If I put the slide back up here of all the different ministries that we're offering right now in the teaching of God's word, we're trying to help you learn how to use the word of God to live by the principles or precepts or statutes of the Lord and obey the Lord because you love Him.

That's how you do it. The way you decide about who to marry and where to go to college and if I should buy this house or that one or if I should buy a car right now or if I should make this investment, you can't go to chapter and verse and read that but you can go to chapter and verse and see the principles that will help guide you in wise living so that you don't make decisions that put you in financial hardship!

[46 : 34] or marry somebody that you cannot be companion with as you follow the Lord. It's there folks.

We want this on the Bible, will we? The problem is not the Scriptures. The problem is not that God is not speaking. The problem is with us. Why is it true that we need to live by what the Scripture tells us, the Scripture written in the past to strengthen and guide our lives because there's no new revelation coming out right now.

You and I need to understand that if God is speaking to us outside of the Word of God in some kind of impression or some kind of this or that and the other, we need to run and we need to write it down and figure out how to get it into the Bible because that's how God transmitted His truth.

Be careful, friends. Please be careful. And please hear your pastors warning you against living like that.

Please, please be careful. You're staking your situation in that moment on impressions that you're receiving and what I want to ask you is this.

[47 : 53] Now, stay with me because this is what I will do. You need to count on this. If you were to come to Greg and I and do this, this is exactly what you would hear from your pastors. This is what I would say.

Kevin, can I use you? Alright? So, Kevin has come to me and he said this. Not that Kevin would do this, but he's allowed me to use him as an example. So, Kevin comes to me and says this and I'm going to do the role play with Kevin.

And so, the first thing I'm going to say to my brother Kevin is, Kevin, you say that God impressed that, you feel like God spoke to you or said that to you or gave you the impression that this is the way you need to go.

What are you basing that on, brother? How can you be confident that was God and not something else? And if Kevin's done his homework, he's going to be ready for that and here's what he's going to say to his pastor.

Well, because God's word says dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot. And you know what I'm going to say why don't next time we start there, right, with the word, and we'll just stay there, and we'll just let that impression go, because that impression needs to be weighed against God's word, because you're saying God's word is the standard.

[49 : 07] this is what, Kevin, I'm relaying something to you that happened to me. I was you, and I was getting confronted with that. And I went, okay. How didn't I think of that?

That actually happened to me. I gave the God spoke to me thing, and the person who loved me enough to tell me the truth said, well, Jeff, how do you know that it was God?

And I went to a passage in the scripture that helped define for me that that was a good direction to move in, and the person said, well, why didn't you just go to the Bible in the first place if that's where you finally got your confirmation?

Why don't you just stay in the scriptures? That moment was, boo! It blew my spiritual mind. Now, are you with me? All right. Because there are people in here who've lived like that, just like me, and you're thinking right now, oh my gosh, can I even stay at this church?

Because I'm real down in your business right now. I want you to realize how dangerous it is for you to live over here in that space instead of over here where God has spoken.

[50 : 17] It gets better. Stay with me. All of this that we're talking about now has to be based on 2 Peter 1 3.

You don't have to turn there. I'm going to tell you what it says. Where God has given us, Peter said, everything we need for believing and for living godly during our life on earth.

That's what he said. It's all in his truth book, the Bible. In 17 1, God has broken the silence of 14 years and what God says next is the very foundation for Abram's relationship with his covenant, promise keeping, truth telling God.

And it's this, look to God in situational silence, there at the bottom of the screen, and look to God in the assurance of things hoped for. Look at the text.

Now when Abram was 99 years old, and all of this that I've been setting up now comes to fruition, the Lord now appears to Abram and what does he say to him?

[51 : 30] I am God Almighty. And that would have been enough. God is God Almighty.

Walk before me and be blameless. Wow. I am God Almighty. This title expresses God's omnipotence.

That is his sovereign power over all things. I am God Almighty. Is there anything too difficult for me, Abram? I am God Almighty. I'll bring it to pass. I am sovereign.

I am in ultimate, total, unconquerable control of all aspects of my universe to include your life, to include the barrenness of your wife's womb, to include the fact that at 99 years old, and Sarai at 89 years old, and way past child bearing, and barren in her womb, those are not obstacles to me.

I am God Almighty. Now think about your life. What are you facing right now, or what have you faced recently, that would have made the difference for you to look into the heavens and rehearse in your heart, I am God Almighty, and there's nothing that's impossible for me.

[52 : 44] What do you need healed? What do you need hope for? What do you need direction for? I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless. That's where it starts.

That's where the answers come. And the answers may be, continue in the way that you are, but trust me, it's not going to be like this forever.

Your forever is very different and that may be all the change that comes. Is that enough? If God says that's enough, is it enough? This is where you're challenged.

Now consider this, for 14 years, Abrams lived in the consequences of his own sin with Hagar. Can you think of that? 13 years of watching Ishmael grow up knowing that Ishmael is not God's promised heir, but that the heir will come in God's time and in God's way.

After 14 years, the very first thing God says to break this situational silence and establish the baseline for all that he, God, will go on to say is this, I am God almighty.

[53 : 52] I am God almighty. You know, in the darkest moments, I don't mean to dramatize this as I say this, I just want you to hear your pastor being real with you.

In the darkest moments of Suzanne's suffering, that's all I had. I am God almighty, Jeff.

And I remember thinking from the promises of scripture that God will never ever give me anything that I cannot bring to him and see him move me through because he is God almighty.

That was the difference. That was the difference. Nothing is impossible with God and Abram allowed himself to forget that just long enough to sin against the goodness of God.

What if Abram had held on to I am God almighty when Sarai came to him with this plan with Hagar? Abram could have lovingly looked at her and said, baby, I know this is tough for you.

[55 : 07] I know the years have been hard, but we're going to trust God. We're just going to keep looking to him and praying and living for him and we're just going to wait and see how God does this thing because he's God. That's what we're going to do, babe.

Let's pray. This is humbling. This is humbling. It's also hopeful. Let me show you why. This is a humbling situation because it's a stinging reminder of Abram's lapse of faith compared to God's faithfulness and blessings on his life.

I think that's what we all feel that when we sin. There's a particular aspect of that sin that causes us to say, you know, God didn't deserve that. He's so faithful and merciful to me.

Right? So it's humbling. But it's also hopeful in this way. It's hopeful because nothing is impossible with God. The world drags us down.

It whines. It complains. It worries. It's so fear-filled in its focus. So fear. You see it. You hear it. The world drips with this.

[56 : 12] Right? But listen. Listen. I am God Almighty should be enough to make our hearts sore. Notice this.

You are small. Your problems are big. And God Almighty is much, much bigger. Now, where are you going to live?

You've got three choices up there. You can live in your smallness. You can live in your problems. Or you can live in God Almighty. Your choice.

I think you're here this morning because you want to exalt the Lord. So how are we to explain and live beyond the hurt that any of us feel when life is made nearly unbearable by words like this, degradation or humiliation, desperation like fear, and the depravity or wickedness of our own hearts, and then the sinful hearts of others?

How are we to endure and have hope? You know, it was pride that led Abram to listen to his wife and forsake God's way of providing Abram with an heir in God's timing and way.

[57 : 25] The Lord will use, listen, the valley of humiliation even for 14 years if necessary to destroy our pride and cultivate godly humility in us.

Many of you are familiar with Dr. Wayne Mack who recently went to be with the Lord. He describes times when we descend into the valley of humiliation in a book that he wrote.

And here's what Dr. Mack says. The valley of humiliation represents the humbling experiences that God brings into our lives to destroy the sin of pride and to help us develop godly humility.

humility. And I want you to listen to Dr. Mack's definition of humility and the point becomes even clearer. Look at this. Humility then consists in an attitude wherein we recognize our own insignificance and unworthiness before God and attribute to him the supreme honor, praise, prerogatives, rights, privileges, worship, devotion, authority, submission, and obedience that he alone deserves.

It means having a servant's mindset and always putting self last. And that is not intuitive. That is not your default nor mine.

[58 : 50] It takes the power of saving faith and the Spirit of God working in our life to bring that life about. Right? Now, look at this running list with me as we rehearse I am God Almighty together.

Praise the Lord with me, will you? Look at this. He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel. The first mention of the gospel in the Bible.

I will establish my covenant with you and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood. Neither shall there be again a flood to destroy the earth.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. But the angel said to him, do not be afraid for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord. The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him and he will be raised on the third day.

[60 : 07] It is finished. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who has been crucified. He has risen. He is not here.

And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Beloved, without I am God Almighty, these declarations would ring hollow and could never have been made, much less accomplished.

They would mean nothing. God Almighty is the power and assurance and hope making these declarations what they are. Abram and each of us need to look to God in the conviction of things not seen.

Quoting from Dr. MacArthur, this is what he says about that phrase, the conviction of things not seen. It implies a response that is an outward manifestation of the inward assurance.

The person of faith lives, lives his belief. His life is committed to what his mind and his spirit are convinced is true. We live by what we are convinced is true.

[61 : 24] Now, if you'll look with me again, verse 1 goes on to say, I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless. Notice on the screen, walk before me is expressed here.

Walk before me is expressed here in the New Testament by the Scripture which says, for in Him we live and move and exist.

I mentioned this to you earlier in my message. It is in God and God alone that we are able to live the lives that we live and do what we do. We are to live the kind of life which expresses our profound relationship to God as His recreated creation.

So God is saying, look, live your life openly. Live your life honestly. But live your life according to the knowledge that all you are, all you think, and all you do is laid bare before my eyes.

And that should make a difference. The second part of the verse takes it even further. What does he say? Notice the text, and be blameless. Now blamelessness here refers to godly action done from a humble heart.

[62 : 45] the idea here is like this verse in the New Testament. Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called. Live like you've been saved.

Live like you've been saved. Or maybe like this verse, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your what?

Behavior, your life. Why? Because it's written that you shall be holy for I am holy. And then finally, like this verse, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

So be blameless. Be wholeheartedly devoted to God so that you live your life in faithful obedience to me, the Lord says, knowing that I am God Almighty by whom you live and move and exist.

It reminds me of Paul's instruction to the Ephesians when he said this, you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

[63 : 53] Walk as children of the light, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. So the question, it is God's prescription for covenant living, are you living it? Look to God in situational silence, the assurance of things hoped for, look to God in the conviction of things not seen, and here's what we'll end with, live your faith.

Beloved, live your faith. Will you pray with me? Father, as the word rings out and we look at Abram's life, we see failure.

We see a reminder of the desperate need that each of us have for saving faith and for walking and living by that faith and relating to you in faith.

There are so many things about our lives that we cannot explain. There seem to be a number of things that we really can't change. And so I pray that you would help us to focus on the work that we all know the Scripture says you want to do in us, and that is to change our hearts.

We can't even do that. So Father, we can't look to you in saving faith to change our hearts, to teach us how to listen to you, how to go to your word and listen to what you're saying to us in Scripture, so that we can base our lives on the truth and not the dark, the light and not the dark, the hope and not the dark.

[65 : 30] Help your people to take great confidence, encouragement, and assurance in the way that you've promised to lead us by speaking the truth and love to us as your people. So I pray for their strength.

I thank you for their commitment to the truth. Every soul that's come here this morning has come with the expectation that they would have the gospel preached to them, that their pastor would say truthful things to them from the Bible.

And I praise God for their souls, I praise God for their prayers and their commitment to the truth and to Jesus. Please bind us together in a spirit of unity that sees us rallying to this truth so that we can walk in the light together and minister that light to each other.

Help us to be ready to explain these things to other Christians in our community, to challenge them to live by faith. Thank you for your gospel.

Thank you for our Jesus. And thank you for our church family. in your name we pray. Amen.