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Believing the Impossible

Abraham and Sarah

*Hebrews 11:8-16;
Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7*

When I think of a person of faith, I think of George Strickland. He was the spiritual “patriarch” of a church I pastored for more than ten years. When the congregation had grown well beyond the capacity of our facilities, we met to decide if we should take up the challenge of moving to a new location. After all the debate had gone back and forth, Mr. Strickland stood and urged us to step out in confident faith. “This church was born as an act of faith in God’s ability to do great things,” he said. “We cannot hesitate to trust him now.” His passionate appeal settled the issue.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Who in your life do you think of as a person of faith and why?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Do you think your family or friends consider you to be a person of faith? Why or why not?

When the writers of Scripture wanted a model of faith, their eyes almost always turned to Abraham. Other men and women lived lives of impressive faith, but no one's faith is celebrated like Abraham's. Read *Hebrews 11:8-16* and *Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7*.

1. According to *Hebrews 11:8-16*, in what situations did Abraham exhibit faith?

2. What price did Abraham pay to respond obediently to God's call?

3. When has God called you to leave behind what you're comfortable with to take a similar step of faith?

4. While in Canaan, Abraham and Sarah were visited by three strangers. Hospitality to strangers was a social obligation in the ancient Middle East. Do you think Abraham sensed something special about these three men by the way he treated them (*Genesis 18:1-8*)? Explain.

5. The Lord made a promise to Abraham and Sarah when he

visited them (*Genesis 18:10*). Why did his promise cause Sarah to laugh and require such great faith for both Abraham and Sarah (*Genesis 18:10-12; Hebrews 11:11-12*)?

6. About what situation or circumstance is God telling you that it is never too late?

What can you believe God to do in that seemingly impossible situation, based on the way God kept his promises to Abraham (*Hebrews 11:12*)?

7. Why does the writer of *Hebrews* hold Abraham and Sarah up (with others) as examples of those who finish life well (*Hebrews 11:13*)?

8. What "city" was Abraham seeking (*Hebrews 11:10*)?

Why was that a mark of faith?

9. God called Abraham to follow him to a new land, but what was the real pilgrimage God called him to?

10. What can you learn from Hebrews 11:14-16 about the focus of your own spiritual pilgrimage?

11. How does God respond to those who diligently seek after him (Hebrews 11:16)?

Think quietly about the fact that God is not ashamed to be your God. Recommit yourself to seeking after him in your daily journey.

Now or Later

As you reflect on a situation or relationship in your life that seems “as good as dead” (see question six in the study), write down some of the reasons it is hard for you to trust God for that need. How are you responding to the long wait for God to intervene? Consider what steps you can take to increase your faith in this difficult time of waiting. Pray through those steps and ask God to help you cultivate a deeper trust in him and in his faithfulness.