

Parallel

(Parallel: Abraham's Future is Our Series – Part I)

9/6/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

NOTE: Until Gen. 17:5, Abraham has the name of Abram, but to simplify the discussion we will be using the name God gives him, Abraham.

1. Reflect briefly on the ancestors you know. How far back can you go? Is digging into your ancestry something you spend time on or something you care relatively little about?

Hopefully you will have someone who enjoys working on their family tree and can share some interesting stories about distant relatives they have discovered. If not, get the group to reflect on why there would seem to be so little interest in learning more about past generations. You might remind them that the genes we inherit from our ancestors continue to be powerful forces in our health and development.

2. Now think about the generations coming after you. What would you want your legacy to be when they come digging backwards and stumble across you?

This could take lots of twists and turns. For example, you could go around the group thinking up an epitaph you might want on your grave stone. In the end, it would be good to point out that those who don’t care much about past ancestors may well have descendants who don’t care much about them either.

3. Read Gen. 12:1-4 and consider the situation for Abraham and his family. Would you have responded in the same way?

Abraham left the security of the family and Haran and took off for an unknown destination. He was called by God to do something great and accepted that call. We are prone to seek the safe path, which makes change difficult. If we are open to God’s leading, we may well find ourselves going down an unexpected pathway, but God will give us a peace that could only come from Him as long as we continue in the direction He has established.

4. Why did Pastor Steve say that Abraham was a living lesson in virtue, but not in morality?

Abraham was obviously a God-fearing man or he wouldn’t have been chosen for this assignment. He was a friend of God. However, he made many mistakes along the way, including lying about his wife twice (see Gen. 12:11-20).

5. Think of Abraham's life in three stages that are similar to that of a trapeze artist working high about the ground: 1) letting go; 2) joy of flight; 3) faithfulness of the catcher. Talk about each of these stages as it applies to Abraham and then as it applies to your life.

a) letting go – We are told to “Let go and let God”, but we fear the unknown and want to stay in control. It's hard to let go of what we have (our hands on the trapeze bar), but our life is not very special if we just stay in one place. We tend to overvalue what we have and undervalue what we might take on if we let go.

b) joy of flight – the sensation of flying can give one an adrenaline rush in and of itself. It is freeing to let go and sense that we are connected to nothing for a brief time. At this point we usually don't know many details about how all this is going to work out. Sometimes the flight is not so joyful at the time, but can lead to amazing differences in our lives.

c) faithfulness of the catcher – any good trapeze artist gets to know his catcher well, so that they can work together with trust. Similarly, a more experienced Christian has simply had more practice working and communicating with God, so this comes more easily. Note that the trapeze artist lets go long before the catcher is in sight. He has to have faith that he will be there at the right moment.

Side note: The first time Abraham moved (from Ur to Heran), he had a safety net – his dad and extended family moved too. The second time (from Heran to Canaan), he was on his own, so no safety net to catch him if the Master Catcher let him fall.

6. Read Hebrews 11:8-12. What do these verses say about the man from whom Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are all descended?

He did everything God asked of him because he had faith that the Creator would bless him just as He had said. Abraham's wife (Sarah) had the same intense faith, so there were able to have children long after their childbearing days were over. Thus, all three of these religions are based on the same fundamental faith in a Heavenly Father who was and is the Creator and Sustainer of Life.

7. So, how does the story of Peter in Matt. 14:22-33 fit in with all of this?

Peter demonstrated great faith by jumping from a safe place in a boat to the great unknown, the sea around the boat. He was doing fine until he took his eyes off of Jesus and started worrying about what he could do on his own to keep himself on top of the water. When the obvious answer came back that he was powerless to keep himself afloat; he panicked. We must keep our eyes on Jesus as we listen for God's voice.