



Beginnings

A Look at Genesis

The Book of Genesis is a book of beginnings, it reflects on the human struggles that we all encounter. During this month of June we will be looking at situations in Genesis that reflect on our present existence. There is a temptation to believe that the people of the Bible did not struggle with the same problems we struggle with. But just because they did not have the same cultural reality or technological advances it does not mean that they did not experience the same kinds of questions and problems.

Father Abraham

Genesis 17:1-6

[Romans 4:11-18]

Abraham struggles with the dilemma of Father's Day.



It is surprising to see Abraham as a “Father of many nations”. In this chapter God tells Abram he will now be known as Abraham. Abram means “exalted father”, Abraham means “father of many nations”. It must have seemed strange for Abraham. In chapter 15 which was 13 years before the events of chapter 17, Abram did not have a son. He now has one son by his concubine Hagar, he feels like an ‘exalted father’, but Ishmael was not the future that God had envisioned for Abraham. Abram placed his hopes for the future in this son. In this chapter God challenges Abram not only with a new name but with a new identity and direction for his life. This year would be transformative for Abraham and all his descendants.

Genesis 17:1-6

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying:
4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

7 “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”



Father Abraham, *Genesis 17:1-6*

[Romans 4:11-18]

In the 1960s a Dutch musician, singer and song writer wrote in Dutch “Father Abraham had Seven Sons”. It was a carnival song that became extremely popular and was translated into many different languages. He took his stage name from this song. It was reworked for Christian camps as “Father Abraham Had Many Sons”. Mr. Kartner is still performing. He was the model for Papa Smurf and wrote the Dutch theme song for the Smurf’s TV show. He has written over 1600 songs, several made it into the Top Ten lists in various countries.

Impact in life is dependent on long term consistency during our lifetime. The real Father Abraham’s impact is seen on this aspect of his relationship with God and others. *Genesis 18:16-19*

Pierre Kartner “Vater Abraham” in 2007
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Genesis 18:16-19

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

17 And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,

18 “since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”



Father Abraham, *Genesis 17:1-6*

[Romans 4:11-18]

Abraham's Caravan by James Tissot

In Romans 4:11-18 Paul reflects on this experience in Abraham's life. He reflects that Abraham before he was circumcised "...believed God and it was counted as righteousness" [Genesis 15:6]. Abram as he was known then was not a father at all, in fact as Genesis 15 indicates he had no hope of becoming a father.

Following this event Abram and Sarai decide to take matters into their own hands and Abram takes Hagar, Sarai's personal maid as a concubine and father's Ishmael with her. For Abram this was the end of the story. He had gotten what he wanted out of fatherhood. But God had bigger plans for Abram than his and Sarai's desires and Hagar's compulsion could accomplish.

Romans 4:11-18

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

16 Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed — God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.”

Father Abraham, *Genesis 17:1-6*

[Romans 4:11-18]

Abraham's Caravan by James Tissot

Abram expresses to God in Genesis 17 that he desires that Ishmael would fulfill the promise of God given in Genesis 15. God promises to bless and watch over Ishmael but He makes it very clear that He intends Isaac the son of promise to be the one who will carry on the promise given to Abram. Abram has for 13 years been uninterested in the purpose that God laid out in Chapter 15. Paul indicates that with this change of name to Abraham and the seal of circumcision [representing holiness - consecration to the will of God] he would begin to pursue the will of God and not his own will. If we are to complete the purpose of God in the lives we must consecrate ourselves to the purpose and promise of God.





**Abraham and the Three Angels by
James Tissot - Genesis 18**

Father Abraham, *Genesis 17:1-6* [Romans 4:11-18]

Abraham in chapter 18 is visited by God. The final promise of Sarah's pregnancy with Isaac is prophesied. Abraham has accepted the challenge to be what God wants him to be but Sarah has yet to accept the challenge. This meeting is about Sarah's need to consecrate her life and Abraham's need to understand mercy and justice. God has called us as his own and that means that we not only must be consecrated to to His will but we must also begin to think as He does about life's circumstances.



William Jackson Smart and his daughter Sonora Smart Dodd. She is pictured in 1909 for her wedding picture, the same year she proposed a national Fathers Day in honor of her father who as a single dad after the death of his wife raised their 6 children. Sonora was 16 when her mother died.

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Father Abraham,

Genesis 17:1-6

[Romans 4:11-18]

While our culture has made fun Father's Day the truth is that in the last decades as fatherlessness in our society has grown we have been profoundly impacted by the negative results of this cultural shift.

In 1909 a 27 year old woman sat in a Mother's Day service in Spokane WA beside her father who had raised 6 children after the death of his wife 11 years previously. He was a Civil War veteran, a farmer and loving father. She so admired him that she decided there needed to be a day to honor men like him. She proposed the idea of "Fathers Day". It would take 20 years to catch on.

Galatians 3:29-4:6

Galatians 3:29-4:6

3:29 And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:1 Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"



Father Abraham, *Genesis 17:1-6*

[Romans 4:11-18]

Paul Vitz in 1999 astounded the academic world with his stunning claim that fatherlessness was the most consistent impact on whether a child would become an Atheist. He defined fatherlessness as the result of the death of a father, absent father or abusive/weak father.

Paul Vitz had been an Atheist until the mid -1970s when he became Christian.

He viewed Atheism as “wish-fulfillment” by people who desired God not exist because their fathers had not been a part of their lives or they wanted their father’s not to exist. His study of prominent atheist’s lives and the similarity between them has lent much credibility to his hypothesis.

He indicated that the presence or absence of a father figure in a child’s life was more important in spiritual development than that of a mother. This idea turns popular conceptions on their head. His view seems to be that as we experience more fatherlessness in our society we will lean toward Atheism and New Age religions.

Paul Vitz, Psychologist and Educator, author of “Faith of the Fatherless” 1999 and Revised edition 2013

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Father Abraham,

Genesis 17:1-6

[Romans 4:11-18]

This problem in culture has been also noticed in sociology over the last decades. In a Prager U video entitled “Are Fathers Necessary” Sociological information that has been known for decades is summarized. It is known that most violent male criminals come from fatherless homes. In fact, the statistics are overwhelming in this area and are undisputed. The most consistent predictor of criminal behavior in adolescent males is the lack of a father in the home. Almost all young males who enter gang life lack a father in their home. For young men a father provides an example and a controlling influence to curb violent impulses.

For young women the results are just as dramatic. Young women who lack a father in the home are far more likely to become sexually active at an early age and move from sexual partner to partner. They are far likelier to experience depression and accompanying problems.



Father Abraham,

Genesis 17:1-6

[Romans 4:11-18]

In addition, children who grow up in a fatherless home are more likely to grow up in poverty, face abuse and exploitation. These are social realities that our present society would like to ignore. When God says through the prophet Malachi, “I hate divorce”. This is why.

While it is popular in our culture to paint fathers as witless idiots or worse as violent cruel predators. The truth is just the opposite. Fathers provide stability financially, structurally and morally in a home. The statistics are very clear on this point in spite of the cultural images our media portrays. This does not mean that there are not exceptions to this reality.

Genesis 16:7-11 & Genesis 21:9-21

Genesis 16:7-11

7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her [Hagar] by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

8 And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

9 The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”

10 Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.”

11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: “Behold, you *are* with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction.

In truth, these exceptions are so stark a contrast that they point up the reality of the statistics. Often, our culture points to these exceptions as normative when they only highlight the unusual results. We make a rule out of an anomaly. Usually these anomalies have a “father figure” in the picture like a grandfather, coach, uncle or a remarkable mother who imparts a clear male model to these children.

On the 17th of this month a film was released called “The Streets Were My Father” it is a documentary that follows the lives of 3 fatherless men who were violent gang members who met Jesus Christ through the witness of Christians in prison, came to find God as Father in their brokenness. God promises to be a Father to the fatherless...to offer hope to the hopeless and acceptance in His family through Jesus Christ.

No matter how broken we may be in life God wants to make us whole.

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Father Abraham

Genesis 17:1-6 [Romans 4:11-18]

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Father Abraham

Genesis 17:1-6

[Romans 4:11-18]

Because, of our spiritual birth in Christ we are children of Abraham due to our faith and adopted children of God due to Christ's work on the cross.

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Happy
FATHER'S



DAY

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