

*Faith of our
Fathers*

QUIET TIME SERIES 2011

Faith of Our Fathers

Introduction

As we enter the second decade of the new millennium, we are inspired by the historical narrative of something that happened several millennia ago – the story of Abraham and Sarah, one of the most faith-building accounts in the Bible. It involves a childless, elderly couple willing to obey God and “go” to a land that God had set aside for them and their descendants.

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. (Genesis 12:1)

During their journey, they experienced many ups and downs/highs and lows, but eventually left a legacy of faith for the ages. This series examines some of their experiences, in the hope that our faith will be boosted, especially in the area of mission. We are praying that that we will be able to glorify God through our Bible Talks in 2011.

Just as God told Abraham to “go” in Gen 12, Jesus also told us to “go”, in John 15 and Matthew 28.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:16-17)

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

The truth is we do a lot of going. We go and eat in special restaurants, we go and upgrade ourselves, we go and play sports, we go and watch movies, we go and help our children and we go to bed. As we go about our lives, do we also go in faith, like our forefathers, and make disciples? Perhaps God has given us amazing lives of opportunity in Singapore *so that* we could go and make disciples. These opportunities are everywhere, but do we have the eyes of faith to see them as such? Prayerfully, as individuals, and as Bible Talk members, by the end of this workshop and QT series, we will all be moved to "go" with a lot more desire and faith, in the spirit of Abraham and Sarah!

Reading: Genesis 11:10 – 12:5 and Galatians 3:6-9

Questions for Reflection

1. Think of your own parents and grandparents or perhaps great-grandparents. What is something that they are known for that was passed down until it reached your generation?
2. What are you most proud of when you think of your ancestors?
3. In Galatians 3:6-9, Paul says that we are able to be in the same family of faith as our forefather Abraham. How real is this in your mind? What does this mean to you?
4. What impresses you most about Abraham’s obedience?
5. When God gave Abraham the calling in Gen 12:1, how difficult was that for him and his family? Why was it difficult? How far was the journey from Haran to Canaan?

Insights

Read Galatians 3:6-9

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through

you.” So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

This Scripture is very encouraging. Abraham, our forefather in the faith, was commended because of his obedience to God’s command. He was blessed, as God was pleased with him. We, too, are able to share in that wonderful blessing if we imitate the faith of our father, Abraham. In other words, the story of faith of our fathers is not just an academic exercise. Just learning from them, we can draw strength from them and walk by faith. We are to view him as our forefather, not just an old man who demonstrated some acts of obedience. Imagine if it could be proven that Abraham was actually part of your bloodline and was your ancestor. In other words, what if he were actually your great, great, great...grandfather? How would you feel? You would have an immense sense of pride and dignity. Well, we are to actually view him that way. He is truly our forefather and we are in the same family of faith.

These were real people. Abraham’s forefathers originated, so it seems, from the land of Ur, in Gen 11:28. Ur is known as one of the oldest cities in the world and is now an archaeological site in Southern Iraq. The Bible says that Ur was identified with the Chaldeans, Gen 11:28, and is now known as Tell el Muqayyar. Both history and archaeology indicate that Ur was a centre of a sophisticated civilization even several centuries before Abraham.¹

¹ IVP, page 24

The society at that time was an agrarian one. People moved from place to place depending on the seasons, in search of better pasture. The bible says that Abraham's father, Terah, moved out from Ur and headed towards Canaan, but for some reason they settled in Haran, Gen 11:31, now located about 32 miles south-east of the modern Turkish city of Urfa (See map on page 7).

As far as dates are concerned, we cannot be definitive. We know with good certainty that the events of Moses and Joshua took place around 1400-1500 B.C. Although we have the genealogy record in the bible that goes to Noah and Adam, we are not certain if every generation was recorded in that or only some of were highlighted. Scholars estimate that Abraham lived around 2,000-2,500 B.C. Even though we cannot be certain of the dates, these events are real. We are talking about real events that took place in real cities with real challenges when it came to obeying God.

Look at the account from Gen 11:10-26. As far as we are able to tell, God did not intervene directly with any of these people except during the time of Noah, way back before Abraham's time. Perhaps He did, but there is no record of that in Genesis. God's direct intervention was seen in Noah and thereafter it only happened at the time of Abraham. Noah was five hundred years old when he became the father of his three children, Gen 5:32. He was six hundred years old when the flood took place, Gen 7:6. Shem at that time was about a 100 hundred years old, Gen 11:10. We assume that God appeared to Noah when he was 500 years old, when all his three children were born. In Gen 9:28, it says that Noah lived another 350 years after the flood. Also,

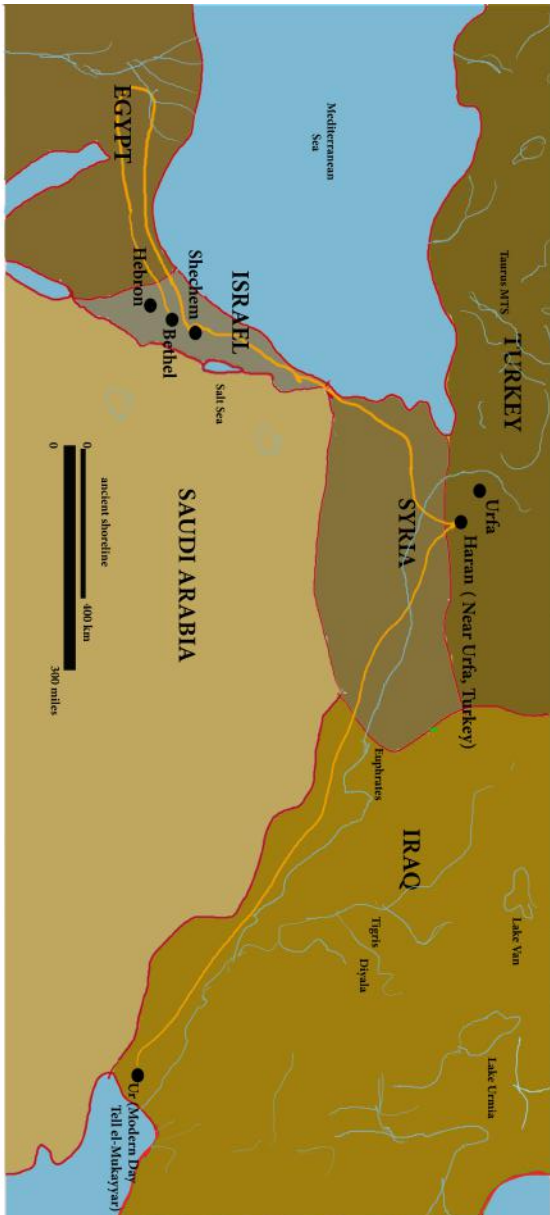
when Shem was 100 years old he had a son, Arphaxad, Gen 11:10. Using this information as a starting point, we can estimate the number of years before God again intervened directly with Abraham, like he did with Noah, shown in table 1.

Table 1: Noah to Abraham

Name of Son	Years Elapsed Before They Had a Son	Years Remaining of Noah
1. Shem	100	350
2. Arphaxad	35	315
3. Shelah	30	285
4. Ebner	34	251
5. Peleg	30	221
6. Reu	32	189
7. Serug	30	159
8. Nahor	29	130
9. Terah	70	60
10. Abraham	60	0 (Noah died)
Total	465	

Abraham was 60 years old when Noah died. About 15 years later, when Abraham was 75 years old, God appeared to him. There was thus a gap of about 465 years, in 10 generations, between the calls of faith, the call for Noah to build an ark and the call for Abraham to move.

MAP OF ABRAHAM'S TRAVELS AFTER HE RECEIVED GOD'S CALLING



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Reading: Genesis 12:6 – 14:24

Questions for Reflection *change numbering*

1. Notice that one generation before that, Terah, his father, actually made the decision to move to Canaan, but stopped at Haran instead and settled there. Where is Haran with respect to Ur and Canaan? Did God start to work his plan even before he appeared to Abraham?

2. Think of your own family and the decisions they made earlier on before you were born. Which ones, looking back was significant to you being a Christian?

(Think about the decision to migrate, your school, home, work...)

How has God worked in your family and in your life? Can you draw a time line?

3. Was there a time in your life when you made a new start? Was it challenging to do so at that time?

4. Was there a difficult time when either one or more of your family members parted from you? What was the occasion? Why was it difficult?

5. What was the hardest decision you had to make as a disciple of Jesus, to step out on faith and to trust God? Did you regret trusting God?

6. How old was Abraham when he had to make start in his life? Compare the age when he began a new chapter to the length of his entire life, stated in Gen 25:7?

7. Sometimes God calls people to be radical during the later part of their lives. What does that say about how He works?

8. Is it too late to begin a new chapter in your life? Is one third, or one half of your life over? Do you feel useful? Is it too late to start anew? Talk with your group about this as soon as possible...

Insights

When Terah was 70 years old, he had Abraham, Gen 11:26. When Abraham was 75 years old and got God's calling, Terah was by then (70+75) 145 years old. So when Terah was 145 years old Abraham moved away. Terah lived without Abraham for about 60 years, from the age of 145 till 205 (Gen 11:32). What must have been like? How did Terah receive Abraham's call to move away from the family when he was at that age? How, in turn, did Abraham feel?

What is interesting is that it was Abraham's father Terah that broke the family tradition and planned to move to Canaan, Gen 11:31. How did that decision come about? We have no record in Genesis of God appearing to Terah. Could it be that for some normal yet compelling reasons, Terah felt that it was best for them to do so? Then, as events would turn out, their move ended up in Haran, half way between Canaan and Ur. They never made it to their planned destination. They reached only the half way mark so to speak (see map). Terah did play a part in the overall

scheme of things. However, God in Gen 12:1-5 told Abraham to move to Canaan, and in Gen 15:7, He promised it again.

Did God started working in Abraham's family even before he gave Abraham to call to move? Why did God not mention anything about Terah? Did God begin working in his father, Terah?

After Abraham made the decision to move to Canaan, God appeared to him again in Gen 12:7 as if to reconfirm His earlier call to him. Then a famine came over that land and Abraham made the decision to move further down to Egypt. The move to Egypt was never stated in God's plan. Perhaps the famine, the presence of the Canaanites (Gen 12:6) was all too much for him and he decided to make a detour to God's plan. How many times do we take events into our own hands and make our own detours, only to never head back to our original destination? For Abraham, after a short while in Egypt, he headed back to Canaan, seen in Gen 13:1-2.

During his time in Egypt, Abraham gave into fear and roped his wife into deceiving the Egyptians that she was his sister. She fell for it, but later this plan was flushed out. One possible lesson here is that sometimes making one faithless decision leads to other ones.

Reading: Genesis 15:1-21 – 16:16, Romans 4:16-25

Questions for Reflection

1. When God appeared to him again, Abraham questioned this time, but God took him outside to gaze at the stars. In Gen 15:6, it says Abraham believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness. In Romans 4:20-25, what do we have to do to for the same to be said about us?
2. How did Sarai (Sarah), in Gen 16:1- 2, believe that she would have children? Why did Sarai resort to this plan?
3. Did this plan influence Abraham?
4. How similar was this plan to the one that God had told him earlier? Is it possible to have similar plans with some kind of outcome to justify not following the earlier more challenging plan?
5. How different was this plan to the one that God had told him earlier? Were there consequences to this alternative similar plan of theirs?
5. Have you come up with other plans to thwart what you know deep in your heart to be God's plan for you to handle a challenging situation?

Insights

This was God's second appearance to Abraham promising that he would have a son. The Bible simply records that

Abraham believed in God. In looking at Romans 4:16-25, Paul says that our acts of faith can also be credited to us as righteousness if we step out on faith and embrace God's promises. For Abraham, it came down to him believing in God, Gen 15:6. Actually Abraham believed that a servant in his household would inherit his estate, a person by the name of Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2). Yet after that one encounter he changed his mind and believed in God.

Sarai (Sarah) did not have the same depth of believe as her husband. She resorted to another plan; to have her husband sleep with her maidservant Hagar, and then raise the child as her own. This plan would still give her a child, she thought, though through another woman. She was so strong in her desire to carry this out that she convinced her husband, Gen 16:2. He gave in and slept with Hagar and she conceived. Sarah's planned "worked". The outcome came about exactly like she had hoped. In her mind, this may have confirmed that her plan was right in the first place. Many times we test our plan and look for the first "positive" sign of confirmation and then we walk away believing it was God's plan. As always, when we go against God's plan we will reap the consequences. Sure enough this led to quarrel between Sarah and Hagar. Disunity came into the family. Abraham was caught in between. Perhaps by now he began to regret his actions. Abraham was eighty-six years old when he had Ishmael as his son. Ishmael was born fourteen years before Isaac would come along.

Reading: Genesis 17:1 – 18:15

Questions for Reflection

1. In Gen 17, God appeared to Abraham again when he was ninety-nine years old. It had been twenty-five years since God first made his appearance and gave him the promise. Why didn't God tell him in the first place that it would take this long?
2. How did Sarah cope with the thought of having a child at the age of ninety? (Gen 17:17, 18:12)
3. Would it be reasonable to laugh if someone said that she would be able to conceive a child at the age of ninety?
4. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, Ishmael was about thirteen years of age. How closely bonded would Abraham have been to him at this point?
5. Did Abraham want to believe that the blessing could be through Ishmael? How can you tell? What does this say about Abraham's faith at this point?

Insights

Abraham was ninety-nine years old when God appeared to him again about the promise that he would have a son through Sarah. At this point both their names changed, from Abram to Abraham and from Sarai to Sarah. Abraham wavered in his belief and God came and strengthened him again. God never gave up, although Abraham doubted, so

much so that he laughed in Gen 17:17. When we do not believe, one of the ways it shows is how we chuckle at the thought of following God's word. Laughter, in this sense, is a way of fending off the challenges and not working on our faith. So it was not the laughter *per se*, but rather the lack of faith that produced the laughter that mattered to God.

Abraham even tried to have the blessing be passed on to Ishmael instead of embracing the challenge to believe that God would bless him with a son through Sarah. God, in one sense, allowed him to believe in Ishmael. Abraham then circumcised Ishmael and all the members in his household. He wanted Ishmael to be part of God's blessing. After all by this time Ishmael was already thirteen years of age and had bonded with his father pretty well, given that he was Abraham's only son up to this point. It is easy to see why Abraham wanted Ishmael to be part of the blessing. After all, to believe in having another child through Sarah would be stretching his faith a lot, perhaps too much. But he believed once again and decided to go back to his original belief that Sarah would conceive in one year's time when he himself reached a hundred years old.

God did say that he would bless Ishmael but He never gave up on his original plan to fulfill His promises through Sarah. The more difficult faith route was believing that a son could be born through Sarah, the less difficult faith route was through Hagar.

Then God sent three visitors to Abraham to confirm His plan in Gen 18:1-15. They also detected Sarah's unbelief and confronted her laughter. She denied and was dishonest about this act. Again laughter showed a lot about faith. Do

we laugh at doing God's will, when underneath it is about our lack of faith? Do we resort to an alternative that takes so much less faith?

Reading: Genesis 21:1-34 – 22:1-24

Questions for Reflection

1. How did Isaac's birth affect Sarah?
2. What did Isaac's name mean? Why was he called that? Look at all the passages that mention their laughing – Gen 17:17-18; Gen 18:11-15; Gen 21:5-7.
3. Later, Abraham had to give in to Sarah's desire to have Hagar to leave the family. How did he feel having to be separated from Ishmael at that time?
4. Then came the ultimate test of Abraham's faith in Gen 22. By this time, he had already lost Ishmael and was about to lose Isaac. What did this say about his faith? At what point did God stop him? When he agreed to do it? When he decided to go to the place of sacrifice? When he bound Isaac on the wood? When he took the knife?
5. Why did God wait for Abraham to go the full distance? What does this show about God and the kind of faith He wants to see in us?
6. Right when God said he was convinced of Abraham's faith and that He would bless him and make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, in Gen 23:20-24 the bible says that Abraham's brother had eight sons? Why might this passage have been placed right below the promise that God gave Abraham?

Insights

Imagine how excited Abraham was, at a hundred years old, interacting with Isaac. Sarah named him Isaac, which means “he laughs”. Their laughter changed, from cynical, unbelieving snickers to joyful laughter in awe in God. Do you believe your unbelieving laughter can change to the joyful kind which is in awe of God’s power?

Undoubtedly, Abraham was close to Ishmael as he grew up. Ishmael was fourteen years ahead of Isaac. Then rivalry developed between Hagar and Sarah and it resulted in both Hagar and Ishmael leaving the entire family. Abraham lost Ishmael. Then God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, and he must have thought that he would then have nothing and be back to how he was for decades without children. Think of all the thoughts he could have had. However, the Bible says that when God told him to sacrifice his own son, he did the following:

- a. Woke up early the next morning, Gen 22:3
- b. Traveled for 3 days to the place of sacrifice, Gen22:4
- c. Arranged the wood and was absolutely ready to sacrifice his son, Gen 22:9
- d. Had a knife in his hand and was about to bring it down into his son, Gen 22:10

When he was about to slay his son, an angel stopped him. God was convinced that Abraham loved and feared God more than anything else. Abraham had been called to demonstrate this. God was not content with good

intentions. He wanted evidence. Many times we say, “Well, God knows my heart, so I do not have to prove it to him.” Yes, God knows our hearts, but we need to sometimes prove to ourselves that He is truly the number one person we fear and honour the most in our lives. When we are able to prove this to ourselves, God will be pleased. It is nothing but a step of faith.

It is interesting that in Gen 23:17-18, God said that He would make Abraham’s descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and then right after that in Gen 22:20-24, it says that Abraham’s brother had eight sons. It was written perhaps to contrast further what Abraham had to go through; the comparisons, the pressure to compete with family, the reputation, and the shame...

Reading: Genesis 23:1- 24:1-66

Questions for Reflection

1. Did God pull through with his promises to Sarah?
2. In Gen 23:3-6, Abraham regarded himself as an alien in the land of the Hittites. How do we reconcile this with what God said in Gen 12:7, that He would give Abraham's offspring this land? Did both Sarah and Abraham live to see this promise come true?
3. Why was Abraham not willing to accept the land for burial for his wife Sarah as a gift from the Hittites, seen in Gen 23:7-13?
4. Even in his last days, Abraham kept the belief that God would keep His promise and give his offspring this land, Gen 24:6-7. Did Abraham live to see this come true? How much of his faith was centred on the next generation?

Insights

Ishmael was fourteen years older than Isaac. He had a head start. Later, Isaac got married at the age of forty (Gen 25:19) and was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to their twins, Gen 25:26. This means that Abraham was one hundred and sixty years old when the twins were born. When the twins were fifteen years old Abraham died, at the age of one hundred and seventy five. Given the promise that God made that his descendents would be as numerous as the stars in the sky in Gen 15:5, all Abraham got to see in

his life time was the twins up to the age of fifteen. However, look at the news that reached Abraham in Gen 22:20-24, that his own brother Nahor had many sons. Abraham had two other brothers (Gen 11: 26), Nahor and Haran, but Haran died much earlier on. Abraham had to be contented with one son, Isaac, compared to Nahor who had eight sons by this time. Ishmael, according to Gen 21:21, got married to an Egyptian wife much earlier on, and Ishmael himself, in Gen 25:12-16, had twelve sons. So how was Abraham feeling by comparison to his son and his own brother? How faithful was God in His promise if by the time of Abraham's death, he saw only Isaac and two grandchildren through Sarah, while Ishmael's and Nahor's families were already a community of many children and grandchildren? This could have made Abraham bitter. He could have gone back to God and challenge Him about His faithfulness. Perhaps Ishmael and his brother may have send snide remarks about the God of Abraham who did not pull through with His promises.

What about the land that he was told that his offspring would inherit? In Gen 12:7, God told him so. Notice God did not promise him that he would live to see this promise come to fulfilment, but He did promise that his descendants would. Abraham remembered that when he spoke to his chief servant, in Gen 24:7. Again, he did not live to see this promise come through, but accepted by faith that his offspring would. As far as he was concerned, he was still an alien, seen in his words in Gen 23:4. In essence, Abraham lived by faith not so much for himself, but for the generation that was to come. It was not a faith based on what he wanted to achieve, but a faith to let God work

through him and bless the generations that would follow. That was why he insisted that Isaac find a wife that would be willing to come back and settle in the land and for Isaac to not move anywhere else. He made this very clear to his chief servant in Gen 24:8-9. This was not something he wanted for himself, but rather to facilitate the process, and do everything he could in his power and ability, so that God's promise for the generations to come would be fulfilled. He was not going to leave it to chance. The faith of our father Abraham is impressive, convicting and inspiring. We are called to imitate the faith of our fathers.

This is the kind of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11:13, which says that these people went by faith and welcomed God's promises at a distance. Abraham did not make comparisons with others and get sour or bitter. His faith continued to grow. Would you be content with this kind of faith? In Hebrews 11:10, it says that Abraham was looking forward to a better city, whose architect and builder in God. He knew that God had planned something better for them. This was what drove him to accept life as it was. This was why he was content to see some of the working of God, but not everything. The miracle of Isaac was enough. The others would come by faith. He did not live to see his descendents be as numerous as the stars of the sky, but he trusted and believed in God. He set the pace for all the other heroes to follow in the Old Testament, which is why Abraham is known as the father of our faith.

What would make you be completely satisfied to put all of your trust in God? For many of us, we expect and want miracle after miracle, year after year. We discount the past

victories that God has given. We continue to make comparisons with others. When others do better in life, we nullify all the past victories that God has given to us. It is as if God has to start from scratch. Such behaviour is like that of a spoilt child who wants everything and every request to be fulfilled. We set out conditions to God and hold Him ransom. We leave God, stop praying and get bitter when one new dying request is not answered and discount all the past requests that were. With such an attitude, we are not going by faith. This is not the kind of faith for which our forefathers were commended.

In chapter 23 of the book of Genesis, we read about Sarah's death at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven. Abraham insisted to buy the burial spot himself, even though he was offered the place as a gift. He loved his wife so much that he wanted to pay a huge price for her. It was a mark of his deep respect and love for her. It was also an indication that Abraham wanted Sarah to be buried in the land that was truly under his ownership. It was the land that God had promised him, not the land given to him as a gift by the Hittites.

Reading: Genesis 25:1-18

Questions for Reflection

1. Abraham had only one son through Sarah and two grandchildren from her. However, (Gen 25:1-4) he took another wife, Keturah, after Sarah's death and Keturah bore him many other children. Was this part of the promise that God made to him earlier?
2. Why did Abraham leave everything he had owned to Isaac, but only gave gifts to his other sons, in Gen 25:6?
3. Ishmael had twelve sons, in Gen 25:16. Later on, from Jacob, Isaac's sons, there were also twelve sons, Gen 46:8-25, but it came one generation later. What might this show about the way God chooses to work?
4. Both Ishmael and Isaac came to bury Abraham in Gen 25:9. However, in looking at Gen 25:18, did both families get along with one another?
5. In looking at all the ups and downs of Abraham and Sarah's lives, which ones convicted you the most and how is your life going to be different as a result?

Insights

Abraham was very faithful to Sarah until her death. Through her, he had only one son, Isaac. God took his time to work through His promises. He allowed Ishmael and his brother's families to multiply ahead of his own. In those

days, the number of one's offspring was a measure of one's success; this could have been a real struggle, and Abraham could have nursed a grudge against God for being slow in fulfilling his promises. However, he did not allow a potential cause for shame to interfere in his relationship with God. God's opinion of him mattered much more than that of others. He did not care about being "left behind". He cared more about being faithful. Faithfulness was more important than winning the rat race of his day.

Interestingly, only after Sarah's death did Abraham take another wife, Keturah. He could have done so earlier as many wealthy people of his day did. Abraham was content with what he had, even with the trials that came with it. He had much by way of wealth and success but he also knew how to be content with little.

Abraham then had other children through Keturah and his other concubines. However, he only left them with gifts, but gave his inheritance to Isaac, the person through whom God promised to work.

At Abraham's death, Ishmael paid his last respects and both he and Isaac buried Abraham, seen in Gen 25:9. God also blessed Ishmael by giving him twelve children, Gen 25:12-16. This was a fulfilment of what God had promised to Hagar in Gen 16:10; 21:17-18. God may take time, but He never forgets His promises. His delays are not His denials.

Even though God blessed Ishmael's family, both these families stood at odds with one another (Gen 25:18). Giving into Sarah's impatience to have a son through their maidservant brought about life long pain and hostility.

Sometimes, our one mistake can be very expensive. We have to be careful and constantly have a long-term view in mind before we make any major decisions. In life, we usually reap what we sow. While God does forgive and show grace and does help us out in times of need, the law of sowing and reaping does have its consequences. It is a principle that works for Christians and non-Christians, the faithful and unfaithful. Even with our forefather, he had to reap what he had sown.

In summary, below are some of his major set backs and also examples of the faithfulness that both Abraham and Sarah demonstrated from the time they got the calling to obey in God's promises.

Setbacks

- When called by God in Gen 15:1-5 to go to Canaan, he detoured and went to Egypt on account of a famine in Canaan, Gen 12:10.
- He crafted a plan, and lured Sarah to join him in being dishonest, Gen 12:10-20.
- He gave into Sarah's lack of faith and had a son through Hagar, Gen 16:1-4.
- He laughed at God's promise that he would have a son at a hundred years old and when Sarah would be ninety, Gen 17:17-18.
- Sarah also laughed at God's promise in Gen 18:10-15.
- Abraham and Sarah sent Hagar and Ishmael away in Gen 21:10, although God approved of it.

Faithfulness

- Abraham obeyed God and moved away from Haran where he was living. He left his father behind who was one hundred and forty five years old, Gen 12:1-5.
- He cared about his Lot and allowed him to choose the better part of the land to avoid quarrelling with him, Gen 13:5-9.
- Later Abraham rescued Lot from a catastrophe, Gen 14:13-16.
- Abraham believed in God when God reminded him of the promise he had made earlier, Gen 15:4-6.
- Abraham had a big heart for people who did not love God and tried to convince God from destroying all of them, Gen 18:16-33. God remembered Abraham in Gen 19:29.
- Abraham persevered in his believe and had a son Isaac through Sarah, Gen 21:5-6.
- Abraham passed the supreme test of being willing to sacrifice Isaac in Gen 22:1-12.
- Abraham and Sarah made no comparison with his brother Nahor or with Ishmael's family, Gen 22:20-24; 25:12-18.
- Abraham did not nurse a grudge against God for having to be an alien in the land that God told him to move to, Gen 23:1-4.
- Abraham and Sarah believed that God would bring about descendants through Isaac, Gen 21:12.

- Abraham was faithful to his wife till death, Gen 23:1-2.
- Abraham kept his faith for his offspring, not for himself, Gen 24:6-7.

Are you willing to let the faith of YOUR father Abraham inspire you to persevere in your faith in God to do great things that He has planned for your life?

After the Workshop and QT Series

Week One

1. Reflect and think about a time when someone obeyed the “go” command and reached out to you. What did this person do that was helpful?

2. Start praying for two people that you want to “go” to and help them be disciples of Jesus. Names:

a. _____

b. _____

3. Pass around a list in your Bible Talk and pray for everyone’s names daily as a group.

4. Of all the requirements people feel they need to help others know God, which ones are the most effective? While all of them are useful, some are more effective than others. Rate in order of effectiveness with 1 as the most important point, and 4 as the least important.

___ Know the bible very well

___ Know how to defend the faith, like mastering apologetics

___ Know how to counsel

___ Know how to help people feel loved without any agenda

5. How do you feel about people that you have helped that now have faith in God as a result of your personal outreach?

Week Two

1. Get with your group and pray for at least 15 minutes about the mission and about your faith. Pray for God to really open a door.

2. After reaching out and spending time with people you have in mind, do you think that it is time to have the courage to initiate a bible study with him/her? Jesus showed courage when he spoke to Nicodemus in John 3:3-5, the Samaritan woman in John 4, the crowd in John 6, the Pharisees and many others.

3. Think about a time when someone spoke the truth to you in love. Did it help you? Think especially about people whose lives and marriages are hurting. Think about the people who think life is OK without God.

Week Three

1. As you study with them, remember to develop friendship with them. Have some people in the Bible Talk also reach out to these people. Why is developing friendship challenging? Can we show courage and develop friendship at the same time?

2. Write down six names of people that you know whom you have NOT reached out to yet.

Names	How Long Have You Known Them?
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	
f.	

3. Bill Hybels, a respectable Christian leader in the US, used the term “cocooners”. These are people who have built cocoons and who rarely step outside of their nice, warm safe lifestyles.

Instead God wants us to be “connectors”, people who step out by faith and who invest into the lives of others.

Which term could be used to describe your Bible Talk in 2010? What will it be like in 2011?

Week Four

1. Take a look at your circles. Where has your impact been felt? Where have you spiced things up, like the salt of the earth? Remember that Jesus says that salt can lose its saltiness.

Describe how you can be the Salt of the Earth for the following groups of people:

My family

My relatives

My circle of friends at work

My recreational friends

My neighbours

Strangers from opportunities

2. What can you do to reach out to those whom you have not done so?

When will you take action?

What will the steps be?

3. By faith, think what could they become for God? How might they look if they changed and lived for God? Share your views...

4. Do you spend time wondering what people would be like if they changed or wondering about your worries in life?

Week Five

1. How has your Bible Talk been doing? Have you been devoted to growing in the three areas of M. A. P. (Mission, Atmosphere and Participation)?

2. By having non-Christians in your Bible Talk, does it motivate you to be more giving? Is it more exciting to have such people there? What does that do to the atmosphere?

3. Do you make it a habit to follow up on possible visitors? Discuss this among yourselves. Does following up on others make a difference?

Decide and make a pledge to not give up easily as a group and to keep moving forward in seeking and saving the lost as a Bible Talk.