



4. How did Abraham demonstrate his faith in God? What can we learn from him and how can we apply it today?

5. What is your biggest take away from this week's sermon?

## Devotional: The Life God Rewards

Airlines and hotels offer popular reward programs as travel incentives to their customers. However, the best reward program is truly divine. According to the writer of Hebrews, God rewards those who seek Him by faith because “without faith it is impossible to please him” (11:6).

Faith is an essential element in our relationship with God. Hebrews makes this clear through a series of short summaries in chapter 11, highlighting the walk of faith by great men and women in the Bible such as Abraham who is mentioned three times in the hall of faith.

The life God rewards is a life of reckless abandonment and faith in Him. Is your life moving forward in faith? Life with God is always moving forward, never backward and rarely standing still.

## Bring It Home

Family Activity: Have your family gather around a chair in your living room or dining room. Ask each member of your family to take turns sitting in the chair. After everyone has taken their turn, ask them to explain how faith was used when sitting in the chair. Explain to them that we all used a little bit of faith when sitting in the chair. We each sat down trusting and believing that the chair would hold us. That's

faith. We can trust God because His word is true, and He will never fail us.

**What is one way we can put our faith in God?**

**When has God shown our family that we can put our faith in Him?**

**How can we strengthen our faith in God?**

Prayer: Lord, we pray as a family, that You will strengthen our faith. Help us to trust You with our day to day life, our health, our finances and our time. We know that You love us and will meet all our needs. We love You. Amen!



# **FORWARD**

*reaching to what lies ahead*

Life Group Discussion Questions  
**Kiss Your Comfort Zone Goodbye**

**Genesis 12:1-9**

March 1, 2020 / Dr. Ron Jones

1. Identify the five “I will” statements in Genesis 12:1-3. Who is speaking them? Discuss the significance of these statements as it relates to faith.
2. How did God test Abraham’s faith from the start? What are some ways God is testing your faith right now?
3. What does it look like for you to make an “all in” commitment to Jesus as Abraham did in his relationship with God?

4. How did God upset Abraham's comfort zone? In what way is God asking you to step outside your comfort zone, walk by faith, and trust Him?

5. What is your biggest take away from this week's sermon?

## Devotional: The Grand Epic of Faith

The first eleven chapters of Genesis form a grand epic and cover the first two thousand years of human history. It begins with creation and ends with the Tower of Babel. Then His story narrows to one individual and his descendants.

God's plan to redeem the crowning achievement of His creation shifts into high gear in Genesis 12 with a divine promise made to a pagan-worshipper named Abram. Though the promise made to him was unconditional, Abram would take possession of the promise only by faith, first by leaving his comfortable home in the Ur of the Chaldeans in reckless obedience to God's call.

Are you ready to kiss your comfort zone goodbye? Will you choose to walk by the grand epic of faith in God as Abram and his wife Sarai did?

## Bring It Home

Family Activity: Plan an imaginary journey for your family. Ask them all to sit comfortably on the couch. Make sure they all get nice and comfortable. Tell them that they are going to be like Abraham and do

what they are told. Ask them all to stand up and begin to walk together to a place that you will tell them. Follow them around the house telling them to keep going. Eventually guide them to the dining room and have them sit down at the table. Ask them how they liked the journey and what the hardest part was. Compare this to what God asked Abraham to do.

**What would you call your comfort zone? (think physical, mental, and spiritual)**

**What is something God could call you to do that would make you uncomfortable?**

**How can we apply faith when God calls us out of our comfort zone?**

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the many comforts that You have given us in our home. We thank You that You have provided and given us so much. But God, we ask that You help us to listen to You and do the things You have called us to do even when it makes us kiss our comfort zone goodbye.



# **FORWARD**

*reaching to what lies ahead*

Life Group Discussion Questions

**The Dark Side of Faith**

**Genesis 15:1-21**

March 8, 2020 / Dr. Ron Jones

1. God told Abraham to “fear not.” What is the relationship between faith and fear?
2. What is the relationship between faith and God’s timing? Why is waiting on God so hard? What does it look like for you to wait on God in faith right now?
3. Consider Genesis 15:6. How did Abraham respond when God reminded him of the covenant promises that He had made? How can we respond like Abraham as we wait on the promises of God? What practical steps can we take?

4. What is the nature of a biblical covenant? How should God's covenant have strengthened Abraham's faith?

5. What is your biggest take away from this week's sermon?

## Devotional: Finding God in the Dark

Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, experienced a season of darkness during the Boxer Rebellion. He said to a friend, "I cannot read; I cannot think; I cannot even pray; but I can trust." It was a dark and difficult time in the famous missionary's life, but God eventually gave him the light he needed to move forward.

Are you experiencing your own "dark night of the soul?" That ominous phrase comes from the title of a poem written in the sixteenth century by St. John of the Cross.

Wherever you are in your walk of faith, be encouraged that even some of God's star pupils, including Abraham, experienced times when they felt as though they were groping in the dark and wondering, "Where is God?" (Genesis 15)

## Bring It Home

Family Activity: Pick a night this week where the sky is clear. Find a place where you can see the stars best (the less light pollution the better). Take some time together looking up at the sky. Have your family begin to count the stars. After some time together, enjoying God's creation, sit down together and discuss the questions below.

**What did you see when you looked up at the stars? How did it make you feel?**

**When God told Abraham to do the same, what did He want Abraham to know?**

**In what ways can we feel comforted in knowing God keeps His promises?**

Prayer: God, we come to You tonight in awe of who You are and Your amazing creation. We thank You that we can look around us and see Your promises fulfilled. We pray that You will help us to see things from Your eyes and patiently wait for Your timing in our lives. Help us to follow You even when we are worried and scared trusting that You are right here with us. We love You and praise You. Amen!



# ***FORWARD***

*reaching to what lies ahead*

Life Group Discussion Questions  
**Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back**

**Genesis 16:1-15**

March 15, 2020 / Dr. Ron Jones

1. Like Sarah, why is it easier to doubt God than to trust His promises?
2. How did Abraham move three steps forward and two steps back? What resulted from his backsliding?
3. How is God asking you to exercise the patience faith requires?

4. What steps can we take to strengthen our faith?

5. What is your biggest take away from this week's sermon?

## Devotional: The Patience Faith Requires

The Urban Dictionary defines taking matters into your own hands as “dealing with a problem yourself because the people who should have dealt with it have failed to do so.” For example, when the police failed to catch her son's murderer, she decided to take matters into her own hands.

Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands when they were still childless ten years after God promised He would give them a son (Genesis 16). A strange twist takes place in the Bible's story of redemption when Abraham fathers a child with Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, who gave birth to Ishmael. Sarah would not give birth to Isaac, the actual promised child, for another fifteen years.

By taking matters into his own hands, Abraham lost the patience that faith requires and took two steps back. How is God asking you to exercise the patience of faith?

## Bring It Home

Family Activity: It's puzzle time! Pick out a puzzle you already have or go pick up a small puzzle at the store. Don't show the box to your family. Just dump the pieces out on the table and get everyone to participate in working the puzzle. As you're working the

puzzle explain how God only shows us one piece at a time. It's not until we trust Him and keep working the puzzle of life, that we see the final picture. Remember, God knows the end from the beginning, so we can trust His plan for us.

**What do you think happens when you try to do things your way?  
What happened when Abraham and Sarah did things their way?**

**What can we do when we don't know what God's plan is?  
(Matthew 6:33, Proverbs 3:5-6)**

**Why is being patient so hard? What are things we can do to help  
with being more patient?**

Prayer: God, we thank You that You have a plan for each of us and that You love us even when we don't follow it. We pray that You will help to guide us through this life and that You will help us to trust Your ways. Give us the strength and the confidence we need to follow You with our daily lives. Thank You for Your Word and help us to stay in it so that we can know Your heart better. Amen.



# **FORWARD**

*reaching to what lies ahead*

Life Group Discussion Questions

**Sacrificing Your Isaac**

**Genesis 22:1-19**

March 22, 2020 / Dr. Ron Jones

1. Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? What did this accomplish? What did it picture?
2. What is the relationship between Abraham's faith and his obedience? Illustrate with examples from the passage. Describe the relationship between your faith and obedience?
3. Take a moment to reflect. What is your Isaac? If God asked you to sacrifice it, could you? Would you? What would hold you back, if anything?

4. Isaac is perhaps an older teenager in Genesis 22, and yet the text gives no indication of a struggle. What does this say about Isaac's faith and obedience?

5. What is your biggest take away from this week's sermon?

## Devotional: Total Surrender

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is sacred ground for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. It is the place where Solomon built the first Temple and where Abraham offered up his son Isaac in an act of worship. Today, a gold-domed mosque sits atop the mountain.

In Genesis 22, Abraham is now an old man who has walked with God for nearly four decades. His son Isaac, the promised child, is likely a teenager when his dad receives instructions from Yahweh to sacrifice him as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah.

God tests Abraham in what becomes a picture of Calvary where our heavenly Father offered up His one and only Son, Jesus, for our sins. Abraham's act of faith and obedience required nothing less than total surrender. How is God bringing you to that same place of abandonment?

## Bring It Home

Family Activity: Today's activity is an oldie but a goodie; the "Trust Fall"! The object of this activity is an individual who blindly falls into the arms of others. The person falling will stand up straight, fold their arms

across their chest, face away from those catching them, close their eyes and fall into the arms of the person/people waiting to catch them (kids will probably trust falling into their parents arms more than those of a sibling). Explain to your family that Abraham and Isaac both had to trust God and each other. They didn't know the outcome, but they trusted the command.

**How hard would it be to obey if you were Abraham? What if you were Isaac?**

**How would you remember that day if you were Abraham and Isaac?**

**What is something God has called us to do that seems scary, but we know we need to obey? (sharing our faith, standing up for the weak, etc.)**

Prayer: Lord, we come to You today thanking You for providing in Your timing. We thank You that we can learn, through the experience of Abraham and Isaac, that we can trust You in everything. We pray that You will help us to see that in our life. Help us to trust and follow You every day of our lives. Amen!



# ***FORWARD***

*reaching to what lies ahead*

Life Group Discussion Questions  
**Reaching To What Lies Ahead**  
**Philippians 3:12-16**  
March 29, 2020 / Dr. Ron Jones

1. What goals are you absolutely determined to accomplish in life?  
How does this compare to the goal set for you by God?
2. What did Paul need to forget and lay behind him? Does this include both the good and the bad?
3. What does it look like in your life to “forget what lies behind and press forward to what lies ahead”?

4. Consider Philippians 3:15. What is the mark of mature thinking mentioned by Paul? How will you know if you are there and how do you change your thinking?
  
5. What is your biggest take away from this week's sermon?

## Devotional: The Upward Call of God

Too many of us live below our exalted position in Christ. We reach for things in life that are temporal not eternal, earthly not heavenly, downward not upward, behind us not ahead of us. We set goals and even achieve ones that are not worthy of the exalted Christ.

The upwardly called life is lived in response to the claim of God upon us as believers in Jesus Christ. It is a life that has positive direction and nearly always changes our trajectory, taking us higher and farther than ever before. How do we get there?

Paul writes, "One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

## Bring It Home

Family Activity: Today's activity is all about teamwork. It may take some thinking but try to find an object that is easy to pick up as a family but a little difficult by yourself. I would suggest a chair of some sort. Place the object in the middle of the room and ask each person to pick it up and move it from one point to another. After everyone has

had a turn ask everyone to work together to move that item. Point out how much easier it is to carry the item when you work together. Explain that God has called the church to work together for the common goal of telling the world about Jesus Christ by making disciples who make disciples.

**How would you define the word unity?**

**What are some examples of times when unity fixed a problem or made something easier?**

**How can we work together as a church family to achieve what God has put before us?**

Prayer: We pray, God, that You would strengthen Your church. That You would help us work as one church to reach forward for the things You have called us to do. Help us to be a light to this dark world. Be with Atlantic Shores and help us to be focused on You and to go out into the world and make disciples of Jesus Christ who go and make disciples. Amen.