

Four Men of God

Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David

Marilyn Kunz & Catherine Schell

Published by Q Place

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Four Men of God: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David
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Previously published as: *Four Men of God: Lessons in Obedience*
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Cover photo (View of Promised Land from Mount Nebo): [vvoe/Shutterstock](https://www.shutterstock.com)
First Printing 2018
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-1-880266-68-7

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Genesis 12—15

Abraham, An Adventurer for God

Read Genesis 12:1-20; 13:1-4

1. What is the LORD's initial call to Abram? What promises are included? What is Abram asked to relinquish?

What impression do you get of the extent to which God intends to involve himself in Abram's life?

How would you compare God's call to Abram to a human marriage proposal?

*Note: The word written as **LORD** represents the Hebrew name YHWH, meaning I AM WHO I AM, the Self-existent One. It's the name by which God made himself known to Israel. YHWH was probably pronounced "Yahweh."*

2. How does Abram respond to God's call? (See also Hebrews 11:8.)

At what point does the LORD appear again to Abram?

When and why does Abram build the first altar?

The second altar?

3. Why does Abram go to Egypt?

In view of God's promises in verses 1 and 7, what might have been a better action for Abram? (See Psalm 37:3.)

4. Having failed to trust God for food in the land of promise, what danger and subsequent temptation does Abram face in Egypt?

How would you characterize Abram's behavior in Egypt?

How does God intervene to prevent further wrongdoing, and at the same time, to rebuke Abram?

5. What does Abram acknowledge by retracing his steps and returning to the altar at Bethel?

Read Genesis 13:5-18

6. How does Abram handle the problem that arises between his herdsmen and those of Lot?

What further insight does this give you into Abram's character?

What confidence is required for someone to give up material wealth for spiritual gain? Give a present-day example.

7. Based on the LORD's response, how do you think he regards Abram's actions?

What additional promises does God make to Abram?

What does Abram do in response?

8. Compare Abram's situation with Jesus' promise in Matthew 6:31-33. How do the choices between self-interest or trust in God's provision play out in your life?

Read Genesis 14:1-24

9. Why does Lot get into trouble? Note Genesis 13:12-13.

How does Abram react when he learns of Lot's difficulty?

10. Describe the encounter with Melchizedek and the king of Sodom. Of what two things about God does Melchizedek remind Abram?

How does this reminder prepare Abram to deal with the king of Sodom's tempting offer?

What does Abram's response in these interviews reveal about his values (verses 20b, 22-24)?

Note: Occasionally it is helpful to refer to the first half of a verse as "a" and the second half as "b."

Read Genesis 15:1-21

11. How is the LORD's message to Abram in verse 1 appropriate in context of the events described in chapter 14?

Note: Abram has now defeated four powerful kings (14:17) and he has given up great material rewards (14:22-23). In this context, see God's word to us in Hebrews 13:5-6.

What is to be our security and the object of our affections?

12. What is the reason for Abram's distress (verses 2-3)?

What specific promises does God give to Abram? Compare 15:5 with 13:16.

13. How does Abram respond (verse 6) to the LORD's astounding declaration, and upon what does Abram base his belief?

In Romans 4:1-5, 23-25, Paul comments on this scene. What do these verses say to you?

14. In two columns, list God's few commands and many promises to Abram (12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1, 4, 5, 7).

Commands	Promises

15. What covenant or pact does the LORD make with Abram (verses 7, 18-21)?

What pledge of his promise does God give to Abram (verses 9-17)?

What future events are revealed to Abram (verses 13-16)?

Note: An ancient form of contract or covenant is described here, in which sacrificial animals were divided into halves, and the two parties to the covenant passed between them. In this particular covenant, only a symbol representing the LORD (verse 17) passed between the pieces, indicating that God alone was undertaking the fulfillment of all the conditions of this covenant.

SUMMARY

1. How has the LORD initiated his relationship with Abram in chapters 12–15?

What do these chapters reveal about God?

2. What do chapters 12–15 reveal about Abram?

What are his weaknesses and strengths?

What spiritual qualities does he exhibit?

3. Which of Abram's qualities do you most desire in your life?

What can you learn from Abram's failures?

CONCLUSION

Abram possesses the spiritual confidence to leave his home and go to a new land in response to God's call. In this new land that God has promised to him, Abram is able to hold his possessions lightly, allowing Lot the first choice of the land. Abram's greatest step of courage and faith so far occurs in Genesis 15:6, where he believes God for the impossible.

PRAYER

O God, who calls each of us from our former ways to live in agreement with you in a new land of spiritual reality, give us the sensitivity to hear your call, and the courage to obey and move ahead with you. Amen.