

Meditation: ON A JOURNEY

"This world is not our home; we're just passing through."

As a child, I longed for adventure. I wanted to go places, to see sights, to do things, and these desires caused a restlessness, a discontent within me. In time I did do some traveling and had many interesting experiences, the memories of which nourish my soul to this day. Now, because of my neurological condition, my traveling days on this earth are over and I don't mind at all! I am quite content to stay here at Sky View with limited physical mobility, and I'll tell you why: It's because I've come to see that all of life for a person with faith in God is an adventure, a spiritual journey that never ends, even after we arrive at the place our Lord has prepared for us. I am enjoying this trip so much that I don't miss the other trips. I really believe that the best is yet to come, and – let me be clear here – I DO mean after death! I don't look for the total healing of my physical body here on earth, despite Bible verses that seem to promise good health, because I am CONVINCED that in Heaven I will NEVER AGAIN have to cough, blow my nose, or type out the words I want to say! While I'm still on earth, where these afflictions – and many more! – are normal, my desire is to allow these things to build in me a patient endurance that will glorify my Lord.

My attitude has been shaped by the Bible stories and passages that I have read repeatedly throughout my life. One of my favorites is found in Hebrews 11.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear a child because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, knew this world was not their home – that they were just passing through on their journey to the heavenly country that would be their permanent abode. Their faith in what was yet to come affected their lifestyle in interesting ways, such as being willing to move around a lot with tents as houses, even though they were wealthy enough to settle down; living with unfulfilled promises; and living as strangers and foreigners on this earth. They set a fine standard for all of God's people on the move. The opening verses of Hebrews 11 give us a clear definition of the quality of faith that enabled these people to live with such lofty attitudes:

Now faith is being SURE of what we hope for and CERTAIN of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we UNDERSTAND that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

The faith that motivated Abraham and the others was STRONG and STABILIZING. They didn't WONDER if God and Heaven and eternal life were real; they KNEW the invisible world was real! What's more, they knew that God had SPOKEN the visible world into existence! That powerful a being, who also spoke to them, CERTAINLY was due their respect and honor, best shown by obedience, no matter what God asked them to do. Abraham is not only called a man of faith in the Bible, he is also called God's friend, a high calling that is also available to us! Listen to the connection Paul makes between Abraham and people with faith today:

Galatians 3:6-9 – Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The 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 have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

I wonder if that passage makes you as happy as it makes me? I am delighted to know that by faith – that is, by believing God – I am a child of Abraham, as well as God's child! Abraham was blessed, and so am I! What a privilege to be on the same journey through this world on the way to our heavenly Home that so many have traveled before us! And what a reunion awaits us when we arrive!

Faith is meant to increase as we continue on our walk with God through this life. This is what happened with Abraham. He was chosen by God to receive marvelous promises, some of which affect us today, as we have mentioned. He was also given commands at times, which his faith allowed him to obey. The first command to Abraham recorded in the Bible is in Genesis 12, where God told him to leave his country, his people and his father's household and go to the land that God would show him.

From the beginning God had been making great promises to Abraham that would come through his offspring. The problem was that Abraham's wife Sarah had always been barren, and now they were old, with Sarah's childbearing years behind her. Then when Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100, she gave birth to their son Isaac, much to their delight! (NOTE: Isn't God amazing? We really get to know God as we walk and talk with him on our journeys!) Then when Isaac was a teenager, God came to Abraham with a severe request. What could he do but obey? The story from Genesis 22:

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

As Abraham and his son went up the mountain, Isaac asked his father why they had no lamb for the sacrifice. Abraham explained to his son that God himself was going to provide a lamb for the

offering. After the altar was built, Abraham bound his son and placed him on it. When he raised his knife to kill Isaac, God prevented him from doing so. The test was over, and Abraham passed with high praise! Just then a ram became entangled in the bushes by his horns. That ram became the sacrifice as Abraham and Isaac worshiped and then returned to the servants. God had indeed provided! Now listen to what Hebrews 11 tells us about this story:

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead! That's how he was able to carry out this obedience! And of course, he was right! His journey was filled with adventure that all could be boiled down to this: Abraham and God were friends! What a privilege! Amen.

When traveling on earth, if we want to arrive at our desired destination we must take the roads that lead there. If we find we have made a mistake, we need to turn around and get back on the right road. Some people who want to go to Heaven are not sure how to get there. Jesus knew that, so one day when he was talking about his Father's House, he gave very clear instructions as to how to get there. Listen to the words of Jesus from John 14:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus said that he himself was the Way to God the Father and to his House. Jesus is the Route to take. We get onto this Road by believing in Jesus and receiving from him the forgiveness he offers. If you have been trying to get to Heaven some other way, turn around now and get on the Right Road. The Bible says: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.* The Way is filled with people on a spiritual journey Home, but there's always room for more! Yes, God's people are on a journey. May God receive the glory as we travel with him. Amen.

Scripture references: Hebrews 11:8-16; Hebrews 11:1-3; Galatians 3:6-9; Genesis 22:1-5; Hebrews 11:17-19; John 14:1-6; Acts 16:31.