



**This week – 187 lbs.
YTD – 507 lbs.**



COMMUNICATION **at sooke baptist church**

join our email list for weekly updates



The mayor's office of Caldas, Antioquia grants this recognition to El Redil Caldas, highlighting the good work carried out in building the social fabric of our municipality.

Mission Trip to Caldas, Colombia

Friday, November 25 – Monday, December 5, 2022

A week with our sister church, to encourage them and assist them in outreach to children, youth, adults, ESL, outdoor evangelism.

Speak to Rick if interested or if you have questions.

Abraham,
An Unlikely
Candidate for
God's Grace:
Genesis 12:1-5

Sooke Baptist Church
Sunday, July 24, 2022, 10am
also on Facebook Live Stream and YouTube

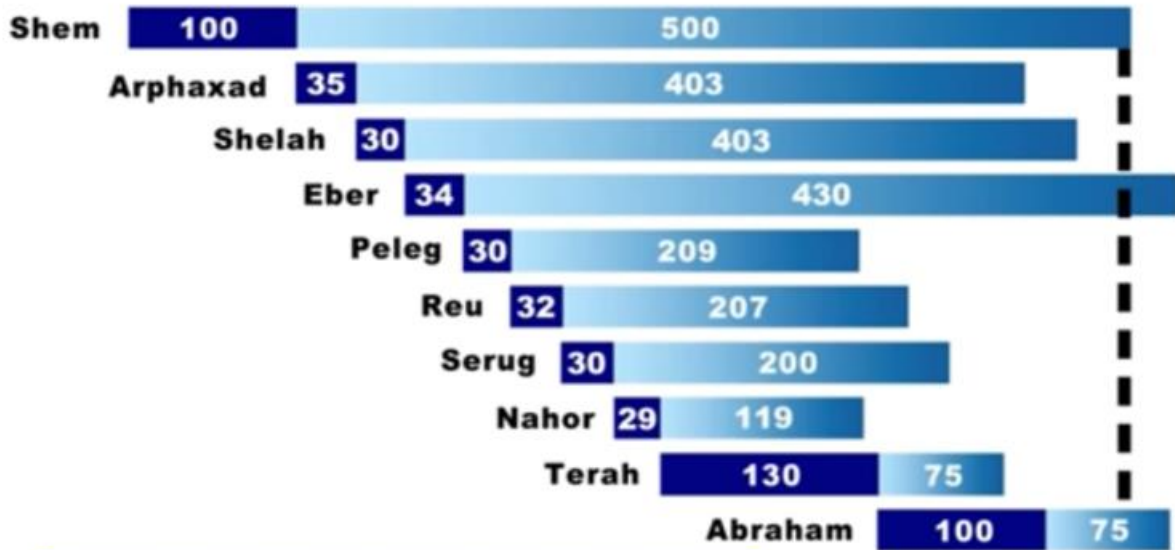
03:00

Coffee Question:
"If grace does not make us different, then we
have not experienced the grace of God."
Agree? Disagree? Explain.

The Back Story
of Abram:
Genesis 11:27-32

The reading of God's word.
Prayer

What you are looking at in this slide...



Abram's great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather was Noah.

... is the genealogy of Abram going back to Noah, through Noah's first-born son, Shem.

Abram was born in Ur of the Chaldeans around 2000 BC.

The archaeological ruins of Ur tell us that approximately five hundred years after the flood, not only had human culture rebounded, but that it was flourishing.





The next slide shows an artist's conception of what Ur might have looked like based on its ruins and what archaeological digs have uncovered.



The yellow arrow points to the temple that I showed you in the first slide – a temple that is still standing to this day.



Abram had two brothers... one was named Nahor, after their grandfather... and the other Haran, who as an adult died in Ur.

Abram's wife's name was Sarai.

In the Akkadian language, which they would have spoken, her name means "queen."

Sarai was the daughter of Terah, but her mother was different than Abram's.

The wife of Nahor was Milcah, whose name also means "queen."

She was the daughter of Haran who had died, which means she was Nahor's niece.

Abram and Sarai were not able to have children because Sarai was unable to conceive.

As their story unfolds, we shall see... Sarai's infertility was a great test of faith for Abram and Sarai.

In their story, in the waiting and in the provision, God made known his power and ability to do the impossible.

This truth about who God is ... is a crucial aspect of the story of God's Rescuer who would come through the lineage of Abram and Sarai.

The Rescuer's coming would require waiting on behalf of those who looked for his appearing.

His coming would also require, in the generations that followed.... repeated miraculous interventions by God.

Terah, Abram and Sarai, and Lot, the son of Haran, left Ur with the intent of travelling to and setting in the land of Canaan.

When we read the Scripture, it would seem God's call was for Abram alone.

So why then did Abram leave Ur with his father Terah?

We are not told.

The text also causes the reader to wonder why it was Terah who took his son Abram... and set out to go to Canaan... rather than the other way around.

Maybe Abram was slow to act on what God asked of him.
Maybe God stirred the heart of Terah to migrate in order to move Abram along.
We can only speculate.

But who among us is not grateful for God's intervention in our own lives through others when we were slow to say yes to him?



Another aspect of the story for which there is no explanation, is why after travelling approximately 1000 kms...



... which would have been a journey of at least 50 days, their migration to Canaan was interrupted.

They stopped in a place called Harran, located in present day Turkey... where they stayed until the death of Terah.

The following four slides show pictures of the ruins of ancient Haran.



It is important as we begin to study the life of Abram... that we understand that neither Ur, nor Haran were backwater, “podunk” places, but thriving commercial and cultural centers.

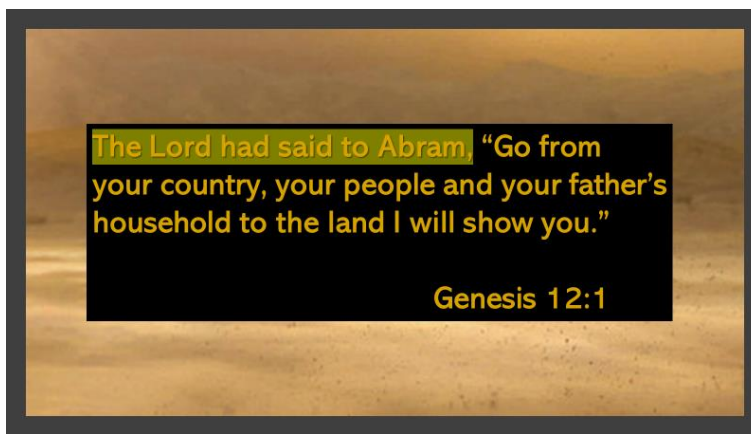
This too is important to know.



Ur and Harran were centers that worshipped the moon god “Sin,” who was the father of the goddess “Ishtar” and the sun god “Shamash.”

When God called Abram, he was a worshiper of idols... a most unlikely candidate for God’s grace.

Genesis 12:1



Abram’s story, as told in the book of Genesis, begins with God appearing to and speaking with him.

We are not told how old Abram was when this happened.

But the fact that verse 1 reads... “The LORD had said to Abram...” ...tells us that this took place when Abram lived in Ur.

After the death of Terah, Abram resumed the journey, which some years earlier, God had asked him to take.

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

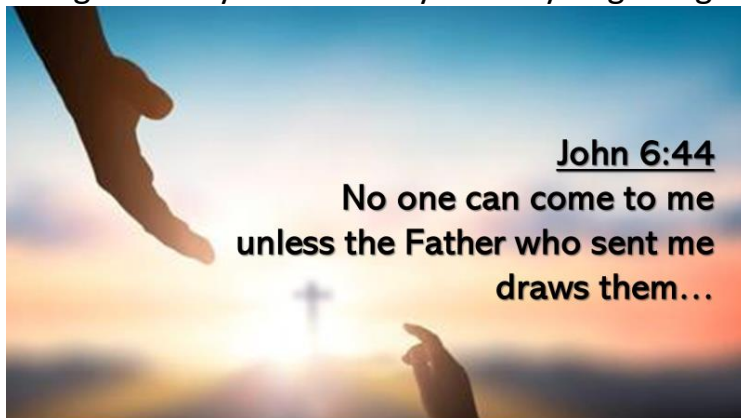
Genesis 12:4-5

It was important to God that we know that Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Harran to go to Canaan.

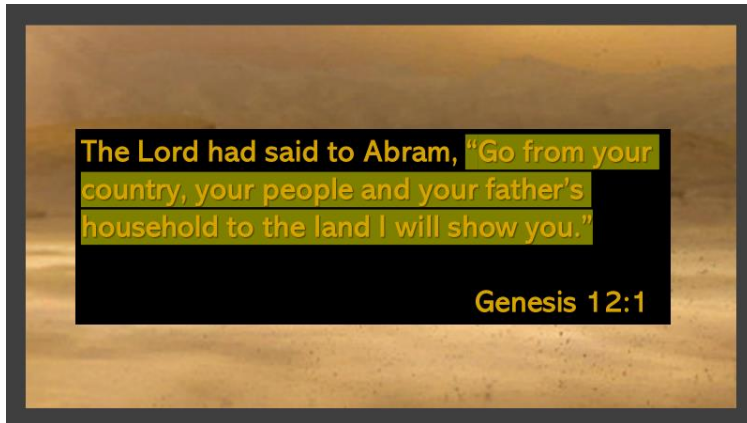
Seventy-five typically is not the age when people set out on new adventures; when they pack up their life and start over.

But when a person has been gripped by the love of God, and has experienced his forgiveness, and tasted his mercy... that changes everything.

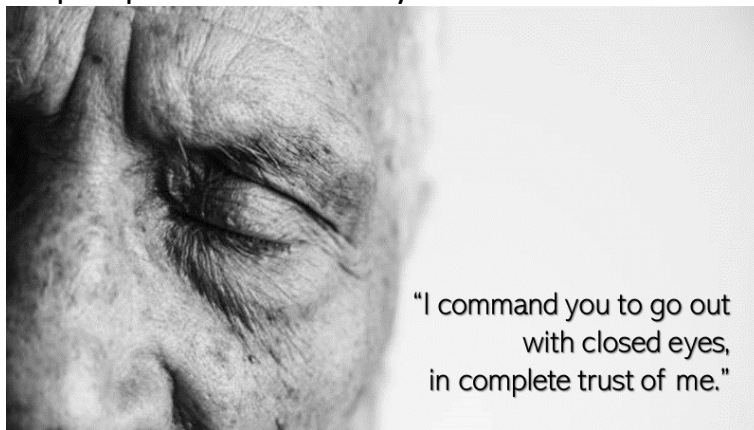
Being found by God is always a story of great grace.



When God appeared to Abram, he asked him to leave behind everything that up to that point had defined him.

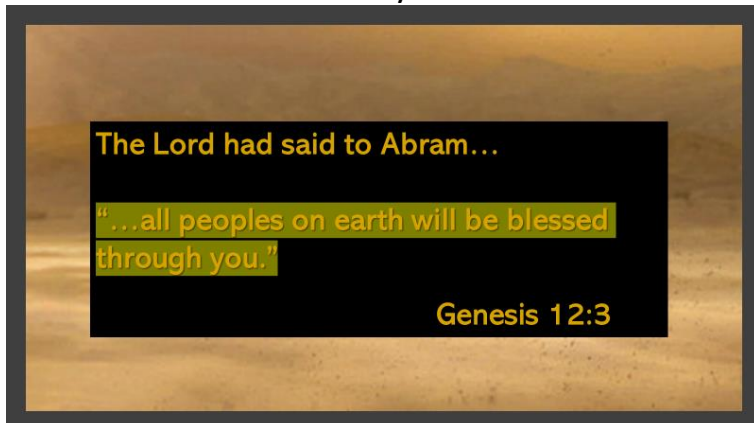


I appreciate how John Calvin described what it was that God was asking of Abram. He paraphrased it this way...



Waltke, p.204

On the one hand what God asked of Abram was unique. For with Abram, God added detail to his long ago promise about a Rescuer who would come. He said that if Abram obeyed him...



... all peoples on the earth would be blessed through him. What did God mean by that?

If Abram obeyed God, through him and Sarai... .. the Rescuer would come... and not just rescue them... but rescue all people on the earth. It is this that makes Abram's story unique.

But there is an aspect of Abram's God story... that is also typical of all who follow Jesus.

Every person is faced with this question: will we center our life in Jesus and live on his terms?

In order for Abram to follow God, he had to lay down everything in his life that had taken God's place – which for him was his national, cultural and family identity.

There was no room here for negotiation.



That's why Jesus repeatedly told people to count the cost before following him.

But what God promises... to those who come to him; who trust in him; who turn to him from an empty way of life... is astounding.

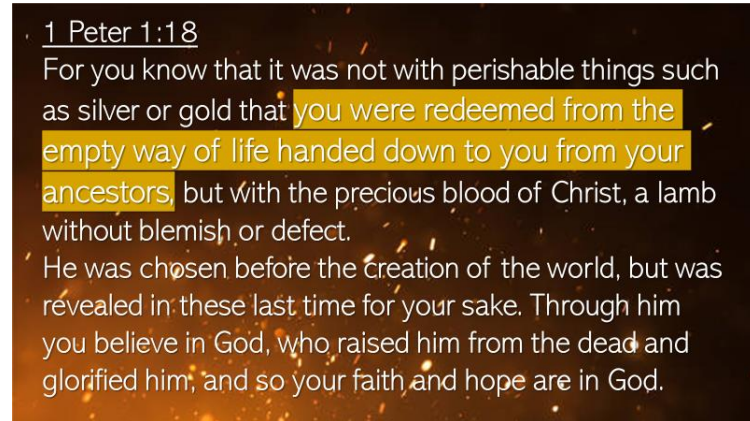
Look again at the promises spoken to Abram.

**The Lord had said to Abram,
"Go from your country, your people and your
father's household to the land I will show you.
I will make you into a great nation and I will bless
you; I will make your name great, and you will be
a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and
whoever curses you, I will curse, and all peoples
on earth will be blessed through you."**

Genesis 12:1-3

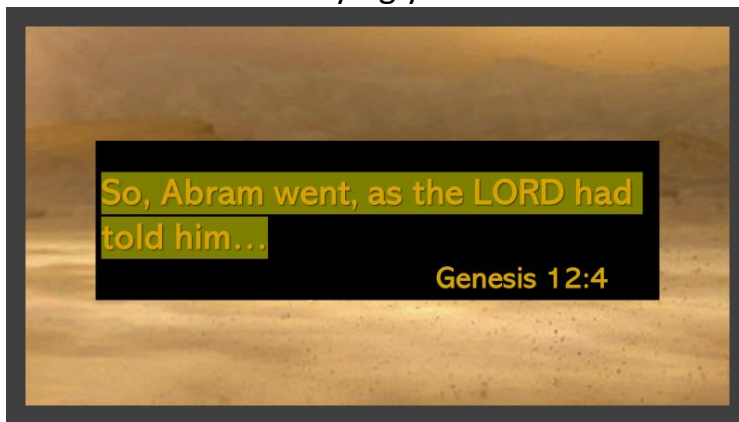
If Abram would put into God's hand what he could not keep, God would give to him what he could not lose.

It is the same for all who come home to God through Jesus.



To follow Jesus, we lay down an empty way of life... and receive from God the life of the ages, the life that is full and abundant, the life that cannot be touched by the second death.

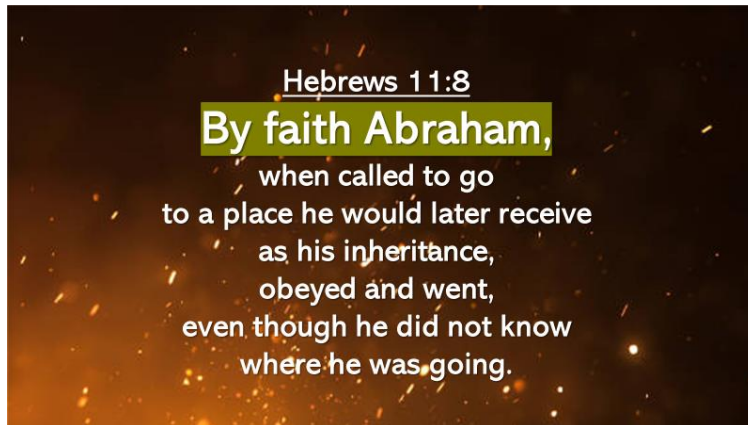
What Abram did in saying yes to God...



... was an act of faith.

He went because he believed God is trustworthy.

Hebrews 11:8 confirms...



This is why, Abram is said to be the father of all who believe in God. Romans 4:11-12.

That said, the Bible does not airbrush the story of Abram.
Some of the things Abram did were shocking.
Twice he pimped out his wife to save his own life.
And then there was the whole Hagar debacle.

As we unpack the details of Abram's life, it will make you wonder why God isn't more selective in who he invites to be in relationship with him, in who he utilizes in carrying forward his rescue plan.

And then, God in mercy by his Spirit will hold up the mirror of his word, and we see ourselves as God sees us... and like those whose stories populate the Bible... ..we are reminded that God delights to search after and bring into relationship with himself... flawed, sinful individuals, whom he transforms, with their willing cooperation, into trophies of grace.



Remember the words we sang?

“Two wonders I confess, my worth and my unworthiness.”

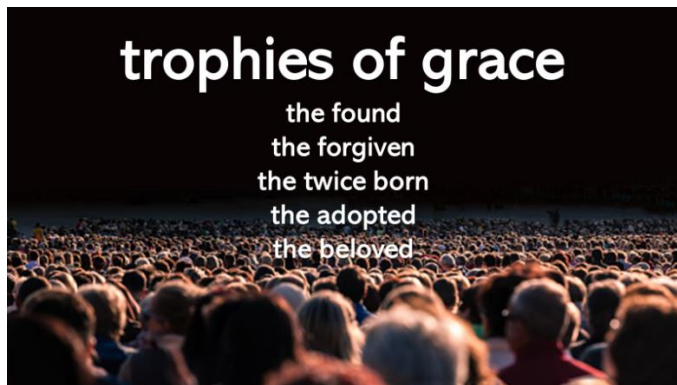
This is why the gospel of Jesus Christ is scandalous... for it boldly proclaims that salvation is of the Lord!

It cannot be earned.

It is a gift of God.

The grace of God covers our shortcomings because it is greater than our sin.

The emphasis of the gospel is not on who we once were, but on who we now are in Jesus Christ...



How awesome is the God who searched for and called Abram and Sarai to himself!

He is the same God... and he too pursue after us... to bring us into relationship with himself.

Having spoken much of God's surprising and amazing grace, in closing I must remind you of Abram's obedience.

- He and Sarai left Harran in obedience to God.
- He and Sarai travelled to Canaan in obedience to God.
- He and Sarai lived in Canaan as sojourners in obedience to God.

And so, it is with all who come to Jesus.

In response to his grace, we repent of our sin.... in obedience to him.

In response to his grace, we obey him... and trust in Jesus alone.

In response to his grace, we obey him... and keep in step with his Spirit who leads our lives... going wherever he leads us.

The grace of God meets a person wherever they are... in Ur, in Sooke.

But praise God... it never leaves us as we were found.

God actively works in us transforming us into a trophy of his grace.



We praise you for Jesus Christ our Savior who rescued us from an empty way of life.

We are grateful that through him our sin debt was paid.

How incredible is your salvation; your peace and your justice that kissed a guilty world in love.

You are our greatest treasure. To God be the glory!



We hear what you said through the prophet Zechariah, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit."

Thank you for the precious gift of your Spirit, who has made his home within us.

Without him we could not live as your people, nor serve our generation! To God be the glory!



We ask for your peace and grace...

... for nations that are troubled...

...for those we know who are troubled...

To God be the glory!



We ask on behalf of Rick Wismer (Youth for Christ) for clear direction and a definitive call from you as he meets potential Indigenous staff members. May your will be done.

To God be the glory!

- We ask for you to comfort Marion's family and friends who mourn her passing.
- We ask for Grace Garden... for your blessing on the land that it might yield a great crop.
- We ask for adults to join the Youth Ministry team.
- We ask for you, if it be your will, to bring together a ministry team to serve in Caldas, Colombia this year.
- We ask all of these things in confidence that you are a good Father and have welcomed us to bring our requests to you. Amen.