

6 Ways God Delivered Abram

- It's so good to see you, men. Hey, if you're new, here's how it works. We tend to go through a book of the Bible on the weekend, and then there's a leadership lecture for the men here at Real Men. We're honored to have you join us live or online. And what I'm really excited to talk about tonight, and then you'll get some time to talk about, around the table, is a guy named Abraham. So where we find ourselves in the story of Genesis, it starts with a guy named Adam and his three sons. And then it covers over 1,000 years, and a lot of guys and their sons, and then it stops and it slows down for a guy named Noah, and then his three sons, and then it moves forward to a guy named Abram, or Abraham. His name literally means father. And so he's a guy who shows up, end of Genesis 11, beginning of Genesis 12, and he is prominent all the way through about Genesis 25. And so he becomes this major centerpiece, not only in the Bible, but in world history. There are few people in the history of the world that are even in the same category of Abraham. I'll give you just a little bit of his background. Today, there are three major religions that all say that they follow Abraham. Judaism, the Jewish people, Islam, and the Arabs, and also Christians. In addition, cults like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, they would also say, "We follow Abraham." Abraham shows up about 300 times in your Bible. He's mentioned in the four Gospels in the New Testament, 11 New Testament books. There's Hebrews chapter 11, that talks about people who are examples of faith, and it has this list of people. And what's curious therein is that most people get one verse, Moses gets six verses, Abraham gets 12. He's just the dude of dudes. He gets a lotta airtime. He's a big deal in the Bible. And what can happen is, we look at a guy, sort of at the end of his life, when he's lived in God's grace and some good things have happened, and it can actually get a little discouraging, 'cause it seems like, man, I'm just not there. I'm just not there. And sometimes the most helpful thing is not to look at where a guy is, but where a guy started. And there's some guys, even in this room, that are successful in business, they got good marriages, good families, they love the Lord, they know their Bible, there's some great guys, but as you get to know them, you may hear in their story, like, wow, where you started is not where you're at. And so I don't wanna just tell you about how impactful Abraham was, but I want to tell you how he began. And the point is, if you get to know him for where he started, it gives you hope for wherever you start. And so, in the ensuing weeks, we're gonna spend a lot of time with Abraham, so I wanna introduce him tonight, but here's the first thing. We're talking about six things that God delivered Abraham from. God delivered Abram from a bad dad. His dad was not a good guy. Now, I don't know if you had a bad dad. If you did, don't raise your hand, especially if you brought your dad. But sometimes you're like, "Man, I didn't have a great dad," and sometimes a great dad can be a real head start. You know, sometimes a guy's got a dad and he's like, "He loved the Lord, he loved my mom, he taught us the Bible, he prayed for us, he helped me buy my first house, he laid hands on me and loved on me, and I was born in the red zone." Other guys are like, "My dad was horrible, and I was born in the parking lot, and I didn't even make my way onto the field. My dad did not help me at all!" Abram had a bad dad. Now, he's gonna become the father of our faith, and he's literally, you know, he's the father of our faith, but his father was not a good father, and the big idea is, you can actually be a good father, even if you didn't have a good father. So here's what it says about his dad. Genesis 11:28, "Haran died in the presence of his father, Terah, in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans." So, Ur of the Chaldeans, those

are the Babylonians. We just looked at Babylon. Babylon's a horrible place, awful people. You know that's a fact because The Rolling Stones named an album after it. Anytime the Rolling... "Bridges to Babylon," anytime The Rolling Stones name an album after something, it's awful. That's just how you know it's awful! So he's got a bad dad, and he's born into a bad situation. And sometimes we look at it and we say, "Man, I wish I was here. I wish my life was at a better place. And if I had a dad, I probably would've started a little closer to where I should be." Well, he started with a bad dad. God delivered him from that. And he also was born into a bad culture. Nehemiah 9:7 says, "You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram, and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham." And so the point is this, God chose him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, again, we looked at it; it's Babylon. This is where they were trying to build, in Genesis, the city of Babylon and the Tower of Babel. These are proud people. They're trying to build a civilization and a culture apart from God. They had no regard for God, no love for God. They were completely lawless. They're just like rebellious Americans. This would be like, I had a bad dad, and I was born in Vegas. I mean, that's where he's starting. It's worse, I was born in downtown Portland. I was born in San Francisco, you know, to tech guys in dresses, like, that's where he starts, he starts in a rough spot. And so his dad and his culture, they're not gonna be real beneficial to him. In addition to those things that are against him, that God delivered him from, he was born into a religious, demonic, satanic cult. I mean, it doesn't get any worse than this. Joshua 24:2, "Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham, that's Abraham's dad, and Nahor, and they served," What? Other... His dad's demonic! So to worship other gods, it literally is to worship demons who are pretending to be gods. Other religions are propped up by powerful, demonic spirits and beings that pretend to be gods. They will answer prayer, they will heal you, they will provide for you, they'll give you whatever you want, as long as you give them your soul. That's the way the demonic works. So some people are like, "Well in our religion, we pray, and our God hears and answers us." Yes, Satan will give you whatever you want, as long as he gets to own your soul! He's willing to make the trade. And the way the demonic, counterfeit, false religions work, it's kinda like fishing. There's an old Puritan. His name is Thomas Brooks. He's got a book called "Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices." And he says the way that Satan works is the same way that a fisherman works. You figure out what the fish want, you put it on the hook, and the fish are dumb enough to bite, and they don't see the hook, and you pull 'em into the boat and club 'em over the head. That's the way Satan works. So, like, "Satan, I want power, I want sex, I want fame, I want money, I want comfort, I want a miracle." Satan's like, "I'll give that to you. I'll put that hook on the bait, or that bait on the hook, rather, you will not see the hook, you'll just see the bait, and I'm gonna reel you in and club you over the head." That's how demonic, counterfeit religion and spirituality works! It gives you what you want. It doesn't give you what you need. And it causes Satan to control you, rather than God to change you. And what it says is, his dad worshiped other gods. Now, again, don't raise your hand, but how many of you, especially your dad's here, you grew up in some freaky cult, like you were a Jehovah's Witness, you're Mormon, you grew up in some New Age, you're up in Sedona drinking oolong tea, sitting in the lotus position, talking to a rock, I mean... You laugh, but there's somebody doing that right now in their underwear! That's just what they're doing up there. How many of you grew up in something you're like, "Man, yeah, my dad was

just..." Maybe even if it wasn't formal, official religion and spirituality, it was just demonic. Like the dude was just, he was just not well. There was something really evil and dark about him. That's his dad. It says this as well, in Acts 7:2-3, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abram when he was in Mesopotamia," again that's ancient Babylonian region, "before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land, from your kindred in the land that I will show you.'" It was so bad that for God to deliver Abram, he said, "You're gonna need to leave everyone and everything you've ever known. You lived in Babylon. We're gonna need to move you. You inherited the family land and business. You're gonna need to leave that. You have only done life with your father, and he's just not a good guy, so you're gonna need to move, and you're gonna need to leave your mother and father." And so what Abraham knows is, everything in his life to this point has been certain, and what God is calling him to is totally uncertain. "Well, we've lived here for generations." "Okay, well, move!" And God doesn't tell him where he is going. He says, "I'll show you later." Well, you've got a family here. They're gonna support you and help you and give you an inheritance in the family business. "Lord, if I leave it, what do I get?" And he's like, "I'm not gonna tell you. You're gonna need to trust me." How hard is it just to move... How many of you have moved here from somewhere else, amen? Most of you probably have. But how hard is it to move to another country? I mean, Grace and I were sitting on the couch the other night, and I was studying Abraham, and they moved to another country, and we moved here from technically another country, but it was another city, but it's not America. And so I asked her, I said, "Man, if we had to move to another country," I'd never really thought about it, I said, "What country would you move to?" She looked at me, she's like, "I have no idea." I was like, "Me neither!" I'm not going to Canada. I don't like liberals or mayo on my fries, so I can't go to Canada. And I don't know how to play hockey, and I don't do the cold. And I'm sure not going to Mexico, I mean, like... They don't even protect their border. You know, nobody is trying to get in! So that's probably not the best place to be! You know? I've been to Canada. I drove through... Or I've been to Mexico, I drove through the border, and, man, to get into the States, it's hours, and to get into Canada, there's nobody at the gate! There's literally nobody! I was like, "We're in Mexico." They're like, "Yeah." Everybody's trying to go the other way. I asked Grace, like, "Where would we go?" I wouldn't go to Canada, I wouldn't go to Mexico, couldn't go to Australia. You know, I like "Crocodile Dundee," but they're not even allowed to leave their house! So I don't know where we'd go! Start thinking about it. Pick another country, be a citizen of another nation. This is a big calling, but here's the big idea, sometimes, for bad things to end is the only way for good things to begin. Let me say it another way. There's a Christian counselor who says that "for good to begin, bad must end." And so what Abraham can't do is just modify. Well, let me modify the religion of my family, let me modify the family system, let me modify the culture, let me modify the marriage. What God says is, "Actually, it's like death and resurrection." Like, "This has all gotta die, and then I'm gonna resurrect you and your wife and your family and your future with something brand new, okay?" So sometimes what we wanna do, we wanna do improvement, and God wants to do burial and resurrection. And there's no way to make it work unless he starts over. But ultimately, at the end of the day, he's in a bad cult. I mean, the God he just met, and God shows up to Abram in Genesis 12 and speaks to him. We'll get into that this next weekend. But he is literally saying, "You need to leave your cult and follow me," and it's a God that he just met. So here's what he's got against him so far. We're halfway through the list.

Bad dad, bad culture, born into a bad cult. In addition, number four, he's got a bad marriage problem. And let me say this. Every marriage has a bad problem. Let me say this, there's nobody that gets married and doesn't have a bad problem. Sometimes the bad problem is health, sometimes it's the in-laws act like outlaws, sometimes it's a blended family, and one of the kids is just not doing well. Sometimes it's the family business. Every family, every marriage, has something bad that is a big, painful, terrible obstacle. And sometimes we think, man, if I could just get rid of that, well, it would be something else. And here's the bad marriage problem. Genesis 11:30, Sarah, her name means princess. So she's high maintenance. She's a lot of shoes, a lot of lotions, a lot of products. If you wanna go out with her, you gotta give her 42 hours' notice, 'cause there's just a... There's paint, spackle, there's a lot going on. Her name means princess. She was what? Barren. She had no child. Abram's name means father. How many kids does he have? Zero. How painful is that? I mean, how many of you, you struggle with infertility, you're like, "We'd love to have kids and we've not been able to"? Grace and I have got five kids. We had one miscarriage, and it was devastating! To have zero children. Now, he has a beautiful wife, and, you know, he loves her, but they can't have kids. And for a man in our day, who's healthy, but a man in that day as well, why do you get up and go to work? So you can bless your family. Why do you make money, start a company, buy land, pay off your debt, pay off your mortgage, you know, stay sober? Because you want to love your wife, and with your wife, bless your kids, so they have it better than you did, amen? That's why most guys get up in the morning. You're like, "I want my kids..." Like if I was born on the 40, I want them born on the 20, and I want my grandkids born on the 5. Like, we're just trying to make progress here for generational legacy of our family. He's got no kids. And every time somebody says his name, it literally means father. Means every time he hears it, it's kinda just a little dagger to the heart. Hey, yeah, you don't have any kids. You're the fatherless guy named "Father." In addition, he was looking at a bad death, meaning, at this point, you know, he's got a bad dad, he's in a bad culture, he's in a bad cult, and he's got no kids. And here's what you learn. Genesis 12:4, "Abraham went as the Lord told him..." Abram was how old? 75! "When he departed from Haran." How many of you guys don't wanna start over at 75? How many of you at 75 are like, "You know what? I'm gonna move to another country, that I'm not sure where it is, and I'm gonna start a company that I'm not sure what it is, and we're gonna join a religion that doesn't exist, and we'll just see how it goes." How many of you guys, at 75, you're like, "There's no way I'm getting out of my chair," right? There's no way I'm getting out of my chair at 75! And sometimes what happens for men is, we think, you know what? Yeah, I've been going in a bad direction, but I've been going so long, it would be too much work to reverse course and start over. This is the lie that Satan tells a lot of men. "Yeah, your life isn't going that great, but you know, you've already run the red light, you're halfway through the intersection. You may as well keep going." Abraham is gonna start over at 75. Here's what I'm saying. It doesn't matter how old you are, if you're breathing, it's still a good time to get started.

- Amen.

- So if you're an older guy, don't be discouraged! You might only have weeks to live, but those could be the best weeks of your life! And if you're a guy who's blown some time, and some of

you blew your teens, you're like, "I didn't really do anything in my teens, I kinda blew it." Some of you blew your 20s, you're like, "I didn't really do anything." Some of you are blowing your 30s. Wherever you are, start there. He starts at 75. And if one of the greatest, most impactful, and significant men in the history of the world didn't even get saved and started until he was 75? Well, there's hope for all of us, amen?

- [Audience Members] Amen.

- I mean, it should be an encouragement. So he's 75 years of age, and he was looking at a really bad legacy. He was looking at dying as an unbeliever, in a cult, in a horrible city, with no children to hand what was a very large empire to. He's a very wealthy man, he's got a lot of land, he's got a lot of business. Later in Genesis, he has his own personal army. I mean, so he's a man of great means. He's very wildly successful, but he's looking at having no one to give it to. He can't give it to God unless he knows God, and he can't give it to a kid unless God gives him a kid. And up until 75, he didn't know God, and he's gonna be about 100 when he has a kid. So God's gonna promise him that a son and an heir is coming, but it's gonna be around 25 years. How many of you guys at 100 don't wanna start parenting? You're like, "We're both in diapers!" Like, "This is odd! We're both eating the baby food. You know, it's just, we both nap a lot." He's gonna be 100 when he starts his family. But the point is, wherever you are, start there. Don't be discouraged by where you start. Wait and see what God does with faithful obedience, wherever you start. So, he waits almost 25 years. God says, "You're gonna have a son." He waits almost 25 years. And he almost shipwrecks the whole thing. Twice, he... You're gonna see this coming up, and this is gonna make you feel good. He gives away his wife twice. That's at least once too many, amen? Dude comes to him, she's pretty. "Yeah, she's my sister, do you want..." He doesn't do conflict, so he gives the promised wife away, twice. God brings her back. He gives the promised land away. God brings it back. And at one point, Sarah comes up with a really crazy idea. And that is, "Well, we've been waiting a long time for God to give us a child; he's not giving us a child." She says, "I got an idea, why don't we find a young gal, maybe one of my handmaidens, and you sleep with her until she gets pregnant?" Abraham's like, "Well, honey, if that's what the family needs," you know, like, "I think it's a bad idea, but I mean, for my family, I'm willing to make certain sacrifices." So he takes the handmaiden, gets her pregnant, and they have a child that's not the child of the promise. We're gonna get into all of this. The point of this, Abraham started with a lot against him, and even as a believer, true or false, he made some big mistakes?

- True.

- Yeah! You know, I mean, he's got baby mama drama. I mean, it's because of Abraham that the Arabs don't like the Jews and the Christians, and we have Islam as a secondary major world religion, and most of our geopolitical crisis started with Abraham's drawers. I mean, he made some mistakes. And the point of Abraham, we look at his impact in history, we're like, "He's one of the most significant men in history," and he started with a whole bunch of failures against him. And even after God saved him, he really messed some things up, but God delivered him. So the

hero of the story isn't Abram, it's ultimately Abram's God. But here's on his legacy, God said to Abram, "Go." And sometimes, you need to go from what God had you doing, or what you were doing, to what God has for you next. And this is not running from your problems. This is running to your calling. There's a big difference, just running from your problems, and running to your calling. He's not running from his problems. He's running to God's calling. "Go from your country, your kindred, your father's house, to a land that I will show you." Now, faith is two things. It's what you believe in here, and it's how you behave out there. The Bible talks a lot about faith. Abraham is repeatedly revealed to us as kind of the prototype, the example, he's called the "father of our faith." And faith is what we believe in here, and it's how we behave out there. In the New Testament, Paul, the apostle, he talks a lot about faith is what we believe in here. And James, Jesus' brother, talks about faith is how we behave out there, okay? And the truth is, faith is both. And Abram could say, "Lord, I trust you in here, but we need to see it out there." Unless he moves, he doesn't really trust the Lord. Unless you act and obey, you don't really trust the Lord! And so faith is not just what you believe. Faith is what you believe and it determines how you behave. Had he never obeyed God's calling to leave, he would not have walked into the destiny that God had for him. And so the point is this, sometimes we need to leave our former life and then trust God for our future life. And within this, when we think of Abraham to this day, as the story continues, and you're gonna learn a lot about him in the weeks coming together, he is a guy who has sons. It's Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus comes in the New Testament. He says that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Generations come through this man Abram, and ultimately bring Jesus Christ, the Godman. And what I want you men to just think about, as we're gonna spend Genesis 11, 12, all the way to 25 in Abraham is, not what is his impact in history, though it's magnificent, and I would submit this to you, world history is completely different if Abram doesn't obey the Lord and move and do what God told him to do. Everything changes in human history. But not just looking at the impact that he has left, but looking at all of the things that were against him and God delivered him through, and all of the mistakes that he made along the way. God's not looking for a perfect man, because God is a perfect God, so perfection is already taken care of. What God is looking for is men who will hear and obey, and when they get it wrong, hear and obey, to work with God to try and make it right. That's the story of Abram and Abraham. And it's almost like this, what is amazing is all that Abram can get done after age 75. And again, he doesn't even get his first kid, his only kid, until he's about 100. I mean, that's a late bloomer, amen? How many of you, you're like, "100," you show up and you're like, "I need a jersey. I'm ready to join the team." Like, you're 100. You've waited a while. But the point is, it's not too late. And it's almost like when we're disobeying the Lord... A pastor friend of mine, he uses the analogy, it's almost like we're in a canoe and we're paddling upstream. It's a lot of of work, it's a lot of effort, it's really hard. And when we turn our canoe around, and repentance is literally changing mind and changing direction, and God shows up and says, "Abram, time to stop paddling upstream, time to turn the canoe around. You're gonna leave here, you're gonna go there, you're gonna stop worshiping that God, you're gonna worship me as God. You're not gonna make your extended family your first priority. You're gonna make God's family... So here's the deal. We're turning your canoe around." As soon as the canoe turns around, it's amazing how much progress Abram makes. I mean, all of a sudden now, God starts to bless him in rich and incredible ways. God provides for him in

supernatural ways, and God protects him, even from bad decisions that he makes, that could wreck his whole family and legacy. It could cost him his wife and his kid! But God spares him. And I wanna use the story of Abraham just to say that sometimes when it comes to the Bible, we tend to think in terms of good guys and bad guys. The Bible's about bad guys and a good God, okay? It's not about good guys and bad guys. It's about bad guys and a good God, that's what the Bible's about. And also, when we come to the Bible, sometimes we treat it like superheroes. We're like, "Oh, well, they were superhuman. They were incredible, they, you know..." No, they were actually really like us. Abram is a lot like you. If you're a guy who has got some anxiety, you've had a big move, you've had some big adjustments and losses in your life, if you're a late bloomer, if you've tried to give away your wife, you're just like Abraham. You're real similar. You're running the same playbook. And the guys who laugh, pray for them. So they had a rough night. But let me say this, I'll close with this, and I hope it's an encouragement. So, for my family and I, Grace and I are married, we've got five kids. We were living in one place, we were invited to stay, and we had a good relationship with our governing board, but it was a very tumultuous and difficult season. My relatives, family was there. I've got like 20 nieces and nephews. I met Grace in high school there. All of our extended family is there. And literally, I was in the bedroom at our house and Grace was in the kitchen, and God spoke to us both audibly at the same time. It was... And God sometimes speaks to me that way. She doesn't usually get that. That's not the frequency that her and the Lord are dialed into. And so she came running into the bedroom and it looked like she saw a ghost. And she looked at me, she said, "God just spoke to me." I said, "That is so weird. God just spoke to me." She said, "What'd he tell you?" And I said, "Honey, I'm not gonna tell you, 'cause I don't wanna inform what you think you heard. I wanna hear it from you first," and she said, "He said we're released and we need to resign." We'd just agreed to come back to a job that we had held for a very long time. And she said, "What'd he say to you?" I said, "He said the exact same thing, with one addition, he said, 'A trap is set, you're released, you need to resign immediately.'" And Grace fell to the floor, my beautiful, wonderful wife, and started convulsing. She was like hyperventilating. 'Cause this is all she had ever known, this city, these people, that's all she'd ever known. She was born and raised there. And she looked at me and she said, "Where are we gonna live?" I was like, "I don't know!" She's like, "Well, what are we gonna do?" I was like, "I don't know! All I know is, this is over, and this is a question mark. That's all I got." And she's like, "That's not what I want!" And I said, "Well, it doesn't matter, honey, what we want. I mean, that's what he said. And if we believe that God is good, then we have to believe that even if we don't like it, it is good, and eventually we'll see it's good, 'cause God is good." So we prayed and fasted, 'cause we wanted to make sure. We ran this by our pastors and wise council and the spiritual authority over us, that we really had invited in for our life and knew our family and process. And they all 100% confirmed it was a word from God. So we resigned. And I didn't say anything, and you know, I don't need to tell my side of the story or whatever, and I remember we called a family meeting with the kids. We had to pick up the kids at school. It had already hit the news, and the kids had heard, and it was on their phone, and my kids were all crying, and media crews coming to the house and media crews coming to the school, and it's all kinds of drama and chaos. So we picked up the kids and we drove to a hotel, checked in and under an assumed name, 'cause the media and the critics were at our house and we couldn't have any privacy as a family. And I

remember just sitting in a circle in the hotel room with Grace and the kids, and they were all crying and I was crying, and they were like, "So do we need to leave Grandma and Grandpa?" I said, "Yeah, we're gonna probably have to move. I don't see how we can stay." They're like, "Well, how long do we gotta be in the hotel?" I was like, "Till it's safe to go home. I don't know when that will be." They're like, "Daddy, what are you gonna do for work?" I was like, "I don't know. I don't have a job. I don't have a plan. I don't have a backup job. I had a job and I quit it, and now I don't know what I'm doing." They're like, "Well, are we ever gonna be able to go back?" And I was like, "I don't know!" All these questions. And they said, "Well, what's gonna happen?" I was like, "I don't know." I'm 45 years old. I got five kids. I got an elementary, middle school, high school, college. All I heard was, "Leave, and I'll show you later." I was like, "Oh." I mean, I'd always studied Abraham, and I thought it was interesting, till I was living it. And then I found it really scary and anxious. If I had to be honest with you, in that season, I didn't respond with tremendous faith. I had a lot of anxiety. How am I gonna feed my family? How am I gonna lead them? What does the future hold? Can I get 'em to safety? I got five kids. I love 'em, my wife. We've been through a lot. Like what, what are we... How's this gonna... So I reached a point where, for a while, the anxiety was so high for me, I got a hand tremor. I remember there was one day I was sitting at my desk and I was trying to do something. I'm like... I was like, "Okay, this isn't good." So I tried to read my Bible, and I couldn't read it. My eyesight was gone. And so I tried to go for a drive, and my depth perception was gone and I couldn't drive, and I had hand tumors and I couldn't see. I'm like, "I'm not doing so good." So I went in and I saw an eye doctor. I was like, "There's something going on. He's like, "Are you stressed?" I was like, "Yeah, a wee bit, you know." Wee bit, nervous eye twitch, you know? And all of a sudden it's like, okay, my body is telling me that my soul isn't doing so good. And it was because of the anxiety of, I know what this is and it's not great, and I don't... I love certain people and things, but this is not sustainable, and this is not healthy for my family, but a complete unknown future, no clue, I mean, literally, blank sheet of paper, and God's like, "Uh, I'll tell you later." As a man, that time in the middle, it terrified me, if I'm totally honest with you. I wish I could tell you, like, "I woke up every day, I tapped the red S on my chest, my cape fluttered in the wind and me and the Lord moved..." No, that wasn't it. I was a hot mess minus the hot, okay? And then in that, God led us to Arizona. And that's where he led us to. And then he led us to plant this church, and so that's why we're here tonight. We wouldn't be here unless God spoke to us, and we left everything we knew for that which was completely unknown. And I will tell you this, it was not anything short of a blessing from God, one of the greatest blessings of my whole life. And sometimes your greatest blessing is wrapped up in your deepest pain, and sometimes your greatest blessing is wrapped up in your most difficult obstacle, and sometimes your greatest blessing is wrapped up in your worst fear. And God has been 100% faithful to me and my family. And he moved us to Arizona, and I didn't know what the future would hold, and I didn't know what the last few years would look like, and, oh! The last few years have been quite a century. I mean, it has been exhausting, and God delivered us and provided for us. And what I love is that not only did God speak to us and deliver us, there were things that I said and did along the way, like Abraham, that are foolish, or were wrong, or were based in fear and not faith, and I screwed it up, and guess what? God was gracious to me, and God still blessed us. And I am honestly in the happiest, most healthy, joyful season of my life, and looking at my future, I have the greatest

hope and joy of my entire life! And sometimes, for good to start, bad needs to end. And sometimes, it doesn't matter where you begin, just begin where you are, whatever age you are, whatever circumstances you are in. And the story of Abraham is this, if you just get your canoe going with the stream, it's amazing how much progress you can make. And even when you get it stuck on a rock, how gracious God is to get it off the rock and get it back in the stream. For those men that are in the middle of it, are there any of you men that have been through it, that you would testify that's your experience? That's my experience. So as we get into the story of Abraham, I'm gonna give you a few questions and pray for you in a moment. And it is simply this, don't just look at Abraham and be like, "Oh, he's incredible!" It's like, he's just like me. And if God could do that for him, God could do good for me. We love you guys. We're not here to rub your nose in what you've not done. We're here not to shame you, but to encourage you, we're not here to talk about all the things that you got wrong. We're here to talk about the God who helps make it all right. So here, I'm gonna pray for you in a moment. Thank you guys for letting me teach. It's an honor. I'm gonna pray, and then you'll have some discussion time in a bit. But what has God delivered you from? From Abraham, bad father, bad culture, bad cult, bad marriage problem, looking at a bad death and leaving a bad legacy, and God overcame all of that. What has God delivered you from? And then how can we pray for you? Father, thank you for an opportunity to teach, and God, I thank you that the story of Abram is not just what happened, but it's what always happens. And Lord, here we are in Arizona. It's weird, 'cause we're in the fastest-growing city and county in America, and a whole bunch of people are feeling like Abram and Sarah. We're moving. We're starting over. This is a little scary. What are we getting into? God, I pray that the story would really comfort those and encourage those who are in that season. God, for those who are listening online, and they're trying to figure out, "Okay, Lord, do you want me to stay at my job? Do you want me to stay in my city? Do you want me to stay in my church? Or do you want me to move? Is it time to pivot and go?" God, I pray that you would speak to them as you did to Abram, and I pray that that would be confirmed by wise counsel, by godly people, because sometimes, Lord, the enemy whispers too, and sometimes you whisper, but we misinterpret what it is that you've said. And God, I just wanna thank you that you delivered me and my family, and that you provided richly for us and blessed us. And I thank you for the season of life that we're in. And I thank you, God, that the story of Abraham and Sarah just makes so much sense to Grace and I and our family. And God, I just pray blessing in the Holy Spirit on all the men who are trying to get their canoe going downstream. God, if they're trying to do the right thing, if they're trying to obey, if they're trying to hear, if they're trying to heed, God, I pray that you would give them lots of grace, that you would speed up everything that they do, that you would give additional impetus and progress for all of their efforts and you would bless them and their children and their children's children. And God, as we look at Abram, here we are thousands of years later, and we're blessed because of him. And I pray that in generations, others would be blessed because of these men. And God, for those of us who make mistakes along the way, we get our canoes stuck up on a rock like Abram did. God, would you get us unstuck and keep us moving downstream, in Jesus' good name? Amen.