

ABRAHAM: ONE NOMAD'S AMAZING JOURNEY OF FAITH

A Classic Series

The Pleasures of Passing God's Exams

Genesis 22:11–19



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Too many people have lost their joy and are suffering a chronic case of the “woe-is-me” syndrome. They’ve either forgotten or never learned that amidst the desert-like sadness, sorrow, tragedy, and grief of life, God has planted beautiful oases of joy, peace, celebration, and laughter. This shouldn’t surprise us, though. The world in which we dwell focuses on the negative. Weather forecasters speak of a 30 percent chance of rain. *Why not a 70 percent chance of sunshine?* We hear reports that 10 percent of pastors shipwreck their faith. *But what about the 90 percent who don’t?* Movies and television delight in exposing the dirty, disgusting underbelly of society. *Why not use media to paint a hopeful picture of how the world could be?*



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Sad Song Sung and Played in a Minor Key

The modern world in which we dwell tends to focus on the negatives—the minor chords that emphasize the sorrowful rather than the major keys that bring joy. This is especially true when we face—and pass—extremely difficult tests.

2. Joyful Principles after We Pass the Tests

When Abraham received the grade for passing God’s ultimate test of faith, several joyous things happened to Abraham as a result . . . and they will also happen to us.

- When we pass, God becomes more real and more personal than He ever was before the test (Genesis 22:11).
- When we pass, God relieves the pressure as He affirms our faith (22:12).



Quotable

*When we
walk with
God through
dark valleys,
we become
inseparably
connected
with Him.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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- When we pass, God provides additional needs in surprising ways (Genesis 22:13–14).

- When we pass, God multiplies His blessings as He ratifies His promises (22:15–19).



A CLOSER LOOK

What Does the Bible Say about Enjoying Life?

King Solomon linked joy in life, not to our material possessions, personal relationships, or ambitious pursuits but to our relationship with God and contentment with the simple things He gives us by His grace. Let's take a look at what Solomon said.

Solomon began answering the question of how we can enjoy life in the present with these words: "The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun" (Ecclesiastes 11:7 NASB). Solomon could have been referring to life in general, along with its simple pleasures, as gifts from God. The message? It's good to simply be alive.¹

Another way to understand this passage is in keeping with the imagery of the Old Testament poetic books, in which light and the sun are frequently used to represent the warmth and security of God's loving presence (Psalm 27:1; 84:11).² But these two interpretations aren't contradictory. Having an awareness of God's love and grace requires us to acknowledge that He gives us the simple things to enjoy (Ecclesiastes 5:18; 9:9). Solomon reinforced it in Ecclesiastes 11:8 (NASB): "Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all." We don't have to wait for that new job, that perfect opportunity, that longed-for relationship—or even until we get our own sinful act together—to enjoy the light that comes from God. We can begin basking in His love and grace now!



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LET'S LIVE IT

Next time you're tempted to major on the minor chords of life's tests and trials, remember these three things:

- Reflect on the many benefits that have come your way.
- Refuse to allow life's few negatives to eclipse the many positives.
- Renew your motivation by decreasing your expectations.

Read Psalm 103:2–5 and jot down the blessings that come from remembering His benefits. Then list the things in your life for which you are most thankful to God. Be specific. Remember even the “mundane” things you enjoy every day.

Endnotes

1. Donald R. Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament Edition*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985), 1003.
2. Ray C. Stedman, *Solomon's Secret: Enjoying Life, God's Good Gift* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1985), 151–52. Used by permission. Also published as *Is This All There Is to Life? Answers from Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2000).



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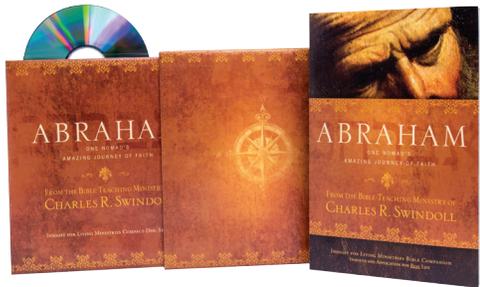
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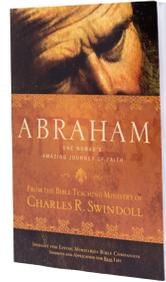
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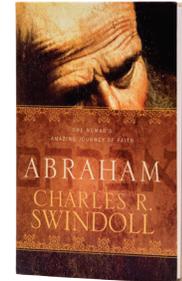
Tools for Digging Deeper



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