

Extraordinary Leadership – Extraordinary part 7

June 20, 2010 – Ben Radant

A _____, (Genesis 12:1-5)

B _____, (Genesis 12:15-16; 1 Timothy 5:8)

R _____, (Genesis 14:18-24)

A _____, (Genesis 22:1-2)

H _____, (Genesis 22:3-19; Matthew 22: 37-39)

A _____, (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18)

M _____, (Genesis 25:7-11; Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19)

I'm happy to be able to be with you today after a great week at VBS. I just want to take a brief moment to thank all of those who played a part in helping out with VBS this year. If you have volunteered in any way please stand up and be recognized for your wonderful help and servant's heart. The stage as you can see is set up from our VBS and we had a great week.

Today we continue our Extraordinary sermon series by looking at Extraordinary Leadership. We will explore seven things that make an extraordinary leader by looking at the life of Abraham.

The first thing that Abraham teaches us about leadership is that we must **Answer the Call**. Abraham receives his calling from the Lord at age 75. **Genesis 12:1-3**, "The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go 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."

It's important to know that Abraham was listening for God's voice. In order to hear God's voice you must have a relationship with Him to know what He sounds like. Abraham might not have known exactly where he was going, but he knew *who* he was following. In order to be an extraordinary leader you have to know the one who leads perfectly. "Abram believed the Lord and He credited to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6). He knew that when God gives you a calling you answer it. Even if the direction is strange, you follow it. Just make sure you know that it is God's voice you are listening to. *Extraordinary Leaders Answer the call.*

The second thing that Abraham can teach us about being an extraordinary leader is they Balance Their Blessings. Abram was a wealthy man. You might have missed it in the call that God gave Abraham, but Abraham had to take all the 75 years worth of stuff with him. God had given him wealth and possessions. He owned many livestock, had servants and tents with furnishings to boot. **Genesis 12:5**, "He took his wife Sarah, 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." There was no way that Abraham could have been as wealthy as he was without being able to make the most out of what God had provided him.

Abram was able to manage what God gave him for his family. A good leader will do the same. An extraordinary leader will take what God has given him and cause it to flourish. As a part of balancing God's blessings, we must make sure to provide for our families. **1 Timothy 5:8** says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." God's blessings are to be shared with our family and with God Himself. Abraham even gave his nephew Lot first pick of the land as they settled into the land God had been leading them. As a result of Abraham's actions God continued to bless him. God has shown through parables, examples and scripture that if we are wise in what is provided that we will receive more. Abraham also visited with the priest-king Melchizedek who was the king of Salem and was the priest of "God Most High". Here Abram gave the priest 10% of all that he had and the priest blessed him. Abraham Balanced God's Blessings and so do extraordinary leaders.

Abram **Reached Out to Godly People**, people like Melchizedek. Extraordinary leaders will not simply rely on their own wisdom. They know that they have their limitations and that they need to have people that they can go to who are in tune with God's heart. Think about the people that you surround yourself with. Think about the people that you turn to for wisdom and advice. Make sure they are people that love God and follow His ways. There are countless examples in the Bible of kings and important people who surrounded themselves with people that they thought were wise. The ones who showed measures of success were the ones who had godly people among the counsel and listened to them.

Be sure to listen to Godly counsel, but special attention to God's counsel. He is the only wise God, the Wonderful counselor and has all knowledge and understanding.

Abraham shows us another example of extraordinary leadership by Anticipating Sacrifices. Abraham was a very old man by the time he started his family. He was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. Isaac was the one that God had promised Abraham and I'm sure Isaac was well taken care of because of how special he was to Abraham. However, it seemed that God wanted to take that gift back from Abraham. God asked Abraham to go on another journey and take his son Isaac with him. They were to go to a place that God told him and they were to make an offering to the Lord. That offering was Isaac. God was going to see if He was first place in Abraham's life or if something else took God's rightful place. First see that Abraham was willing to sacrifice. Leaders need to *Anticipate Sacrifices* in order to please God. Abraham knew that God deserved what He asked for. We see examples all throughout the bible of people that were asked to give up much for the glory of God. Extraordinary Leaders know this and must be willing to give up anything we have when God asks for it. As a father we need to be willing to make sacrifices for our family. Selfishness will only destroy your family.

I'd like to read a quote from John C. Maxwell as it deals with sacrifice:

"Did you know that God provides tests as a measure of progress and as proving grounds for every person He calls to lead? Genesis 22 begins with a divine test... If Abraham would resolve to give up Isaac, God knew he would be willing to do anything asked of him-and therefore would be a perfect candidate to become father of the Hebrew people."

He goes on to give 5 things that these kinds of tests have in common:

1. Leaders get tested at each stage of growth.
2. The leader's goal is to pass the test.
3. Testing always precedes promotion.
4. Self-promotion or promotion by others can never replace divine promotion.
5. Promotion requires sacrifice.

The test God gave Abraham was really about priorities. That leads us to the next characteristic of an Extraordinary Leader: *Have your priorities in order*. Isaac was so important to Abraham, that God wanted to know if that love would get in the way of their relationship. We hear a phrase like family first and it seems to be a wise statement. Unfortunately when we do that, they become the center of our universe and not God. When anything including family takes the place of God, we are off balance, and not living the lives that God intends us to live. Abraham knew this and was willing to sacrifice his precious son through whom God has promised everything. Jesus summed up God's commandments in this way, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And

the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22: 37-39) In saying this Jesus tells us that God is first and others are second.

Let's move on to the next thing that an Extraordinary Leader does and that is to **Acknowledge their Faults**. Abraham was not a perfect leader and not a perfect father. Even though he is regarded as the founding father of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, Abraham had his fair share of mistakes and flaws. Even the best leaders have something in common. They are human. As a result mistakes will be made and there will be consequences. If you attempt to deny your faults or look past them you will lose the trust of those behind you and you only fool yourself. One of Abraham's faults is that he liked to bend the truth. On at least 2 occasions he tried to pass his wife Sarah off as his sister. To be truthful Sarah was his half-sister as she was the daughter of his father, but they didn't share the same mother. Abraham feared that he would be killed if it was found out that she was his wife because she was so beautiful. In the case of Abimelech, the deceit was found out and Abraham was called out on it. Abraham had deceived an important man and put his family at great risk. Abraham made every effort to heal the relationship with Abimelech whom he deceived. He was able to exit those situations unharmed, but suffered a reputation for dealing falsely. Finally Abraham and Abimelech came to an agreement that they would never deal falsely with each other.

As leaders we need to acknowledge our faults and confess them. Completely clear your conscience and live your life in a way that you keep it clear. Maintain your integrity so that when people follow you, they know that they can trust you fully.

The last thing about leadership that we can learn from Abraham is that **Extraordinary Leaders Make their Mark**. Abraham lived a very long and eventful life. He died at the age of 175. That means he lived 100 years after he was called by God. The life of Abraham has greatly impacted the world. As I mentioned earlier, Abraham is the father of Islam through the birth of his first son Ishmael and the father of Judaism and ultimately Christianity through his promised son Isaac. We read about Abraham's life hundreds of years after his death in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 11 is known as the faith chapter and the people mentioned in this chapter are the Who's Who of faith.

As a leader you will leave a mark. Some will be like a watermark and fade quickly. Others will leave marks carved out in stone and will effect generations to come. Exodus 20:5-6, I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments." Parents, your children are the living mark that you will leave behind. The investment you make in who they are spiritually and beyond will be your legacy. Men, lead your families well. Leaders, leave your mark.

I'm going to challenge you to step up and be a leader. God may be calling you to an area of ministry. God may be calling you to lead a small group or Sunday School Class. Answer the Call. God has blessed you. Everything you have is God's to begin with. Manage and be a good steward of God's blessings. Balance them well. Reach out to those who will help you grow in Christ. Choose wise counsel and friends that will build you up in the faith. Anticipate that Sacrifices will have to be made. Leverage what you have for God's Kingdom. Be willing to lose everything for the cause of Christ. Get your Priorities in Order. Stop putting yourself first, it's not where you belong. That's God's spot. Know that you are flawed and change the things that are not pleasing to God. Be a leader by example and help those around you who might be struggling through things you have conquered. Make your mark. Everything you do leaves an immediate legacy. Lead your families and keep doing what is right. It will echo for eternity.

Answer The Call, (Genesis 12:1-5)

Balance Your Blessings, (Genesis 12:15-16; 1 Timothy 5:8)

Reach Out To Godly People, (Genesis 14:18-24)

Anticipate Sacrifices, (Genesis 22:1-2)

Have Priorities In Order, (Genesis 22:3-19; Matthew 22: 37-39)

Acknowledge Your Faults, (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18)

Make Your Mark, (Genesis 25:7-11; Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19)

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