

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
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Genesis 18:16-19

ABRAHAM: Example of a Faithful Father

- 1. What makes a “good father?”**
- 2. The Scriptural role of fathers**
- 3. Abraham’s example**

Hymns: 188 – 182

Distribution: 183 – 135

Closing: 501

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Joshua 7:16-26 –

16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. 17 Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." 20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

What makes a good father? That’s a hard question! Many of us would probably list different things. Perhaps some would say:

- A father who teaches sports or camping to his children
- A father who shows openly that he loves their mother
- A father that takes the children on trips
- A father that attends their recitals and games.

I wouldn’t disagree with these things, but we can take a deeper look at this topic in a man of faith in our reading, namely Abraham. Based on

these verses from Genesis, we will see today that Abraham is an excellent example of a faithful father. We’ll see three ways this is true! As we look at these verses, though, these thoughts are not directed exclusively at fathers. May we all – mothers, grandparents, older brothers and sisters, and friends – strive to follow this example of Abraham!

1. A father who was a “friend of God”

We read in verses 17,18: *“The LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.’* We have to set the context of these verses! The Lord was visiting Abraham along with two angels in visible form. Abraham had fed them and talked with them and they were leaving. The Lord was now going to Sodom and Gomorrah to observe the wickedness of those openly homosexual cities, and eventually destroy them, as he knew he would.

As he walks along with Abraham, the Lord’s thoughts are revealed to us in amazing words. He is wondering to himself whether he should tell Abraham what he is about to do. As the Lord debates this, he thinks of these facts: Abraham was the recipient of many special blessings from him, Abraham had firm faith in these promises of God, and he considered Abraham a friend. In Isaiah 41:8 the Lord calls his Old Testament people *“descendants of Abraham my friend.”* Because of this, the Lord will decide to tell Abraham what he will do to these cities because of their prolonged and deliberate sins against his gift of sexuality.

That’s remarkable, isn’t it? The Lord considered Abraham a friend! Being a friend is not the way we first might describe our relationship with the Lord. It’s different from someone being a “master.” It’s different from being our “Father.” A father acts for the benefit of his children, but he won’t necessarily reveal secret things to his children that they don’t need to know. Being a friend often means having a confidant. As human beings we naturally have a need to share our inner thoughts with. Even

though Abraham by nature has nothing that makes him worthy of knowing God's secrets (after all God had come to him with promises of grace!), the Lord considered him a friend that should know his plan.

Would the Lord think of you this way? Fathers especially, would the Lord think of you as a close friend? Friends are well acquainted with each other. In fact, people today have friends that they talk to every day! Do you talk to your Lord every day? Friends also have a very strong trust in each other. Would you consider your faith in God to be extremely strong? Is it one that grows daily and weekly? Is it one that has grown more and more with every passing year since your confirmation? Do you know more about the Lord and his Word than you ever have in your life?

WHO WOULDN'T WANT A FATHER LIKE THIS? Who wouldn't like to say, "My father knows the Lord well!" After all, what makes a "manly father"? There are many opinions today on what makes a man, such as:

- Growing facial hair
- Hunting
- Having a big truck
- Doing the opposite of what your wife wants you to do
- Smoking
- Having a cell phone
- Tailgating someone going the speed limit
- Having more than your neighbor

For some reason, many today think that being MANLY means that you are not GODLY!

What a different idea this is than Scripture gives us! Scripture tells us that a true man:

- Loves his Lord
- Loves his family
- Loves his church

And a man supports all three of these! This is a true "friend of God!" What a compliment to say a man loves his God and walks with him!

2. A father who taught his household

Abraham is a great example to fathers today also because of what we read in verse 19: **"I**

have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just." We're told that Abraham would "direct his children and his household," or more simply put, teach them. Did you know that the Bible consistently refers to the father of the house as the one mainly responsible for teaching the children the ways of the Lord? Listen to these verses that talk about training children:

- *"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth." (Deuteronomy 11)*
- *"The LORD established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children." (Psalm 78)*
- *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22)*
- *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6)*

Abraham serves as a terrific example of teaching. The Lord revealed these plans of the coming destruction for another reason besides Abraham being his friend. Abraham would be responsible for teaching others about the Lord's ways. In the Sodom and Gomorrah episode immediately after our text, what would Abraham learn about the Lord that he could teach? He learned first of all that the Lord follows through on punishment. He does not take sin lightly but follows through on his threats to those who do not follow his ways. Abraham also learned about

how God cares for his elect believers. Abraham prayed for the believers that he thought might be in those cities in a famous prayer where he asked God to spare the cities for the sake of 50 believers, then 45, then 40, and so on down to 10. The Lord granted these requests, and later when the cities were going to be destroyed had his angels drag Abraham's nephew Lot and his family out of the city to save them. God is a God of grace too, Abraham would see, and later teach!

After all, there was an important person to teach: Isaac, Abraham's son of the promise. And Abraham did teach him. Do you remember the conversation Abraham and Isaac had as Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him, as the Lord commanded when he tested Abraham's faith? Genesis 22 tells us: *"As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together."* Abraham expressed his trust in God, and we are sure there are many other instances of him doing this as he taught Isaac and his entire household!

Today, the responsibility remains the same, with the head of the household. But I'm afraid as I did some research for this sermon, I found that many fathers aren't being the instructors they could be. In fact, did you know that many fathers aren't even spending time with their children, not to mention teaching them? How many quality minutes per day did a recent study reveal that fathers spent with their children? 12 minutes. How much meaningful conversation a day did a recent study reveal that fathers had with their children? 37 seconds. It just seems that dad is not around much nowadays, not to mention mom. An educator recently said: **We're so busy giving our kids what we didn't have, that we don't take time to give them what we did have.**

There are so many simple, even indirect, ways we can teach our children! When your child comes to you and says, "Look, Daddy, I found a leaf in the backyard!" you don't need to

say, "Put that down; that's dirty!" or "Get in the car; we're leaving!" but perhaps, "Look at how God made all these leaves from our tree the same!" And of course there are so many direct ways to teach children about the Lord. A home devotion book that simply needs to be read is very helpful! If you need one, ask me and I'll give you a free one! And regular discussions about God acting in your life or the reading you do in the Bible are a great way to teach the family! Make sure that like Abraham did, you tell your children about God's LAW (how we are sinful and deserve nothing from him) and his GOSPEL (how Jesus came to live and die to take away our sin). **This is the Lord's message to speak!**

3. A father who led by example

We read of one other way Abraham gives us a good example today. In verse 19 we also heard Abraham would have a household that would ***"keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."*** This was a man who would do more than just teach his household, as important as that is. He would also live his faith as a real example for them to see. There were three main audiences that would see the godly life that Abraham led:

1. His household: This is an obvious one!
2. The Jewish nation that was descended from him: In fact, the Jews put so much stock in the fact that they were descended from Abraham that in John 8, this was the reason they gave Jesus for their being saved! In the gospel of Luke, heaven is pictured as being "at Abraham's side." Abraham was an example for centuries to the Jewish nation, and even today!
3. All believers: Abraham is our example of a godly life today. In fact, believers are spoken of as being "children of Abraham." Galatians 3 says, *"Those who believe are children of Abraham. If*

you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." What a compliment to Abraham that he is an example to us today of living a godly life!

Abraham, of course, was a sinner. But in his godliness, he also is an example in the following areas:

- Obedience – When the Lord told him to leave his family for a land he would show him, he went! When the Lord tested his faith by telling him to sacrifice his son, he was willing to!
- Faith – When the Lord told him when his wife was 89 that she would have a son the next year, he believed it. When he took his 318 trained servants to fight the army that carried off his nephew, he knew they would prevail!
- Prayer – Abraham boldly prayed to the Lord for the sake of the believers in Sodom and Gomorrah, and he was answered!
- Willingness to serve – When these three “men” came to him in the heat of the day, Abraham, knowing they were special visitors, was at their service!

How we need examples of godly fathers today! Two University of Southern California sociologists have concluded, **“It is the father who most influences the church attendance and sense of piety (actions) of his children, while the mother most influences what they believe.”** One of our synod pastors did a study on churchgoing influences of mom and dad. He found that when Mom took the children to church very regularly when the kids were growing up, but Dad wasn't in the religious picture, 20% of those children remained very faithful churchgoers their entire lives. But when Dad was the one who insisted on faithful church attendance, 75% of those children remained faithful churchgoers their entire lives. It seems Dad has quite an influence on the kids. This can

be in unfortunate areas: If a child curses a lot, perhaps Dad does this at home. If Dad smokes, the kids will try it sometime most likely. If Dad drives like a mad devil, the kids may end up doing this too.

What an encouragement to be a godly example in your whole life, fathers, as Abraham was!

What makes a good father? **We've seen three characteristics today:**

- 1. A father who is a “friend of God”**
- 2. A father who teaches his children**
- 3. A father who leads by example.**

May the fathers of our church, and all of us, strive for these characteristics in our lives! And may God our Savior help us to be faithful to those around us out of love for him! Amen.