

# From Doing to Living

Hebrews 11:8-22

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was going. [9] By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. [10] For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. [11] By faith even Sarah herself, when she was barren, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the One who had promised was faithful. [12] And therefore from one man—in fact, from one as good as dead—came offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as innumerable as the grains of sand by the seashore. [13] These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. [14] Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. [15] If they had been remembering that land they came from, they would have had opportunity to return. [16] But they now aspire to a better land—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. [17] By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; he who had received the promises was offering up his unique son, [18] about whom it had been said, In Isaac your seed will be called. [19] He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead, from which he also got him back as an illustration. [20] By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. [21] By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and, he worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. [22] By faith Joseph, as he was nearing the end of his life, mentioned the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave instructions concerning his bones." (HCSB)

Most **ticks** of the clock are no different than the others. Time passes. We wake up. More time passes. We work, play, study, eat, relax and return to bed. The clock ticks. We inhale, exhale, and then inhale again. **But then there are those moments when our hearts skip a beat and the clock forgets to tick. Moments frozen in time—defining moments.**

Abraham had two such moments in his life, both of them requiring him to use the kind of faith that allows people to **believe** in something not seen, and **stake their lives** on it. → God told Abraham to **move** to a land that He would **show** him. God didn't give any details, except to say that He would show the land to Abram. Look at the promise that God made to him in Genesis 12:3 "And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." I'd call that a **significant promise**, wouldn't you? It was huge. Would Abram follow God even though God didn't tell him the details?

It is common for us to begin a **conversation** with strangers by asking, "So where are you from?" Like Abraham, most of us are **sojourner**. California is primarily comprised of people from somewhere else. At one time, it was people from back **East** and the **South** that were moving here. Now it is people from all over the **globe**. People from the **East** are likely to be from **China** or **Korea** and people from the **South** are likely to be from **Mexico** or **South America**. They are sojourners, and so are we. Most of us know where we are from, and when we **move**, we know where we are going. Abraham **didn't**. All he knew is that he was to **leave** the **comfort** and **security** of his home and move.

→The **clock** stopped ticking. Abraham faced a defining moment. He didn't **blink**. He gathered up what he needed for the journey and he left.

That was Abraham's defining moment, not mine, but I wonder what I'd do if faced with the same choices. Perhaps I'd want to play **20 questions** with God. Or maybe I'd **freeze** and say something like "I need to talk it over with my wife and I'll get back to you."

Abraham didn't do any of those things. He **obeyed**. But he **did** more than that—He **believed God**. He gathered what he needed for the journey and he left. The writer of Hebrews said that he did this "by faith." (Heb 11:8f) He trusted in the God he was obeying.

Abram was **ninety-nine years old** when God revealed some good news to him. First, he was changing his name from Abram "father" to Abraham "father of many." Second, God had some more news: Then God added, "Regarding Sarai, your wife--her name will no longer be Sarai; from now on you will call her Sarah. [16] And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings will be among her descendants!" [17] Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of one hundred?" he wondered. "Besides, Sarah is ninety; how could she have a baby?" (Genesis 17:15-17 NLT)

In disbelief, Abraham laughed. His laughter was contiguous. Sarai, whose name was changed from "princely" to Sarah "princess" laughed too. Then one of them said, "About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son." Now Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby. [11] And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children, [12] she laughed silently to herself. "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?" she thought. "And when my master--my husband--is also so old?" (Genesis 18:10-12 NLT)

I love what they both said after they laughed. In Gen. 17:17, Abraham called Sarah old, and in Gen. 18:12, Sarah returned the favor.

God turned their **mocking laughter** into **joyful laughter** when He gave them a baby boy. His name? Isaac-"**laughter**" of course.

Water is more refreshing to those who are thirsty. Food is more satisfying to the really hungry. Don't you image Sarah had multiplied joy when she gave birth to her first son at the age of ninety?

All was well, but then God paid another visit to Abraham. Later on God tested Abraham's faith and obedience. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am." [2] "Take your son, your only son--yes, Isaac, whom you love so much--and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you." (Genesis 22:1-2 NLT)

→Abraham who laughed at God when he announced the coming birth of his son, didn't argue. He'd learned to trust "God who provides." Three days into the journey, Abraham left his servants with the donkeys and he and his son Isaac walked up the mountain. Curious, Isaac said, "Father?" "Yes, my son," Abraham replied. "We have the wood and the fire," said the boy, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" [8] "God will provide a lamb, my son," Abraham answered. And they both went on together. (Genesis 22:7-8 NLT)

Walking up the hill, the child trusts his Daddy and his Daddy trusts his God. When they reached their destination, Abraham put his son on the altar.

This is an amazing story. Can you imagine sacrificing your only son, like Abraham was asked to do?

In the movie **Air Force One**, Harrison Ford plays a fictional President who pledges to be tough on terrorists—never to negotiate, under any circumstances. But when they took over Air Force One, and held a gun to his daughter's head, he suddenly was willing to negotiate.

**I don't blame him, do you? How could a father sacrifice his child?**

Abraham raised his **knife**, ready to score the **deathblow** when the angel of the Lord stopped him and provided a **substitute** sacrifice.

How could he do it? Killing his son was completely **illogical**. It made no sense. Why would God promise him a **son**, and then require that Abraham sacrifice him? Besides, obedience would have resulted in an **immoral** action.

→ This was another **defining moment** in Abraham's life when time stood still. Once again, he **responded** in faith. Abraham did not **argue** with God when He told him to sacrifice his son on an **altar**—a son that was born in his old age in **fulfillment** of a **promise** God made to Abraham. He didn't play twenty questions with God. He believed and he obeyed.

When I **think** about this story, I ask myself, "Could I walk by faith like Abraham? Could I **trust** in God even when He asks me to do something that seems completely **illogical**?"

Abraham understood that Isaac's miraculous birth was in **fulfillment** to a promise that God gave him that through his **seed**, the world would be blessed. How could **Isaac fulfill** that promise if he didn't **live**?

How did he do so well during his defining moment? He trusted in His God—a God he had an intimate relationship with. The writer of Hebrews said that Abraham obeyed because he believed that God could raise him from the dead (Heb 11:19). How could he trust so much?

**Because he knew God. He knew His heart—he had an intimate relationship with Him.**

Do you know God in that **intimate way** so that you know his heartbeat? Will you be prepared when your moment of truth comes? Will you be spiritually ready to distinguish God's voice from among the voices and have the spiritual fortitude to exercise faith?

→ In chapter one of **Soul Shaping**, you read **three stories** about people depending upon God **during their moments of truth**. In each case, they didn't just need to know the right thing to do; they needed to know **when** to do it. They couldn't get that kind of information by asking *What Would Jesus Do*—they needed to be able to **discern** God's voice to know **what to do and when to do it**. **Darrell saved his wife's life** by returning her to the hospital, even though common sense told him that taking her back could cause her to lose heart. As it turned out, it couldn't have waited until the morning—his **sensitivity to the Lord's** prompting saved her life.

**Kenneth and Joyce** were leaving the country anyway for some R&R. Common sense would say, **not to bother** with expediting the departure, but Joyce **sensed** they needed to leave **early**. Little did she know that a **blood bath** was about to occur where they were serving as missionaries. But God did, and he led them to safety.

Deborah needed to know **when to attack**, not just that they should attack. **Common sense would say to leave the fighting to the General** and to tell him to do his job and she'd do hers. But she didn't follow common sense. Instead, she listened to God and her people triumphed against their enemies.

**Will you be able to distinguish God’s voice from common sense when your moment of truth comes? The only way that will possibly happen is if you know him, not just know about him.**

For many, Christianity is something they do. **It is a code of conduct;** it is following a set of rules. But for others, it is a **way of life.** **We make a mistake by trying to do what Jesus would do in a given circumstance—especially if it is a substitute for really knowing Him.**

We don’t learn to listen to God **overnight.** We learn to discern His voice by passing the time with Him as a constant habit. One way we do that is by practicing the Spiritual Disciplines.

“Spiritual disciplines are small things Christians intentionally do to open themselves up to God’s work of conforming them to the image of Christ.” P. 23

“Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 (NIV)

**Transforming us into his likeness is the work of God—practicing the spiritual disciplines is one of the ways we participate with God in his work.**

It is my contention that when these practices become a part of our lifestyles, we begin to grow **spiritually**, deepen our intimate knowledge of God and become progressively **conformed** to His image. The key is **growth.** I don’t think there is any such thing as “**arriving**” spiritually, not this side of heaven, but we can move in that direction.

Over the next five weeks, we are going to be learning to practice the spiritual disciplines that God will use to conform us into Christ’s image. As we practice them we will begin to see movement.

→ This week we’ve learned the importance of living as Jesus lived and not just doing as Jesus did. *“Asking, ‘What would Jesus do?’ without asking, ‘How did Jesus live?’ misses the reasons behind the right choices He made. He didn’t just do the right thing; He lived in the right way. One cannot occur without the other.”*  
p. 20

→ Next week we will study the disciplines that will help you move from consumerist praying to developing an intimate relationship with God through prayer. *“Prayer is more than looking for guidance, blessings, or things from God; it is entering into His presence and enjoying an intimate relationship with Him.”* P. 44

→The third week we will explore ways to move from busyness to a more focused life. *“Focus is a single-minded devotion to and enduring pursuit of God. It involves eliminating things and activities from your life that distract you from being who God created you to be and redirecting your energy toward accomplishing His will for your life.”* p 77

→The fourth week we will study how to move from despair to hope. *“As you invite God into your sorrow, you will experience His presence. God is a good God; His mercy endures forever. You will see that vivid truth when your tears blur your vision. Sorrow may last through the night, but hope follows the mourning.”*  
p. 112

→The next to the last week we will discuss how to move from isolation to connection. *“Christians develop relationships with God and His people when they work together for the cause of Christ, resulting in Kingdom expansion and personal spiritual growth.”*  
P 140

→The final week we will learn how to move from entitlement to ministry. *“Whether a ministry is large or small, it meets a need, fulfills your calling and brings glory to God—and that’s no small thing.”* p. 167