

Friday – Listen

The story of Isaac. How could a good God ask this? Read the story imagining yourself as Abraham in Genesis 21:1-22:19. Now read it again as Isaac. And if Sarah had a clue about this, how might she react? (She had just sent Ishmael and Hagar out into the desert to die. Chapter 21. They lived—God intervened.) Now Sarah’s longed-for son is to be sacrificed? The drama is staggering. No wonder poems, plays, books, and theological tomes analyze and explore its dimensions. Life’s trials refine us all. God asked of Abraham what He himself would one day do—sacrifice His only Son. Would Abraham obey God? Imagine—how do you walk 50 miles with your boy, the son of God’s promise, to the appointed place of sacrifice? How do you lay the wood, light the fire, and raise the knife? Abraham obeyed; but before the knife fell, he heard the voice of God call his name. *“Yes”, he answered, “I’m listening.”* Abraham had listened to God or his arm he raised would not be clutching a knife. Stop! Abraham passed the test. A ram appeared for sacrifice. Isaac was spared. In the aftermath God repeated His promises to Abraham. Sometimes “lead us not into temptation” has been translated as “lead us not into hard testing.” Amen. Passing our tests may depend on, “Yes, Lord. I’m listening.” Listen to what Jesus says, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”* (John 10:27-28) Listen for Jesus’ voice in Scripture. Hear it in the nudging of prayer. Listen.

Saturday – Colorado Day

Helicopters whirred. Dawn lit the gray, leaden sky only enough to see them silhouetted in the sky above Estes Park. I watched them move down the Big Thompson Canyon. What was happening on August 1, 1976, Colorado’s Centennial? Then the news—tragedy. 12 inches of rain fell in 4 hours sending a wall of water down the canyon. 144 lives were lost. I think about this every time I drive up Highway 34 and see the “Climb to Safety” signs that were installed afterwards. I think about Colorado and God’s beautiful creation in our state. Today is Colorado Day, our state’s 144th birthday, a special day to pray for our state. 2020 is proving to be a difficult year—pandemic, protests, and elections in November. Colorado is dealing with all of them as well as concerns about fire and drought. Let us pray not only for Colorado, but also for our country. Perhaps the words we need were penned in 1893 when Katherine Lee Bates looked down from Pike’s Peak and wrote America the Beautiful: “America, America, God mend thine every flaw. Confirm thy soul with self-control, thy liberty in law.” God bless Colorado. God bless America.

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This week’s *Bring it Home* devotions were written by Eva Knight.

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Bring It Home



Devotions for
the week of
July 26, 2020

What Now?

- Take to the Lord any matters in your own life that are heavy on your heart or mind. Ask Him to provide as He knows best and, in faith, entrust these matters and yourself fully to Him.
- Pray for yourself and for others you may know in your life who are waiting on the Lord, that He would bring laughter in your life as you trust in Him and His timing.

Monday – One Step at a Time

Read Genesis 18-22. What? Read four entire chapters of the Bible?! Really? No, not really. But if you have time, they are a preview of coming attractions. Warning: the content ranges from a PG to an R rating. Sordid details have not been omitted. The Bible can be brutal in its presentation of sin and consequences. Eden is gone and we are left to learn that God loves us in spite of the muddle we have made. Indeed, God loves us to the point of sacrificing His Son to atone for our sin. Genesis begins His love story to us. It is His inspired Word, worthy of our study. Today concentrate on Genesis 18:1-15. Unbeknownst to Abraham, the men who appear at his camp are part of events that will culminate with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The lesson is important— we cannot see the end from the beginning. We can only walk in the light God gives us at the time. Abraham showed hospitality to those three visitors, the right thing to do. (Hebrews 13:2 tells us that unaware we may entertain angels. Here the three men are the Lord and two angels.) One of the men tells that Sarah will have a son within the year. Sarah laughs. How long has she heard this? How long do we wait for answers to our prayers? We walk in the light God gives us. We wait in confidence that “*all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.*” (Romans 8:28) Even waiting.

Tuesday – Prayer Changes Us

What difference does prayer make? Can we bargain with God? Do not suppose that we who write devotions have all of the answers. Read Genesis 18:16-33. Abraham negotiates with God to save Sodom from destruction. His motivation—Lot. His “irregular” nephew, Lot, has moved with his family into the wicked city. Abraham could see that punishment was coming to Sodom and Gomorrah. His pleading with God shows him facing reality. Could 50, 45, only 10 righteous, faithful people be found? God is not changing. Abraham is. God is with us in our dilemmas. He awaits our prayerful invitation to help, guide, and heal us. He is able to do more than we can imagine when we give Him our problems and wait upon Him. Prayer readies us to hear His “yes,” “no,” or “wait.” “Wait” is not easy. Keep faith. Prayer opens our hearts and minds to God. Prayer motivates us to seek. Jesus assures us—*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find.*” In the end, God knew and answered Abraham’s true prayer—Lot and his family escaped the destruction of the cities. Bargain with God? No, God’s “bargain” for us is His Son. Jesus has taken the punishment for our sins. Does prayer make a difference? Jesus prayed. Today say the prayer Jesus taught us. Listen carefully to the words we pray—*Our Father... Thy will be done.*

Wednesday – Pray!

Read Genesis 19:1-29. Just how bad were things in Sodom and Gomorrah? Bad enough that the word, “sodomy,” has been around since the Middle Ages. Lot, ever “irregular,” settled in Sodom and apparently steeped himself and family in its foul culture. He had wealth and status enough to mingle with the elite at the city gate. His deep bow impressed bystanders as he welcomed his guests. Who could have guessed they were angels on a mission? Lot rushed them off to feast at his house. What next? Read the verses. Not good. None of it. What kind of father offers his daughters to a mob! Things would have gotten worse if the angels hadn’t blinded the rioters. The evidence was in—destroy the city. Even so, Lot hesitated to leave. If the angels hadn’t taken him and his wife and family by the hand, they would have perished. Lot’s wife did perish—turned to a pillar of salt. Google “New Science Suggests Biblical City Of Sodom Was Smote By An Exploding Meteor,” Forbes Magazine, December 4, 2018. Abraham’s prayers saved Lot— *“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power.” (James 5:16)* Lot’s story reminds us that while we live in the world, we must avoid worldly values. Pray for those mired in corrupt culture. You will never look into a face that God does not love and offer His salvation. Pray. Pray for revival in our nation.

Thursday – Jumping to Conclusions

Read Genesis 19:30-38, 20:1-18. There are two stories, but there is a common denominator. Growing up in devil-may-care Sodom, what had Lot’s daughters learned? Daddy had money, clout, and tentative religious values. Maybe Mom was a Housewife of Sodom and Gomorrah—so sad to flee. Just one glance back—disaster. Pillar of salt. Everyone was dead. The girls’ fiancés thought the warnings were a joke—dead. No one to marry. Incest? No values. Why not? Go with the flow. Now to Abraham and Round Two of “She’s My Sister.” This time we learn that Sarah is, in fact, his half-sister. Nice that he thought Sarah, approaching age 90, was so desirable that a king that would kill him to get her. Both stories caution us about jumping to conclusions. They should have prayed first. The babies Lot’s daughters bore became the fathers of Israel’s enemies, the Moabites and the Ammonites. Abraham jumped to the conclusion that King Abimelech was wicked and lied. Hadn’t Round One taught Abraham to trust God for protection? Apparently not. Abimelech was the innocent victim of Abraham’s lie. God intervened to warn Abimelech and prevent adultery. Bottom line: Don’t take matters into your own hands by jumping to conclusions. *“Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.” (Psalm 27:14)* *“Don’t jump to conclusions.” (Proverbs 25:8a) (The Message)*