

**Far From Happy and Far From Home:  
Where the Journey Begins  
Genesis 11:26-32**

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted  
and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

Genesis 12:1-2

***"It's not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world,  
but that God has a church for his mission in the world"***  
– Christopher Wright

**The Question is not:** "where do we find Abram in this story?"

**The Question is:** "where does **God** find Abram in this story?" For this is the story of the mission of God.

The reason for our hope and joy is that we know that our God delights to save people who are lost and broken and far from Him. The story of Abraham is the story of a missional God who goes after the broken and the lost in the nations who have no knowledge of Him or their need of Him. He goes after them to send them after others.

Listen to Jesus in Matthew 9:36-37:

"When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then, he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"

The distressed world of Israel during the Roman occupation was an opportunity for the gospel!

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. **All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.**" (JRR Tolkien – Frodo in Fellowship of the Ring)

The church is not spend its time fretting and regretting what's wrong with the world. Stop fretting and regretting and start go getting.

When we see people miserable in the world of their own making, we must see and seize the opportunity to share with them the hope of a God who the God of all comfort and the Father of compassion.

**Where does God find Abram?** Living in the shadows not far from the location of the Tower of Babel

One commentator:

"Ur is of particular interest to us because Abraham was born in this city a few generations after Babel. The most likely site of Ur is Tel Muqayyar in southern Mesopotamia, about 140 miles (225 km) south of ancient Babylon. Between 1922 and 1934 it was excavated by the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania. Both have excellent museum displays of their finds at Ur. Ur is of particular interest to us because Abraham was born in this city a few generations after Babel. The most likely site of Ur is Tel Muqayyar in southern Mesopotamia, about 140 miles (225 km) south of ancient Babylon. Between 1922 and 1934 it was excavated by the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania. Both have excellent museum displays of their finds at Ur."

## 1. Far from Happy: The story begins with a son dying in the presence of his father. (11:28)

*"Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans."*

From the tower of Babel to human tragedy: the attempt to be our own saviors lead us into deep sorrows.

"The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;" Psalm 16:4

Sorrow can hang over people's lives like the grey ice fog of the past few days. Everything is bleak.

Isaiah 25:7,8

"And He will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken."

## 2. Far From Holy: The story begins with a family deeply entrenched in idolatry. (11:29)

### Addicted to Idols

*"And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; **and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham** from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac.'" Joshua 24:2-3*

"No one could have been farther from God than I was." Jack Miller  
Abram and his family were far from the God of their fathers.

The two chief seats of Nanna's/Sin's worship were [Ur](#) in the south of Mesopotamia and [Harran](#) in the north."

The temple to Sin was famous in Harran.

Sarah (princess) and Milcah (queen) were titles of the moon God sin who was worshipped at Ur.

Iscah is another name for Sarah. It seems to me that this view is correct and should be adopted... the names Sarah and Milcah, which are titles used as personal names meaning, respectively, "princess" and "queen." **In view of the other neo-Babylonian associations of the Abraham story, to be noted in due course, we might add that Šarrātu (princess), cognate with Sarah, is the name of the consort of the moon deity Sin worshiped at Harran under Nabonidus, the last Babylonian ruler, who was replaced by the Persian Cyrus II after the fall of Babylon in 539 b.c. In like manner, Malkātu (queen), cognate with Milkah, is the title of the goddess Ishtar, daughter of the same deity.**

Joseph Blenkinsopp. Abraham : The Story of a Life. Eerdmans, 2015.

Additional Information:

Nanna, the Sumerian name for the [moon god](#), may have originally meant only the full moon, whereas Su-en, later contracted to Sin, designated the crescent moon. At any rate, Nanna was intimately connected with the cattle herds that were the livelihood of the people in the marshes of the lower [Euphrates River](#), where the cult developed. (The city of [Ur](#), of the same region, was the chief centre of the worship of Nanna.) The crescent, Nanna's emblem, was sometimes represented by the horns of a great [bull](#). Nanna bestowed fertility and prosperity on the cowherds, governing the rise of the waters, the growth of reeds, the increase of the herd, and therefore the quantity of dairy products produced. His consort, [Ningal](#), was a reed goddess. Each spring, Nanna's worshipers reenacted his mythological visit to his father, [Enlil](#), at [Nippur](#) with a ritual journey, carrying with them the first dairy products of the year. Gradually Nanna became more human: from being depicted as a bull or boat, because of his crescent emblem, he came to be represented as a cowherd or boatman.

Sin was represented as an old man with a flowing beard—a wise and unfathomable god—wearing a headdress of four horns surmounted by a crescent moon. The last king of Babylon, [Nabonidus](#) (reigned c. 556–539 BC), attempted to elevate Sin to a supreme position within the pantheon.

### **3. Far from Hope: The story begins a family deeply uncertain about the future and beyond hope of a heritage. (11:30)**

#### **Afraid for the future.**

*"Now Sarai was barren; and had no child."*

And ... Abram was "as good as dead."

*"He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb." Romans 4:19*

### **4. Far from Home: The story begins with a family living as strangers in a foreign land. (11.31-32)**

#### **Profoundly Alone.**

"but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran."

- Far from family.
- Fatherless – figuratively and literally.
  - o Terah is grieving.
  - o Terah dies.

Joseph Blenkinsopp:

"From the outset, the destination was the land of Canaan ("They set out from Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan," 11:31). To reach it from Ur, they would first have followed the course of the Euphrates northward, but not as far north as Harran, before turning west into Syria in the direction of Damascus and then south into Palestine, following either the Mediterranean coastal highway, the so-called Via Maris route to Egypt, or the central ridge, passing through Shechem and Bethel, the route actually taken by Abraham. Harran, their destination, must therefore have been the result of a deliberate choice to settle there rather than make a stopover en route to Canaan (11:31)."

**Why did they go to Harran? Was it because Terah was an idol maker as some taught. Haran was a place to start over but they ended up doing the same thing? Selling idols. Was it as some said – stuck in sorrow over Haran.**

When people don't know what to do, they do what they know – drift back (like the disciples did with fishing after the crucifixion) to what is familiar. Back to their idols.

This is where God found Abram and where He finds us in a broken world:

- a. Sorrowing/Grieving/Depressed.
- b. Addicted to our idols.
- c. Afraid for the future.
- d. Profoundly Alone.

Is that you?

That's where God meets us, finds us. That's where Christ enters.

### **What God's mission with Abram means for us:**

1. **Be Hopeful.** Get a God-centered Missional Perspective. Salvation is of the Lord.

"Expect great things from God; Attempt great things for God." William Carey

God sent His Son into such a dark world: A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

We have to see the broken world as Jesus did ... as a ripe harvest in need of workers.

2. **Be Prayerful.** Seek a God-honoring Missional Prayer Life. God delights to have compassion on the broken-hearted and the helpless and the stuck.

"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.

God settles the solitary in a home;  
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,  
but the rebellious dwell in a parched land."

Psalm 68:5-6

Pray to the Lord of the harvest.

***Spurgeon on praying for unbelieving children:***

***Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives.***

The Lord sometimes suffers His people to be driven into a corner that they may experimentally know how necessary He is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the strong for strength, and this is a great blessing to us. Whatever our morning's need may be, let it like a strong current bear us to the ocean of divine love. Jesus can soon remove our sorrow, He delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to Him while He waits to meet us.

3. **Be Real, Ready, and Available.** God chooses and uses the weak, the weary, the stuck, and the struggling.

"God uses people who are weak and feeble enough to lean on Him." – Hudson Taylor

God chose Abram not because of anything in Abram but because everything was out of Abram.

Deuteronomy 7:7 "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers..."

4. **Be worshipful.** The journey God is taking us on is not merely to a place of rest here but a place of rest in Him.

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:8-10)

"Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness – and he was called a friend of God." (James 2:23)