

**LIFE LESSONS FROM FAMOUS FAILURES (Pt. 2)**  
**“Abraham – The Faithless Father of Faith”**  
**(Genesis 12, 16, 20)**

**INTRO:** *Swindoll* writes, “When we think of a list of biblical characters who belong among God’s greatest, Abraham would certainly be included...” He is generally seen as the father of three of the world’s major religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christians. He was a man of God. In so many ways, he was a model of faith. Bible calls him a “friend of God”.

Nevertheless, his life was often checkered with doubt and unbelief. I say “often” because in the 14 chapters in Genesis where he is key figure, failure is found in one-third! He even committed the same failure twice. He was always struggling: facing some trial, repenting of some sin, confronting some enemy, enduring some sorrow. Who can’t identify? Gentle reminder that good and godly people do fail. The godly do slump at times, don’t they (we)? Like Abraham, our walk of faith is also sometimes dotted with doubt. However, in spite of his failures, God greatly used him – says there is hope for us all.

**I. HIS STRONG FAITH**

- A. (12:1-4) He was a *PILGRIM*. At 75 God called him to leave his home and his family and journey to the unknown. He was given no reasons or explanations, just promises. And “he went” into enemy territory. This takes great faith. Walked 100 years with God and still failed!
- B. He was a *PRIEST*. He erected an altar to God almost everywhere he settled (12:6-8; 13:2-4; etc.).
- C. (Gen. 22) *SUPREME TEST* of his faith came with his own promised son, Isaac (1-2, 9). What great faith! He is given most space in the great chapter on the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:8-19.

YET, he failed. This father of faith failed, friend of God failed, founder of three religions failed.

**II. HIS SPECIFIC FAILURES**

- A. (Gen. 12:6-19) Failed to trust God in face of *ADVERSITY* (v.10). No hint of prayer. No altar. No turning to God for His will. Seeing adverse circumstances, he panics and “went down to Egypt”, who represents World in Scripture. He went to world to solve his problems. Once there, he fails to trust God in face of an *ADVERSARY* (vv. 11ff). Out of fear, he plans deceit and dishonesty.
- B. (Gen. 16) Failed to trust God for the promised son (12:3; 15:2-5). Some 10 yrs. passed since promised, now 85. The promise didn’t say when or who’d be mother. He becomes impatient, takes matters into his own hands and runs ahead of God. Though motive right, method (adultery) was wrong, and results were disastrous. No peace in Mid-East since!

Though this practice was socially accepted, it wasn’t God’s way. Again see, no record of seeking God in crisis. Hagar ends up despising Sarah. Sarah blames Abraham, who wants peace at any price.

- C. (Gen. 20) *FAILURE DÉJÀ VU*. It has been 20 yrs. Since Ch. 12 and his lying to Pharaoh to protect himself. He now repeats same mistake. Now, Sarah is asked to lie as well. Once again, Abraham’s sister story, was uncovered as a sham. The results could’ve been disastrous.

**SUMMARY OF FAILURES:** He failed to trust God for provision in famine, protection in crisis, and promises of son to come true.

**III. LIFE LESSONS TO LEARN**

- A. *Our faith will be tested, so it can grow to be more trusted.* God uses adverse circumstances and adversarial people to strengthen our faith, if we allow. We are safer in a famine in His will than anywhere else out of His will. If we run from one test, we will soon face another. Faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted. F.B. Meyer writes...
- B. *Failure can come at our strongest points.* Strengths can become weaknesses, if it becomes point of pride. We must not let rationalization upstage our loyalty to God. We must never lie for any reason.
- C. *When we fail to seek God’s counsel, trouble is ahead.* In none of his failures is there any mention of seeking God. Go to God with fears and needs. Don’t take matters into your hands. Striking out on our own always costs. Learn to wait on Him. Learn to seek God in crisis. Pro. 3:5-6 reminds us...
- D. *Even after we are saved, we can find ourselves repeating the same sins.* Hopefully, we can grow from past failures and repeat them less and less (Ps. 37:23-24).
- E. *When the godly fail, the impact is usually greater...* Abraham’s failures influenced: Pharaoh, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, Abimelech, Isaac, etc. Poor decisions go beyond us. Imagine the worse case.
- F. *God’s faithfulness is greater than our failures.* Where sin darkens, God’s grace shines the brightest (13:1-4; Rom. 5:20). God does not remove His grace because we fail. The Christian life is a series of new beginnings. No failure has to be permanent in the school of faith.

**CONC:** The good and godly do fail. Never has to be final. Some avoid Christianity because they see Christians fail. We aren’t perfect, just forgiven. Let’s not blow Abraham’s failures out of proportion. God judges us more by the general flow of our life, not by occasional and isolated failures. One mark of the genuine believer is not failure (even repeats), but growth. He had a few failures, but many more victories. How do so? Learn to walk by faith, not sight.