

If you were starting a nation who would you choose as your person to start it?

Well I have a few great names who you may think are worthy of starting a great nation with.

Winston Churchill the British Prime Minister who was instrumental in ending World War II

Abraham Lincoln the President of the USA who abolished slavery.

Steve Jobs, the creator of Apple who made it his dream to have a computer in every house.

Albert Einstein, one would say the biggest name in science ever.

Peter Brock, one of the greatest names in Australian motorsport

All of these men I'm sure most of you would be happy to start a great nation with.

Well tonight we start a new series on Abraham. Abraham was God's choice for this very question, but right from the beginning of this story we start to think to ourselves God didn't choose very well. I know if I was choosing a person to start a great nation I would not have chosen Abram. See in chapter 11 we see that Sarai, Abram's wife was barren and had born Abram no children.

Now one would think if you want to build a great nation before you even start to look at the person's abilities or character you would first make sure that they could actually be able to make a nation. Abram and Sarai can't even have one child how are they going to build a great nation?

Sarai not being able to have children must have been a huge stumbling block for Abram to believe God's promise to him. I want you to imagine this for a minute as I think this is something that we just read over most times and go oh yeh Sari couldn't have a child. Sarai is a woman in her mid 60's and she has never been able to bear a child, it would be like me saying to you that the queen of England is going to have another baby. I want you to imagine it, the newspapers article headline reads Prince William and Princess Catherine found to not be the parents of Prince George, Queen Elizabeth found to be the true mother and Prince Phillip the Duke of Edinburgh the father. This just doesn't happen, the

journalist who wrote the story would be the laughing stock of the world and would never get a job again. Well this is kind of situation that Abram and Sarai find themselves in.

I think if I was in Abram shoes I would have struggled to trust in God. My wife of 40-50 years has not been able to bear me a child and now God comes along and tells me that he is going to make me into a great nation. Now to make things even more harder for Abram to trust God it is most likely that God was foreign to Abram for we learn in Joshua 24 that his father worshipped other gods. If I was faced with this choice I would have more than likely have just laughed at God and said what you don't think I have been trying for the last 40 years.

But what does Abram do as a response to God's promise, well in verse 4 we see what Abram does, he goes as the Lord had told him and he starts to travel to the Land God will show him. This shows us the great faith that Abram places in God, he doesn't say no problems God, I will go but on one condition I want you to give me a sign, he doesn't say I will go after God gives him a child, no Abram goes as soon as God has told him to and places his full trust in God.

What would you do? Would you go, fully trusting in God even when all looks grim? Now yes I don't believe that you will be asked by God to go start a new great nation, but what do we do when God asks him to trust him, for example do we believe that God will always provide for us, I know that I have struggled with this in the past, I have been tempted to hold back on things saying I will do that when I have enough money behind me. I'm sure that I'm not the only one who has done this, but the great thing is we have plenty of examples of faithful people in the bible who trust in God and we can learn from examples such as Abram to place our faith in God even when it looks grim.

Whilst Abram is a great example of what it looks like to be a faithful servant of God even great faithful servants fail sometimes. Remember our great names from the start, all of these men whilst being well known and very influential, all five of them also have a not so great side to them.

Winston Churchill the used the fact that gassing people to death was a truly awful thing to do but Churchill had no qualms of using gas on people.

Abraham Lincoln whilst he abolished slavery he stated in the 1858 presidential debate that he did not believe in racial equality, blacks right to vote or interracial marriage

Steve Jobs, At one point Jobs was tasked by Atari to reduce the integrated circuits of one of their games to less than 80 and enlisted his friend Steve Wozniak to help, promising him half the money if they succeeded. Wozniak got the game to 30 ICs and Jobs said they got \$700; Wozniak happily accepted his \$350. Years later, Wozniak was devastated to tears at Job's lack of trust and friendship when he found that the Atari project actually paid Jobs \$5,000.

Albert Einstein, when he was married, he had a very strict list of rules for his wife had to follow that included bringing him food, cleaning up after him, agreeing to never go out with him, and foregoing intimacy among other things.

Peter Brock, the great Holden man did the unthinkable of driving a Ford Sierra in 1989 and 1990 and claimed poll position in the 1989 Bathurst in a Ford before moving back to Holden 1991.

Abram also falls into this category he's a great example of Faith but we see in the second half of chapter 12 that Abram a great man of faith doesn't always fully trust in God.

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. 11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

Now you can't blame Abram for what he has done here can you. He is just about to enter into Egypt a great nation and he is a wealthy man with much to lose, after all God has promised to him that he was going to make him into a great nation but the problem is that Abram is now starting to rely on his own skills to make sure that God's promise is fulfilled as opposed to trusting fully in God. Abram was faced with a life and death situation and he failed to trust in God's ability to deliver him and his wife Sarai in this situation.

Now Abram is stuck in a bit of a situation, he has not lost his life but he has lost his wife, you can just imagine what Abram must be thinking. Oops I have really stuffed this one up now haven't I. How is God going to make me into a great nation now, I have just lost my wife, it's not like Pharaoh is going to just let her go now is he, after all she is a very beautiful woman. The King of a great nation just doesn't give up his beautiful wives.

But thankfully the Lord steps in and saves the day, well I'm sure Abram didn't see it this way well not at first that's for sure. Imagine you are Abram you thought that Pharaoh was going to kill you originally just because Sarai was beautiful and she is your wife, now what do you think Pharaoh is going to do to you now that he realised that not only is Sarai your wife but that you have lied to Pharaoh and brought all these diseases on him. I know if I was in Abrams shoes I would be dreading every step I took being marched towards the king of this great nation.

But once again we see God's faithfulness at work, God allows Abram to live and take his wife back as his own, see God had made a promise to Abram that he would make him into a great nation and even though Abram failed in trusting in God here, God did not fail Abram but instead redeemed Abram from his mess.

Whilst Abram is a great example of what a faithful servant looks like in the Bible and we should look at his example we have an even better example of what true faithfulness looks like, we have the example of Jesus.

I choose tonight's second reading as it shows the lengths that Jesus went to in his faithfulness to God's plan. Now like many of you I had read the passage of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane heaps of time before, but in May this year when I was preparing for the Mark drama at college I remember getting held back after a rehearsal with the director saying I need to see Matt and James after this rehearsal as we need to practice some crying scenes.

Now at this point I had already memorised my lines for this scene so had read over them over 20 times but even now I knew the lines off the top of my head I still had not really got it, it was not until after I had this rehearsal that I truly started understand the pain and sorrow that Jesus was feeling here.

See Jesus knew what was about to happen to him, he was in a true life and death situation just as Abram was, Jesus comes pleading with the Father to take the cup from him, not once, not twice but three times he pleads with the Father, Jesus did not want to go to the cross and you can understand why, he was about to suffer unjustly a great amount of agony, I know that I didn't want to go forward in the next scenes of the drama as I knew that I would have 5-10min of pain and mocking I can only imagine what Jesus was feeling.

But what does Jesus do, each time he goes to the Father he says "Yet not what I will but what you will." Even knowing what he was about to suffer, Jesus submits to the Father's will and remains faithful to the Father's will.

What about us, what can we take from these examples of being faithful and trusting in God's plan, well I could say that by trusting in God's plan that all is good and that nothing will ever be bad for you, that you will never face hard times, but this would not be true and we don't see this in the bible. The bible does not promise that you will not suffer, in fact the opposite is true, the bible tells us that we will suffer. Suffering is also not a result of not trusting in God, the example of Jesus clearly shows this, he is faithful and trust in God yet he suffers for us.

I believe that what we can learn from these examples is that God has a plan for our lives and that he loves us as only a parent can. See parents want what is best for their children, they will do almost anything for their children. You even hear of parents going to extreme measures for their children and the rest of society goes there is no way I would do that for that person. The Lion King is a great example of this, Mufasa tells Simba to not go to the elephant graveyard, but he disobeys him ends up in trouble and Mufasa has to rescue him, the next scene we see Simba once again getting into trouble after being tricked by his uncle Scar, Simba is stuck in a stampede and what does his father do, does he go no you've been naughty I'm not going to save you again, no he does what a loving father would do, he risks his own life to save his sons life.

Well God is the best example of how much a parent loves their children, see God loves us so much that he sent Jesus his only child to die for us while we were still rebelling against him. God wants what is best for us and the good news is that unlike human parents who most of the time know what is best for their children our Father in Heaven always knows what is best for us we just need trust him, not just in the easy times but also in the hard times.

