

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

[www.twojourneys.org](http://www.twojourneys.org)

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at [twojourneys.org](http://twojourneys.org)

## **God Pursues Intimacy with Abraham**

**Genesis 18:1-33**

Introduction: A Deep Thirst for Intimacy with God

### **I. God's Intimate Meal with Abraham**

#### **A. God Takes the Initiative in Intimacy**

***vs. 1-2 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.***

#### **1. We only get as far as He allows**

- a. Queen Esther couldn't take it upon herself to initiate with King Xerxes... if she did and was not received, the punishment was death
- b. a commoner cannot presume to see Queen Elizabeth

Queen Elizabeth II meets her prime minister every Tuesday evening for a confidential audience, at which she and her prime minister discuss matters of state.

In October of 2002, a Canadian named Gerry Wharton was granted the high privilege of two royal audiences with Queen Elizabeth. Mr. Wharton was retiring from his post as manager of Ceremonial and Protocol Services for Public Works and Government Services Canada... a position in which he showed his expertise in organizing the hundreds of flags, barricades, rolls of red carpet and other accoutrements the federal government needs for state visits -- had his second audience in four days with the visiting sovereign. To reward him for 18 years of loyal service, the queen granted him two audiences in four days

In Japan, the Emperor Akihito must grant an audience or you do not get close... that is a country with elaborate ceremony and protocol... and if the Emperor does not want to see you, you won't see him

If this is true for figurehead monarchs like Queen Elizabeth and the Emperor of Japan, how much MORE is it true of the King of the Universe, God Almighty...

If God did not take initiative in intimacy and invite us close to Him, we would never have known Him at all

***Isaiah 45:15 Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.***

2. He HAS taken initiative in Christ... and in Christ invites us to intimacy
3. He takes initiative here with Abraham
4. Is this the LORD in a human body?
  - a. possibly just three angels
  - b. BUT it says "The Lord APPEARED to Abraham..." the narrative seems to imply that one of the three visitors was the Lord Himself
  - c. in verse 10, the Lord speaks a promise, and Sarah hears it from the tent... perhaps he just spoke it through the angel, but it does not read that way
  - d. in the second half of this chapter has Abraham standing there before the Lord, while the "men" turn and go down to Sodom
  - e. the "angel of the Lord" frequently seen to be pre-incarnate Christ

#### B. Abraham's Model of Hospitality

1. Biblical commands on hospitality

***3 John 1:8 We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.***

[3 John is a whole book on offering hospitality to traveling workers in the gospel]

Elders are commanded to be especially given to hospitality: Titus 1:8 uses the word which literally means "loving the stranger"

***Matthew 10:40-42 "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."***

Key verse on this is Hebrews 13:2

***Hebrews 13:2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.***

I believe this account here in Genesis 18 is the basis for the command!!!

2. Best Biblical role model: Abraham in this chapter

3. Qualities

a. eagerness & preparedness

***vs. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.***

b. humility

***vs. 2 [Abraham] bowed low to the ground.***

c. graciousness

***vs. 3-5 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way-- now that you have come to your servant."***

d. cheerfulness

***vs. 3 "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.***

It's as though they are doing him the greatest honor to accept his hospitality

***2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

***1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.***

Hospitality always involves some inconvenience on the part of the host

The guests disturb the usual patterns of the home... eat food, use the linens, take up space... and if the host is stingy and self-centered he makes the whole thing miserable

***Proverbs 23:6-8 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; 7 for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you. 8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.***

e. compassion

Abraham considers the physical needs of his guests... the heat of the day, their tired feet, their need for shade and rest... that involves compassion; getting out of yourself into the situation of another

**vs. 4 *Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.***

f. servanthood

Abraham uses titles like “my Lord” and calls himself “your servant”... he offers his efforts and his resources as a servant would to his master

g. generosity

Abraham is generous, taking the best he has to offer and making it available to his guests

**vs. 6-8 *So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." 7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.***

4. Hospitality Opens the Door for Intimacy

- a. God is hospitable to us
- b. we reflect that to one another
- c. through fellowship with others we grow in intimacy with God
- d. Abraham and his household DID NOT KNOW it was the Lord and His angels... this is the way he would have treated anyone
- e. by being open to hospitality, Abraham made himself open to intimacy with the Lord

***Hebrews 13:2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.***

C. Abraham's Model of Family Life

- 1. Abraham is the unquestioned head of his household
  - a. he gives orders to his wife and servants with confidence
  - b. he takes responsibility for this encounter
  - c. no “Passive Male Syndrome” here
- 2. Sarah graciously submits to her husband

- a. she does what Abraham asks without questioning

**vs. 6** *So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread."*

- b. later in the passage, she calls Abraham her lord or master

**[ESV]** *Genesis 18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"*

The Hebrew is "Adon" related to "Adoni," a common title for God... thus the translation "my lord" is appropriate... it can refer to anyone with authority over us, even up to God Himself

- c. Peter picks up on this very title of respect when he presents Sarah as the role model for all wives of all time

**1 Peter 3:4-6** *[Your beauty] be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*

- 3. Abraham's servants graciously submit

- a. Abraham tells the servant what to do and he obeys immediately

**vs. 7** *Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.*

The servant hurried... he did not dally or waste time thinking "Who cares what the old man wants..."

- b. Abraham's home is well-ordered

- 4. Abraham takes an active role

- a. vs. 6 says Abraham himself hurried into the tent... he didn't ask anything of his household that he wasn't willing to do himself
- b. vs. 8 it was Abraham himself who brought the curds and all the food and set it in front of his guests
- c. Abraham is not lazy but leads by example, energetically

- 5. God's assessment of Abraham's family and future

**vs. 18- 19** *Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household*

***after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."***

This is one of the most vital statements in all of Abraham's life... God has specifically chosen Abraham for the purpose of passing on spiritual truths to his children and their descendants after them... by passing on the word of God and the godly lifestyle, Abraham begins the road to redemption

This is **AMAZINGLY CRITICAL** for the fulfillment of God's timeless plan

Note the "so that's" and "for's"... Abraham's well-ordered and spiritually disciplined home is the key, humanly speaking to God's unfolding redemptive plan

Abraham will become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him [the original Genesis 12 promise... **FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST**]

"FOR...I have chosen him"... unconditional election for the purpose of accomplishing the ends of blessing all nations on earth

**SO THAT** he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord

**SO THAT** the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised

**BEAUTIFUL** marriage of divine sovereignty and human responsibility: God's election, God's blessing... **BUT** Abraham's well-ordered family

#### D. God Eats the Fellowship Meal

***vs. 8 He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.***

1. God and Man at Table Are Sat Down

2. Mystery: "Pre-incarnate"??

John Calvin: A question, however; arises out of the assertion of Moses, that the angels did eat. Some expound it, that they only appeared as persons eating; which fancy enters their minds through the medium of another error; since they imagine them to have been mere spectres, and not endued with real bodies. But, in my judgment, the thing is far otherwise. In the first place, this was no prophetic vision, in which the images of absent things are brought before the eyes; but the angels really came into the house of Abraham. Wherefore, I do not doubt that God, — who created the whole world out of nothing, and who daily proves himself to be a wonderful Artificer in forming creatures, — gave them bodies, for a time, in which they might fulfill the office enjoined them. And as they truly walked, spoke, and discharged other functions; so I conclude, they did truly eat; not because they were hungry, but in order to conceal themselves, until the proper time for making

themselves known. Yet as God speedily annihilated those bodies, which had been created for a temporary use; so there will be no absurdity in saying, that the food itself was destroyed, together with their bodies.

### 3. God's Deepest Desire... Intimacy with Man: a Tent and a Meal

#### 4. Consistent Biblical Theme

Exodus 24: Covenant sealed with a covenant meal

***Exodus 24:7-11 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." 9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. 11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.***

Leviticus 3: Fellowship offerings... a portion burned up for the Lord, a portion eaten by the priest... God and man at table are sat down

Psalms

***Psalm 23:5-6 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.***

Christ's Teaching: Matthew 8

***Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.***

***Matthew 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son."***

Last Supper

***Luke 22:15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."***

Post-resurrection: four occasions of eating... Luke (road to Emmaus, eating broiled fish, Acts 1:4), John cooking fish by the seaside

***Luke 24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.***

***Acts 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about."***

Revelation 3:20

***ESV Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.***

Revelation 19

***Revelation 19:9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."***

God earnestly desires intimacy... to share a dwelling with man, to sit at table with us, to have intimacy and relationship

"God and man at table are sat down"... the image of fellowship, friendship and togetherness

How fitting that Abraham, the one called "God's friend" should spread a table for Him

## II. God's Intimate Personal Revelation to Abraham About Sarah

Note: Essential to intimacy is personal knowledge... intimate knowledge; for God this means revealing both Himself and His plans to Abraham and to Abraham's household

He does that in two ways: personal revelation about Sarah, and public revelation about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

***vs. 9-10 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. 10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."***

### A. Advancing Knowledge: The Covenant Gradually Unfolded

1. Little by little, God has revealed His mind to Abraham
2. First He told him to leave his country and go to a land, and that through him all peoples would be blessed
3. Then, once Abraham had arrived at the Promised Land, God revealed "To your offspring I will give this land"
4. Then, after Abraham returned to the Promised Land from Egypt, God told him more: descendants as numerous as the dust, and the specific extents of the Promised Land



5. Next, in the great chapter 15, God made a covenant with Abraham concerning two things: Look at the starts...So shall your offspring be... and the land of what tribes he would conquer; the Covenant ceremony
6. In chapter 17, God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision and specifically said it would be through Sarah's son Isaac that his offspring would be numbered
7. Now, in chapter 18, the unfolding plan has reached its next level: within one year's time the Promised Son will come

B. Advancing Knowledge of God's Timing: "This time next year..."

***vs. 10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."***

1. God's ways are not our ways... but every detail has been perfectly planned from before the foundation of the world
2. God's timing is perfect... He knows when to do every little detail; sequence is absolutely vital
3. HOW LONG HAVE THEY WAITED??? Abraham was almost 100 years old; Sarah almost 90... they have tried again and again with no results
4. Now, at last, the light is at the end of the tunnel... get the baby room ready, get yourselves ready
5. What a thrilling promise... if only they could believe it!!!
6. Note also God's personal involvement: "I will return to you!!!"

C. Advancing Knowledge of Sarah's Heart

***vs. 10-15 Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" 13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."***

1. Sometimes God acts specifically to reveal the crud in our own hearts
  - a. we don't really know our own hearts
  - b. we don't understand all the things that are lurking in there

Illus. Summer of '86 in Kenya... my first short-term mission trip... I thought I was a good guy until I went overseas and saw some attitudes and selfishness and lack of compassion and faithlessness creeping to the surface... each of those things were in there, but God had to bring trouble on the outside so I could see what was on the inside

2. He orchestrates circumstances that cause things to float to the surface
3. Here: it's Sarah's heart of unbelief: she doesn't really believe God can accomplish His purpose
  - a. NOTE: only God can perfectly judge a human heart
  - b. Abraham laughed about this same news back in Genesis 17... that's why Isaac was given the name "Laughter"... but God did not rebuke Abraham for unbelief; he was just marveling to himself
  - c. Sarah had a mild virus of unbelief
4. The key issue: laughing at God's word... a mild mockery; forgetting that God does not EVER speak in jest

Note: she acknowledges her age and Abraham's age... and for her it is INCREDIBLE that they would have the pleasure of marital love and of conceiving a child and of nursing him and raising him from infancy

So she staggers in unbelief and unleashes one of womankind's most devastating weapons—the mocking laugh

5. Even worse, when God confronts her, she tries to cover it with a lie... a lie rooted in fear
6. God exposes everything with the precision of an expert heart surgeon

***Matthew 10:26 "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."***

Discerning and uncovering a lie can be extremely difficult, since we do not know a person's heart... but Judgment Day will be a day in which deception will be impossible. Notice how quickly the Lord dismisses her denial of the lie

***vs. 15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."***

**END OF DISCUSSION!!!**

***Romans 2:16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.***

D. Advancing Knowledge of God's Incredible Power

Not only is Sarah's heart revealed, but God's incredible attributes are also put on display... this encounter puts God on display

1. God's supernatural knowledge
  - a. knowing the future: he knows when Sarah will have her child
  - b. knowing the secrets of the heart: he knows what Sarah was thinking and what she did in secret
2. God's sovereign power
  - a. as king, God gets to decide what will be
  - b. no one can stay His hand, or thwart His plan
3. God's declaration of His own power
  - a. note that God takes up the issue of Sarah's unbelief first with her husband

***vs. 13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"***

- b. God then declares His own power

***vs. 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."***

Literally, "Is anything beyond my capacity? Is anything too marvelous and astounding for God to do?"

4. Sarah amazed at God's promise, Jesus amazed at humanity's lack of faith

***Mark 6:6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith.***

Our God created the heavens and the earth with a word... He sustains the entire universe by His powerful word... He orchestrates all of human history to achieve His plans and reveal His glory

**IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD????**

### III. God's Intimate Public Revelation to Abraham About Sodom

- A. Angelic Mission to Sodom and Gomorrah
- B. The Outcry Against Wickedness: How Long Must God Bear It

- C. God's Desire for Intimacy with His People
- D. God's Reasons for Intimacy: from Generation to Generation
- E. God Reveals His Plan to Abraham
- F. God's Perfect Holiness and Wrath

#### IV. God's Intimate Intercession with Abraham

- A. God Initiates Prayer
- B. Abraham Responds Passionately and Perseveringly
- C. Abraham's First Concern: God's Reputation for Righteousness
- D. Abraham's Second Concern: The Salvation of the Righteous

#### V. Application