

Don't Stop Short of Your Goal

Dr. Michael Elliott

God instructed Abraham to leave his home in Mesopotamia. He was to travel to a place that he had never been before, the land of Canaan. Abraham was to leave not only his homeland, but he was to leave portions of his family behind as well. *Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you"* (Genesis 12:1). Abraham did as he was instructed and he left his ancestral home of Ur of the Chaldeans; he started what would become an 800 mile journey.

It is important to remember that the instructions of God, whether given through His Word, or through the counsel of the Holy Spirit in prayer, will always place a demand on our faith. Abraham knew he was to leave Ur, he just didn't know where he was going. In order to walk obediently into this instruction of God, he would have to use his faith. The same faith will be required of us. In order for us to walk obediently into the fulfillment of the purposes of God, we will have to use our faith and trust God for everything.

Joining Abraham on this journey of faith was his wife, Sarah; his father, Terah; and his nephew, Lot. I wonder how hard was it for Abraham to talk his wife, Sarah, into making this move? How hard was it for her to say "good-bye" to her family? How hard was it for Abraham to say "good-bye" to his friends knowing he probably would never see them again? Often, our obedience to the instructions of God will require us to make difficult choices in our lives.

A Great Beginning

Abraham was about to learn a valuable life-lesson ... **the road to obedience is very long!** I have no doubt that the hardest part for Abraham, in obeying God's instruction, was that he was going to have to trade what was familiar to him for that which would be unfamiliar. This is also a very difficult concept for us today. We would much prefer that God's instructions would keep us within the boundaries of what is comfortable and familiar to us.

Abraham and his traveling companions made a great start on the road to obedience; however, when they arrived in a town called Haran, something happened. For some unknown reason, they stopped their journey and settled down to live in Haran as we read in Genesis 11:31, *And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.* The Scripture does not indicate just how long they stayed in Haran. We do know though, from Genesis 12:5, that it was long enough for Abraham to build considerable wealth and to acquire additional household servants, *Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.*

No one would argue that Haran is a long way down the road from Ur of the Chaldeans ... but, it wasn't far enough. Haran was only 500 miles down the road on what was supposed to be an 800 mile journey. Haran was 300 miles short of where God had purposed for Abraham to dwell.

Stopping Short of Your Goal

We can safely conclude from the Scriptures that it was most likely Abraham's father, Terah, who influenced Abraham to settle down in Haran. We know that Abraham knew this was not God's place for him, for when Terah died, Abraham resumed his journey to Canaan. What kind of pressure did Terah put on Abraham that would sway his decision to abandon his journey and settle down to live in Haran? Was Terah tired of the hardships that are part of such a long journey? Was Terah a man who needed answers now; therefore, he was just too unsettled with the uncertainty of the future into which Abraham was leading him? Could it have been that since Terah was an idolater in the land of Ur, he felt spiritually at home in Haran as they also worshipped the moon god?

We will never know the answer as to why Terah wanted to stop in Haran. But we do know this; Terah never arrived at the place of God's intended destiny for him. Genesis 11:32 tells us that Terah died in Haran, *So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.* Terah started a journey that he never finished. He stopped short of his goal and ended up settling for something less than what God had wanted to give him. He traded the rewards of God's promised land of Canaan for the familiar ways of Haran.

Tragically, this sounds all too familiar. There are many within the family of God who had a great start on their journey of faith. However, for whatever reason, they stopped short of their goal and find themselves living out their days in the oasis of "Haran." While it may be true they are not where they used to be before they met Christ; but it is also true, they are not where they should be either. They stopped short of realizing the fullness of God's purposes for their lives. They end up settling for something less than God's best for them.

If you choose to stop short of God's intended purposes for your life, you will have to rationalize why you are willing to disobey God. You will think to yourself ... "Surely this is far enough; and for that matter, I feel like it is good enough." You will excuse your actions by saying ... "Surely God will give me some credit for sacrificing my past and making such a good start." Or, you will make every attempt to feel better about your decision by saying ... "Surely God understands and realizes that I am better than I used to be and that has to count for something."

Don't Die in a Place Called "Haran"

Terah's death gives us a sobering warning. We need to be very careful! We can die in "Haran" and never realize the fullness of God's purposes for our lives. I believe that it will be a very sad moment in Heaven when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and realize the mistakes we have made in this life. Jesus will open the books to show us how different our lives would have been if we just hadn't stopped short of the goal and settled in "Haran."

It is critical for us to realize that God is far more interested in our "**finishing**" than He is in our "**starting**." Many have started, but they never finished. It is easy for us to be side-tracked. We, at times, are only willing to go as far as those around us are willing to go. Sometimes, we may even allow them to determine how far we will go in the plans of God. Our families or friends may not always understand or agree with the call of God on our lives. However, we will ultimately answer to God, not them, for our obedience, or lack of obedience. As dear to our hearts as our family and friends may be, we must not let anyone, for any reason keep us from obeying God and answering His call on our lives.

Finish Strong

The Apostle Paul, in II Corinthians 10:12, warns us not to let the opinion of others determine whether or not we obey God, *For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

Remember, the purposes and promises of God are only realized if we do not quit in our pursuit of them. *So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time* (Galatians 6:9). Let's keep our trust in God no matter how long or difficult our journey to obedience may become. We must stay the course and obey God's instructions. Then, and only then, will we enjoy the blessings that come from fulfilling our God-given purposes in life. Hebrews 10:35 tells us, *Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord, no matter what happens. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.*

We need to let the words of the Apostle Paul in II Timothy 4:6-8 encourage us to finish strong, *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

**THE ROAD TO OBEDIENCE IS VERY LONG!
DON'T STOP SHORT OF YOUR GOAL!**