

ABRAHAM: ONE NOMAD'S AMAZING JOURNEY OF FAITH

Abram, the Greathearted

Genesis 14:1–4, 10–17, 21–24



LET'S BEGIN HERE

At this point in the biblical storyline, Abraham's name was still Abram. Later, God would change his name to Abraham for an important reason that we'll discover when we study Genesis 17. For now, the world still knew him as Abram.

How did the world see Abraham during this period of his life? Pharaoh may have thought of him as “Abram, the Deceiver,” because he deceived Pharaoh into thinking that Sarah was his sister (Genesis 12:13). Neighboring Canaanites may have viewed him as “Abram, the Big Shot,” because he “was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold” (13:2).

However, his nephew, Lot, as we'll see in this study, saw Abraham as a great hero. *Hero?* Yes, this gentle, godly patriarch had another side we rarely see. When an invading army captured Lot and his family, Abraham and his men rescued them by defeating the army through a daring surprise attack. After this study, we'll forever know Abraham not only as a man of faith but also as a great and valiant commander. *Abram, the Greathearted!*



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Genesis 14 is packed with strange-sounding places and names. A set of Bible maps and a Bible dictionary will help you understand them better. An excellent Bible atlas is *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible*, which includes historical and archaeological information as well as detailed maps. We also recommend the two-volume commentary set, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* and *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, which is available at the Insight for Living Ministries online store.

Quotable

*I've never
met a selfish
great person.
Never will.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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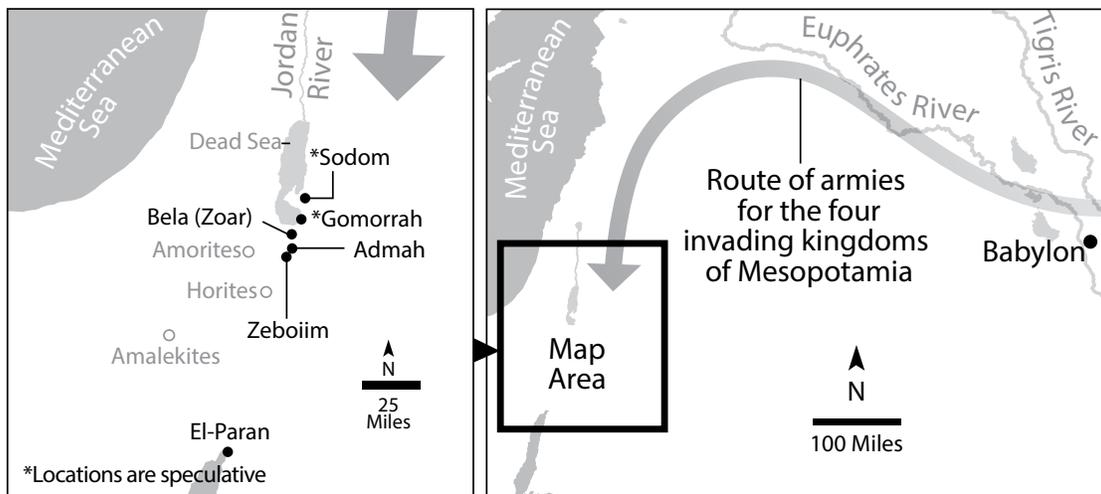
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 **Observation: Places, Names, and Events**

Begin by reading Genesis 14:1–7. The list of kings in Genesis 14:1–2 can be divided into two groups: four kings from Mesopotamia and five from the Siddim Valley (the Dead Sea region). In the chart below, write down the names of the kings and the places they ruled. (Note: the king of Bela is not named.)

Four Kings from Mesopotamia		Five Kings from the Siddim Valley	
King's Name	Place of Rule	King's Name	Place of Rule

The maps below illustrate the route taken by the Mesopotamian kings to the area around the Dead Sea. Locate the cities associated with each of the kings in the Dead Sea region: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (Zoar).



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STUDY

What prompted the four Mesopotamian monarchs led by Kedorlaomer of Elam to invade the region (Genesis 14:4)? Interestingly, this is the first mention of a war between nations in the Bible.

The Mesopotamian armies traveled around the Fertile Crescent and then south into Canaan from Damascus. They marched along the highlands east of the Jordan Valley, taking a route known as “the king’s road” (Numbers 20:17). Locate the king’s road, which follows the modern-day King’s Highway in Jordan, on your study Bible maps or Bible atlas, or you can find a map online at “*King’s Highway and Way of the Sea.*”

Kedorlaomer and his allies vanquished city after city along the way, taking control of eastern Jordan from the Sea of Galilee as far south as the Gulf of Aqaba (Genesis 14:5–6). Then the war machine turned north and west from El-paran (modern-day Eilat), crushing the Amalekites and the Amorites who lived in the wilderness south of the Dead Sea (14:7).

Kedorlaomer’s campaign formed a tight circle around the five rebel kings in the Siddim Valley with no way of escape. All that remained was for Kedorlaomer’s armies to cinch the noose and “hang” the rebel kings. Read the account of the battle in the valley of the Dead Sea in Genesis 14:8–12. What happened? And what was the fate of Lot, his family, and his wealth?

The battle unfolded like the climactic scene of the first act of a play before intermission. Disaster had struck, but the story was not over! Just when all seemed lost, a glimmer of hope shone through. What happened after the smoke of battle cleared (14:13)?



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S06
3

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Don't miss a key observation: Abraham is called, "Abram the _____" (Genesis 14:13), which is the first occurrence of this ethnic title in the Bible. Apparently, by this time, Abraham was already viewed as the leader of a powerful clan, centuries before his descendants formed the Hebrew nation of Israel. Why did Moses, the author of Genesis, include this crucial title for Abraham? Let's find out as we interpret the text.



Interpretation: Four Characteristics of Greatness

Interpretation is discovering the meaning of the text and answers the question of purpose: Why did the author include this episode in the book of Genesis? As you recall, Moses' audience were the recently freed Hebrews who were en route to the Promised Land. Abraham's victory over Kedorlaomer and valiant rescue of Lot would inspire the Israelites to emulate their forefather, "Abram the Hebrew," and rise to his level of greatness as they faced their enemies.

What characteristics of greatness did Abraham model for future generations of Hebrews . . . and us? Chuck Swindoll identifies four to get us started.

Genuine Unselfishness

Lot's presence in Sodom recalls the account of Abraham giving his nephew the choice of land (Genesis 13:9). Lot chose the lush Jordan and foolishly moved to Sodom, the target zone of Kedorlaomer's wrath. Lot's selfishness contrasts the unselfishness of Abraham, who settled out of harm's reach in Hebron.

When studying Scripture, it can be helpful to use your imagination. Put yourself in the scene in which the frightened survivor, fresh from the battlefield, collapsed at the wise patriarch's feet and told him the tragic news of Lot's capture. How might Abraham have responded if he were anything other than unselfish? What would these responses have looked and sounded like?

Critical response: _____

Indifferent response: _____

Proud response: _____

What was Abraham's response (14:14)?



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Willingness to Sacrifice

Greatness begins with a selfless spirit and then it expresses itself in sacrificial deeds. Notice the elements in the text that nuance Abraham's willingness to sacrifice. Dig for meaning by drawing out the implications of the following emphasized words in Genesis 14:14–16:

- Abraham heard that “his *nephew* Lot had been captured.”

His sacrifice was based on _____.

- Without hesitation, Abraham “*mobilized*.”

His sacrifice took _____.

- Abraham mobilized “318 *trained* men.”

His sacrifice influenced others _____.

- Abraham brought back Lot and all the “*other captives*.”

His sacrifice benefited _____.

Abraham surrounded Kedorlaomer's mighty army just like Kedorlaomer had surrounded the five kings and Lot, and he attacked with a bold night raid. When the enemy soldiers fled, Abraham finished the job by chasing them beyond Damascus (Genesis 14:15). What qualities do you see in these actions?



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Absence of Greed

Abraham returned to a hero's welcome but without a hero's ego. Two kings greeted Abraham: Melchizedek, king of Salem and Bera, king of Sodom. Read Genesis 14:17–23, and write down in the chart what each king offered and Abraham's humble response.

	Melchizedek	Bera
What did the king offer?		
What was Abraham's response?		

Rejecting all earthly rewards and acclaim, Abraham praised the true Hero of the story—God, who, as Melchizedek acknowledged, “has defeated your enemies for you” (Genesis 14:20).

Abraham's greatheartedness shone brighter than any medal on his chest! He didn't even expect a pat on the back. Chuck Swindoll remarks on the humility of greathearted people:

There's not a word of thanks from Lot. Not a word. But greathearted people don't do it to be thanked. . . . You're greathearted when you rescue without calling attention to yourself or expecting to be written up in the paper or put in lights.



Correlation: A New Testament Truth

The mysterious Melchizedek came from Salem, later known as Jerusalem—the spiritual center of God's plan to redeem the world. A king and “priest of God Most High,” Melchizedek prefigures Jesus Himself, according to Hebrews 7:1–28. Read the article, “*Melchizedek as a Type of Christ*” on the Insight for Living Ministries Web site to find out more about this fantastic figure of the Old Testament.



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Refusal to Force Convictions on Others

Although Abraham declined the king of Sodom's reward, he didn't force his decision on the others who accepted the king's reward. "I request," Abraham said to the king, "that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre" (Genesis 14:24).

Do you see any additional insights into Abraham's amazing character?

Application: Where to Start and How to Continue

Rarely, in all the Scriptures, do we find a more remarkable example of true greatness than in this story of Abraham. Where his example leaves off, our actions should follow. How can we begin? According to Chuck Swindoll, here are two important steps:

Start by Falling before Jesus Christ

Abraham's ultimate seed, Jesus, is the ultimate model of greathearted character. Depend on Him who indwells to lead you in the path of humility.

Continue by Following Jesus Wherever He Leads

Exhibiting the qualities in this study will lead you to make choices that will set you apart. Don't be afraid to stand out from the crowd as you stand by your principles.

Is the Lord revealing specific ways that you can apply this study?

Let's close our time in the Word with prayer.

A FINAL PRAYER

Father, by Your strength and because of Your glory, I ask You to guide me as I emulate Abraham's model of great character and follow Jesus as my Lord. You rescued me from the clutches of the Enemy, not to release me again to worldly Sodom but to place my feet on the higher ground of Your plan for my life. May I rise to be all You desire for me to be. Amen.



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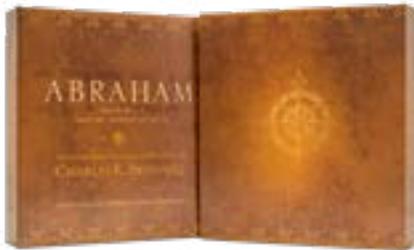
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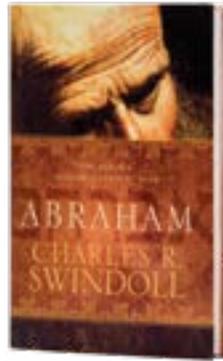
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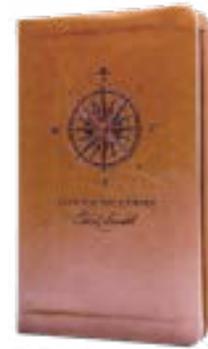
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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S06
8