

The
GOD
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WAY

The
GOD
of the
WAY

A JOURNEY INTO THE
STORIES, PEOPLE, AND FAITH
THAT CHANGED THE WORLD FOREVER

Kathie Lee Gifford
& Rabbi Jason Sobel



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The God of the Way

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I am humbly and profoundly aware that I am one of the billions of people who have been blessed to hear the redeeming message of Jesus' love and salvation and have been called to follow in His divine footsteps. I dedicate this book to all my brothers and sisters of the faith, and I pray that we, together as one body in Him, will continue to believe with our whole souls that Yeshua is the way, the truth, and the life.

—Kathie Lee

To the Lord, whose grace has been more than sufficient at all times and in every season!

To my wonderful wife, Miriam, whose love and support have been a tremendous source of strength and encouragement.

To my boys, Avi and Judah; you are treasures who possess great talent to influence the world.

And to my parents, who have been like wind beneath my wings.

—Rabbi Jason

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INTRODUCTION

This book exists because of a song I cowrote in October 2017 with Nicole C. Mullen in Franklin, Tennessee.

I had never met Nicole before our writing session that day, and it's the only song we have written together since. But that song we titled "The God Who Sees" went on to inspire an extremely successful short film featuring Nicole that I directed in Israel in spring 2018.

At this writing it has been viewed 7.5 million times and still elicits extraordinary responses on YouTube.

The success of "The God Who Sees" has confirmed to me what I am supposed to do with the remaining years of my creative life: tell the amazing, epic, ancient stories in the Bible in a brand-new way, using narration and symphonic orchestrations of original songs. They are called oratorios in the music world, and I have written three new oratorios with brilliant co-composers, orchestrators, and artists.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was prohibited from filming the new oratorios in Israel, but I was able to work with my extraordinary creative/production team to secure locations in Utah and Texas. The final result is an hour-and-a-half-long film called *The Way*, which is scheduled to be released at the end of summer 2022.

INTRODUCTION

It was always my intention to release a companion book to accompany the film for teaching purposes. I asked my collaborator on the book *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi*, Rabbi Jason Sobel, to bring his extensive knowledge and expertise on biblical studies to the project.

I'm grateful that Jason agreed to join me, and the result of our efforts is the book you now hold in your hands.

I pray that it will bless you and deepen your walk with the living God.

My heart's desire is that you will be able to take what you learn and apply it to your everyday life as you "live, and move, and have [your] being" in the One who created you and loves you with an everlasting love (Acts 17:28 KJV).

Blessed be His holy (*Kadosh*) name forever and ever!

SHALOM!

KATHIE LEE

THE GOD OF THE HOW AND WHEN

Kathie

Several years ago I was in early production for a small film I'd hoped to make in Tennessee. At the time, I wanted a song that would capture the essence of our little film. I wrote the lyrics and sent them over to my friend and brilliant songwriter Brett James to set them to music. As usual Brett returned it within hours, totally ready to demo in a recording studio.

So I called one of my favorite people and performers, Jimmie Allen, to record it for us, and he came right over. Jimmie has since emerged as one of the most successful artists in country music and at the time of this writing is nominated for his first Grammy Award as Best New Artist.

He nailed the song. But just as so often happens, the film itself fell through, leaving us with a great song that had nowhere to go—that is, unless the Lord revealed He had a different plan. And He did.

After the success of “The God Who Sees” song, something extraordinary

happened. I realized that I had only scratched the surface of exploring all the epic, inspiring, and miraculous stories in the Bible. It dawned on me that I had literally hundreds of songs just sitting around waiting for a home (we songwriters call them our “trunks”).

The song Brett and I had written for the ill-fated movie was already titled “The God of the How and When,” and it was perfectly adaptable for a brand-new oratorio by the same name.

I immediately set out to tell the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Joshua, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. They all had one thing in common: each story represented a promise from God. Some of those promises, however, took centuries before they were fulfilled, requiring a great deal of waiting from the one who had received the promise. And, as any believer can tell you, waiting on God is one of the hardest things to do. Trusting Him in the process is equally difficult, but it’s in the *believing* that we truly please the God who made the promise.

In the case of Abraham and Sarah, the Bible tells us in Genesis 12:2 that God told Abram (his name at the time) that He would make him the father of a great nation. To do this, he of course would have to have an heir, though it seemed impossible because his wife, Sarai (her name at the time), had been barren for many years. In fact, Sarai actually laughed when she heard that she would become pregnant and bear a child.

Sure enough, though, decades after God’s initial promise to them, their son, Isaac, was born when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety (Genesis 21)!

Of course, this was the beginning of the great nation of the Hebrews that took root with Isaac’s twelve grandsons, their families, and their families’ families. But after six hundred years of growing more populous than “the stars of the heavens” (Genesis 22:17 NASB), they were enslaved in Egypt. God

made a promise to deliver them from Egypt and take them to a land of their own—the “promised” land.

But someone had to deliver them from the brutal and ruthless tyranny of Pharaoh, the powerful king of Egypt.

So God called an eighty-year-old shepherd from Midian who had fled Egypt decades before, instructing him to go back to the place of his birth and convince this all-powerful, evil leader to let God’s people go. The fact that this elderly and, by his own admission, completely incapable man was successful in this mission is nothing short of miraculous.

The legendary story continued on after Moses died and his faithful follower Joshua was called to lead the Hebrew nation to the Promised Land. Again, God’s promise took awhile to be fulfilled, but Joshua and the Hebrews eventually entered the “land flowing with milk and honey” more than forty years after leaving Egypt (Exodus 3:8 NASB).

Many centuries later an angel visited a young Hebrew virgin named Mary and told her she had found favor with God and would bear a child she would call Jesus, which means “God saves.”

Back in the days of Abraham, God had promised the eventual father of Israel that his seed would be a blessing to all nations and that it would bring about the birth of the Eternal Deliverer, one who would be far greater than Moses (Genesis 22:18).

Then, for centuries afterward, the great prophets of Jehovah God prophesied that this Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), a miracle even more improbable than when God parted the Red Sea for Moses and the Hebrew people. Nevertheless, the angel told Mary she would be that virgin.

Nine months later the Savior of the world came into the physical world He had created with His Father in the beginning.

THE GOD OF THE WAY

The God of the How and When is still building His Kingdom through the lives of the billions of followers of Jesus (Yeshua), the Savior of *all* humankind.

Blessed be His holy name.

ABRAHAM

Rabbi Jason

Being Jewish was extremely important to the Sobel household. Our family was a living legacy of Holocaust survivors. Most of my mom's relatives died during that unthinkable horror, and the old photographs lining the walls and shelves of our home served as a memorial. Growing up, when I looked at them I was reminded of their stories that I had heard again and again. Before my grandmother Gerta was able to escape Germany, she focused on getting her family out first. She gave her visa to her brother and his wife, who strapped their baby into a backpack and hiked safely across the Alps to freedom. My grandmother next tried getting a visa to her parents, but it was too late. After being loaded onto a train like cattle and shipped to a concentration camp, they were murdered in transit because of their faith. In large part because of these inspiring stories of sacrifice, being Jewish was always something deeply ingrained in the very fibers of my being. I grew up with a rich understanding of my identity as a Jew.

Part of that identity came from my intensive study of the Torah (the first

five books of the Bible). For years, in addition to regular school, I attended Hebrew school two days a week and went to synagogue every Saturday. As a kid with competing interests like basketball and girls, my studies became a bit of a love-hate relationship. Somewhere along the journey, though, as I read the stories of the Jewish personalities, the characters came alive, leaping off the pages, affecting me deeply—David the king, Moses the emancipator, Ruth the loyal woman of God, and Abraham the man of incredible faith.

Believing the Promise

Abraham is one of the most influential figures in the Bible. In Genesis 11, at the start of his journey, Abraham was known as Abram. Though Abram was a native of Ur of Chaldea, located in what is now southern Iraq, God called him and his family to migrate approximately six hundred miles to Haran, today's southeastern Turkey.

Imagine picking up all your belongings with your family and leaving behind a life of comfort and safety in a thriving metropolis and heading for the unknown. That's exactly what Abram and his family did, traveling through rocky terrain fraught with danger, in a slowly moving caravan with sheep, donkeys, camels, and other livestock.

After his father's death, Abram received a second call from God involving a promise that would later have enormous implications for the Jewish people (Genesis 12:1–2). In another bold step of faith, Abram left Haran with his nephew Lot “not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). Instead of trying to figure out where and how, he chose to trust God's guidance as he moved his caravan farther into the unknown. Then, while setting up camp one day by the great oak of Moreh at Shechem, some four

hundred miles beyond Haran (Genesis 12:6), Abram received the great promise from God.

“I will make you a great nation,
 And I will bless you,
 And make your name great;
 And so you shall be a blessing;
 And I will bless those who bless you,
 And the one who curses you I will curse.
 And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. . . .
 To your descendants I will give this land.” So [Abram] built
 an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.
 (Genesis 12:2–3, 7 NASB)

God appeared to Abram, speaking comforting covenantal words and promises. This is the first such appearance of these kinds of words mentioned in the Torah. Since Scripture is clear that no man can see God and live (Exodus 33:20), most scholars conclude the visitation was likely an angelic vision or human form. Regardless, God chose Abram to receive physical and spiritual blessings. On the physical side, Abram would become the father of the Jewish people through a son, Isaac. Out of this line, Messiah would be born. On the spiritual side, Abram had a unique relationship with his Creator. The two fellowshiped together under the stars and perhaps in the cool of the mornings, walking and talking. Listening with his spiritual ears, Abram recognized something greater than himself was going on and therefore obeyed God without question. Did he sometimes mess up? Of course he did—such as when he did not tell Pharaoh that Sarai was his wife, out of fear he would be killed (Genesis 12:10–20). Yet God quickly forgave this man He had called to be the father of a

great nation. God continued telling Abram to expect to have heirs even though, by this time, he and Sarai were well past their childbearing years. What God was doing did not always make sense to Abram's natural mind, but his faith did not waver because he trusted and rested in God's faithfulness and timing.

God's timing in our lives is one of those things that often trips us up. We sometimes wonder what He is doing and question if He is even listening. We ask God for something, and seemingly nothing happens. We want Aunt Martha healed, but she remains sick or even dies. We want that promotion, but someone else gets it. Instead of getting the answer we want, we often get silence. We struggle like Job. "I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me" (Job 30:20 NIV). But in the end, faith recognizes that God is wiser than we are and that He is outside of time. He sees the whole picture and is doing something bigger than we can imagine. As we acknowledge Him, trust Him, and lean not on our own understanding, He lights the path for us to follow (Proverbs 3:5–6). Abram recognized this and trusted God's faithfulness. As hard as it is at times, so should we. Another writer put it this way:

Let us learn this lesson—God never forgets, he cannot forget! He sees the end from the beginning; he is in the eternal now. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is not in the flux of time; he is outside it. He does not see things as we do. He seems to forget but he does not.¹

Like many people, my life has had its ups and downs. Looking back, I can now appreciate those lingering seasons of wrestling and waiting, but I'm not going to try to sound all super spiritual and say it's easy. Wrestling and waiting are tough! And years of wrestling and waiting will wear a person down. Deep down in the core of my being, I had an intuitive sense of destiny for ministry. I knew God had a plan for me and that He always provided, yet my

endurance was wearing thin. I was weary, and nothing seemed to be happening. At times the silence was indeed loud. *How much longer, Lord? How long?*

Struggling to find out what I was to do for the Lord, I even contemplated giving up my dreams of ministry and returning to law school, since every good Jewish boy (and his mother) knows that he should be either a doctor or a lawyer. While those certainly are noble occupations, for me it would not be God's best. Somewhere, beneath the chaos and the silence, I could hear His still, small voice wooing me, telling me not to pursue other things—that He had a calling on my life and I should stay focused and wait.

God asked Abram to wait. In Genesis 13:14–18, He expanded on His promise to Abram. He promised not only land but also to “make [his] seed like the dust of the earth so that if one could count the dust of the earth, then [his] seed could also be counted” (Genesis 13:16).

Years later the idea of one heir, let alone children “like the dust of the earth,” seemed impossible to Abram and Sarai. Every time they saw their aged faces reflected in still waters or polished bronze, the couple was reminded that they were well beyond childbearing years.

Fully aware of Abram and Sarai's fatigue from wrestling and waiting, God decided to give Abram a new vision. He took him out of his tent—out of his circumstances—and showed him something different. “Look up now, at the sky, and count the stars—if you are able to count them,” God said to Abram. “So shall your seed be” (Genesis 15:5). This new perspective from God renewed Abram's faith (v. 6), and he believed the promise. This one verse is so critical to all of Scripture that, many years later, the apostle Paul, whom I like to call Rabbi Paul, established his definition of salvation on it (Romans 4; Galatians 5). Salvation does not come by the law or works; it comes through God's mercy and faith. God renewed Abram's faith. Abram realized God was in control and there was nothing he could do outside of believing God's promises.

God's promises are never in doubt. When we endanger God's promises, there will be consequences, but that doesn't stop God from moving forward with His purposes. We can still trust Him when our field of vision is narrow. Often our field of vision is limited to "my, me, and mine," but we need to expand it until we can see God using our lives in His design. Sometimes when things seem impossible, we need to walk "out of our tent" and let God cast a new vision for us.

After Abram received that new vision and promise from God, nothing appeared to change. The years continued to slip by, and no children came to him and Sarai—not a one. There was just silence. Sarai was still barren, and they weren't getting any younger. Weary of waiting, Abram and Sarai felt God had forgotten them and His promise. But then, in His perfect timing, God stepped in and did something wonderfully significant. He changed their names from Abram to Abraham, from Sarai to Sarah. He added the same letter to their names—the Hebrew letter *hei* (ה). In Jewish thought, the letter *hei* signifies the creative power and potential to conceive children or give birth to any promise of God. This single letter was a game changer! It was after God added the letter *hei* to their names that the miracle of conception occurred.

Adding the letter *hei* to both of their names is also symbolic of the letter of the divine breath (Genesis 2:4) and the letter of the divine promises (Psalm 33:6). As a woman in her nineties, Sarah's womb was dead, and then God breathed new life into her just as He breathed the breath of life into Adam. God's divine breath supernaturally flowed through Sarah, empowering her to give birth to the promised heir.

God still specializes in breathing life into dead situations. Just as He breathed into Sarah's womb, God wants to breathe into you and your potential, empowering you by His Spirit, so you can birth into reality the promises He has placed inside you. You have potential. You have His promises. Now let Him breathe on you and give you a new vision and path.

Abraham didn't know when. He didn't know how. But he believed and trusted. He understood deep in his heart that Adonai (the divine name of God often translated as LORD) was the God of the How and When. No doubt Abraham had to exercise patience before receiving the promise. Yes, God had spoken to him, but he also knew the silence and wrestling that comes with extended waiting. The Bible tells us that twenty-five years passed before his son was finally born (Genesis 12:4; 21:5). Almost three decades passed from the time God first called Abram in Haran to the time Isaac was born.² Abraham left Haran when he was seventy-five. When he was one hundred, God decided it was time to give him a son with Sarah. Abraham surely wandered the land, gazing up into the night sky and attempting to count the thousands upon thousands of visible stars as they sparkled. Perhaps as a shooting star blazed across the horizon, he pondered the impossibility of it all. In our modern world with billions of city lights, few get a chance to view the stars as Abraham did. The stars Abraham looked up at danced against a backdrop of pure blackness, making them shimmer like diamonds. Unable to count them, Abraham would see with his eyes of faith beyond the magnificent cosmic handiwork to the Creator. *How much longer, Lord? How long?*

Though Abraham showed impatience at times, he never wavered in his trust in God's promise. "Even when Abram did not see how God could fulfill His gracious promise to him regarding an heir, he trusted the Lord anyway. He looked beyond what he could see to what God could see."³

Testing the Promise

According to Jewish tradition, it was on the Feast of Trumpets (or what most know today as Rosh Hashanah) when God supernaturally breathed life into

Sarah's womb and Isaac was conceived.⁴ The Feast of Trumpets is when Jewish people observe their new year. It's a celebration of new beginnings and blessings. Several other things are celebrated on that day—including the creation of the world, the day Joseph was released from prison and promoted to the palace, and the day Israel's servitude in Egypt stopped.

One of the primary Scripture readings on Rosh Hashanah is the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22. Why? Because the event is *that* critical. After all those years of Abraham waiting for his promised son, the Lord tested Abraham by commanding him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on a mountain in the land of Moriah. What is so incredible to me is that Abraham didn't hesitate! Of course, Abraham had human feelings just like all of us, so I can't imagine that there were no internal struggles going on. I'll never forget the time my first-born son was sick and had a seizure. Right in front of me, he turned blue and started foaming at the mouth. After calling 911, I dropped to my hands and knees and cried out for God to spare his life. Sacrificing my son as Abraham was commanded to do is inconceivable to me, yet he obeyed! He didn't ask God for an explanation. Abraham obediently set off with his son to do what God told him to do.

Even when Isaac noticed they had everything necessary to make a burnt offering except for the actual offering, Abraham reassured his son, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (vv. 7–8 NKJV). Once again, we find Abraham not evading his son's question but completely trusting God. He made a statement of faith. He didn't know *how*, and he didn't know *when*, but Abraham knew God would provide. He was prepared to offer up what must have been the dearest, most precious thing in his life for God.

Abraham bound Isaac on the altar and drew back to offer his beloved son to the Lord. At the last moment, though, before the knife plunged down, an angel called out and stayed his hand. Abraham looked up and saw a ram

caught in the thicket by its horns. God, who is all knowing, had already provided a ram. God had seen Abraham's character and trust. After offering the ram in place of Isaac, Abraham named that place "*ADONAI Yireh*,—as it is said today, 'On the mountain, *ADONAI* will provide'" (v. 14).

Abraham's faith led him to accept what was beyond understanding. He obeyed without questioning; his faith was built on God's promises and provision. Author and rabbi Russell Resnik wrote,

The call of faith is often—perhaps always—demanding. To respond, we must leave behind all that is comfortable and follow the Lord into unknown territory. And the journey of faith does not end with this initial call. We must walk by faith, not only at the beginning of the journey, but throughout. We will have to resist lots of chances of turning back.⁵

All of us have a choice to make. We can choose to follow God like Abraham did, to trust Him completely, believing His promises, or we can turn back. When my son had his seizure, I almost turned back. Instead, by God's grace, I was empowered to trust during the time of testing. God tested Abraham *ten* times⁶ throughout Scripture's recordings of his life. Each time, Abraham chose to trust and obey. Likewise, it is important for us as believers in Yeshua to understand that encountering trials doesn't necessarily mean we have lost our way or our calling. It could mean we are exactly where we are supposed to be. The presence of pain, struggle, and waiting does not equate to the absence of God, though it often feels like it. Even amid unthinkable trials, we can still choose to be people of incredible faith, led by God the Father as Abraham was. We must all remember Hebrews 11:6, which says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who

diligently seek Him” (NKJV). The first reward is Himself, His presence in our lives. The choice is yours.

Abram and His Sojourning Faith

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he was to receive as an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he migrated to the land of promise as if it were foreign, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob—fellow heirs of the same promise. For he was waiting for the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:8–10)

When Abram left Ur and then Haran, there was no set plan except obedience. He had no idea where he was going. God said to get up and get moving, and he went! This was no small ordeal. It wasn't like Abram was a lone drifter who could just exit town riding on a horse or a Harley into the sunset. He had to pull up his roots—everything he'd spent years developing and growing, his security and provision. Simply put, despite the uncertainty and discomfort, he did what God told him to do. This is sojourning faith.

Sojourning Faith Is Willing to Move Forward Without All the Details

When God says to go, He usually doesn't lay out all the specifics. Rather, He gives just enough information for us to take the next step in faith. Because of our fear of the unknown, however, we plead with God to give us *all* the answers before moving forward. *We want to know*. When He doesn't oblige

us, we stiffen our necks (become stubborn) instead of trusting Him for the supernatural. When this happens, our relationship with God gets stuck. Like boots deeply entrenched in mire, the longer we stay stuck, the harder it is to get moving again.

Sojourners like Abraham, on the other hand, are quick to act, even if obedience means waiting. That sounds like a paradox, but waiting can be an active state too. Either way, sojourners are moving in faith, saying, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done” (Matthew 6:10 NASB).

The Hebrew phrase *Na'aseh v'Nishma* means “you will do and understand.” We need to be willing to do and go! Whether it was leaving his homeland or making a sacrifice, Abraham did not delay. Scripture tells us that he “rose up early in the morning” to build an altar on which to offer Isaac (Genesis 22:3 KJV). If God said to me, “Offer your son,” I might delay it a little bit. Not Abraham. One might think that he would have been slow to obey since pain and sacrifice were involved. Yet Abraham responded quickly, and God noted his obedience.

Abraham “awoke,” then, according to Rabbi Kook, a highly respected Jewish scholar, he slept during the night. “Evidently, Avraham slept soundly the night before the *Akeidah* [the binding of Isaac]. The peace of mind of this holy soul, of the holy father, the mighty native, did not cease.”⁷

He didn't spend the wee hours pacing back and forth trying to bargain with God. Knowing that he was called to sacrifice his son didn't disturb his sleep. It is this kind of calmness in faith that sets him apart from others.

The Talmud states that one must praise Hashem [God] for the bad things as well as the good things. It further requires that this praise be with “simchah”; Rashi [medieval French rabbi] points out in this case “simchah” doesn't mean joy, but with a “perfect heart” (i.e., with acceptance

that whatever G-d does is just, even though it may be very distressing and appear to us to be unjust). Equanimity is not easily achieved. We welcome pleasant things but are upset when our wishes are denied or frustrated. Personal losses (whether personal or material) cause us to be depressed. We may think that it is beyond possibility for a person to have the same reaction to adversity that he does when his fondest wishes are fulfilled. For Abraham, there was only one reason for existence—to do the will of G-d.⁸

When we fail to act on what we know we are being asked to do, our faith becomes lukewarm. What does one do when lukewarm or cold? Get in motion. Movement generates body heat. If you want to stay spiritually hot, stay in motion!

Sojourning Faith Serves God with Equanimity

Abraham also served God with *equanimity*. That's a curious word that connotes mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in difficult situations. It's the type of faith that allows us to keep our peace even when unforeseen storms of life suddenly appear, threatening to blow us away. Yeshua was the absolute essence of equanimity:

He got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (Matthew 8:23–27 NIV)

Equanimity is rooted in a deep faith that calmly rises above the storms of life and even commands them to be still. Though the waves of our circumstances are beating on our boat, Yeshua calls us to rest. Like Yeshua sleeping on the stormy lake, Abraham could sleep through the night before taking Isaac up the mountain because he knew who was in control of his circumstances. This is sojourning faith. “Rest in the LORD,” wrote the psalmist, “and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7 KJV).

Sojourning Faith Always Looks Up

Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham *looked up* and saw the place in the *distance*. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” (Genesis 22:3–5 NIV, emphasis added)

Abraham lived a life of firmly *looking up* and onward. No time for distractions. No time for gazing to the right or left. With blinders on his eyes and a guard on his heart, Abraham’s face was set like flint on his divine assignment and on the God who always provides. The word “distance” in this verse implies looking forward to the future. So often we live our lives staring in the rearview mirror. Obsession with our past (both good and bad things) distracts us from focusing ahead, causing us to veer off course and

swerve out of our assigned lanes. That's why getting us to focus on our past is one of the Enemy's favorite tactics.

Sojourners live in a fresh, synergetic daily relationship with God as they travel through life dependent on Him as their ultimate, ever-present source for life.

Award-winning author and songwriter David M. Edwards wrote, "Too many times we have relied on yesterday's manna to nourish us today, tomorrow, and the rest of the week. God rebuked Israel for trying to stockpile manna! They were not supposed to live on yesterday's provision, yesterday's manifestation, yesterday's visitation. Don't be satisfied with what happened yesterday."⁹ And don't get stuck back there either. God made a way for you to get unstuck and move forward with true life. A person who keeps looking back is not fit for the Kingdom (Luke 9:62). That's why the apostle and rabbi Paul told us: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13–14, paraphrased).

Abraham did not look back; instead, he looked up. Genesis 22:4 tells us a time when he did this: "On the third day Abraham looked up" (NIV). In Jewish tradition the third day is seen as a day of transformation and insight. God created the trees and they sprouted on the third day of Creation. On the third day God provided the lamb to spare Isaac's life. God came down and met Israel at Sinai on the third day. Jonah was spit out from the big fish on the third day. Yeshua rose from the dead on the third day.

In the account of Creation, the third day is called "doubly blessed." A careful reading of Genesis 1:9–13 (the third day of Creation) reveals that it is the day of double blessing—twice during that day, God pronounced it "good." For much of Jewish history, the third day of the week (Tuesday) was considered an especially auspicious day for weddings. This was so because

on the third day of Creation, the phrase “and God saw that it was good” appears twice (Genesis 1:10, 12).

When we look to the Lamb of God on the cross who rose on the third day, we are looking up. John compared Yeshua to the bronze serpent on the pole that God instructed Moses to build to cure the people from poisonous snakebites. When they looked upon it, they were healed. It was a look of faith. They had to look up (Numbers 21; John 3:14).

Sojourning Faith Never Goes It Alone

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. (Genesis 22:6–8 NIV)

Let’s give Isaac some credit; he suspected what this meant. No lamb meant something was up. And if he had any doubt, it was confirmed when he was bound and laid on the altar. Isaac was not a child at this time as many have believed. According to Jewish tradition, he was a man in his thirties and could have easily resisted his father who was well into his second century of life by then. But he had the faith to trust both his earthly father and his heavenly Father. When Scripture says the two went on together, the Hebrew text implies they were in unity—one heart and one mind.

How can two walk together unless they are agreed (Amos 3:3)? We

cannot walk out our faith alone. We cannot fulfill our destiny by ourselves. Two are better than one! We must walk together or else we will waver, backslide, and drift from our faith. We were not created to be Lone Rangers! We were created for community and for a team. One stick is easy to break, but a bundle of sticks tied together is nearly unbreakable.

Sojourning Faith Trusts God to Provide

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”
(Genesis 22:13–14 NIV)

Sojourning faith means being willing to put everything on the altar because we trust God to provide. Genuine faith always trusts God to provide. But how was it possible for Abraham to have that type of trust? He understood that

1. God loved him more than Abraham loved himself;
2. God knew what was best for him, better than he did; and
3. God is good and is faithful to His promises.

By faith, when God tested him, Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice. The man who embraced and believed God’s promises was about to sacrifice his only son—the promised son. At some point Abraham must have felt his son was going to die. Yet he had enough faith to reason that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

Just as He breathes life into dead situations, the God Who Sees is in the business of resurrecting dead things to keep His promises. Is there something you need to put on the altar and trust God with? Is there something you are holding back? If you put whatever it is on the altar, by faith, God will either raise it back up or give you something new and better in return.

A Note from Kathie

Abram, aka Abraham, is listed in Hebrews 11, the Bible's so-called Hall of Faith chapter. He was described as a "friend of God" (James 2:23) and without a doubt remains a pivotal and profound character in the birth of the Jewish nation and the history of the world.

When God called Abram from the land of Ur, the Scriptures tell us that he immediately left everything comfortable, secure, and convenient in his physical life.

Why? Why would he leave everything for such an unknown destination and an unknowable future?

I can only surmise that he experienced an extraordinary encounter with the living God that left him convinced he had to follow Him.

I'm no Abram, but I, too, experienced such an encounter when I was a twelve-year-old and knew without a doubt in my young mind that I had to follow Jesus. No "if not's" or "maybes."