

**Series: God & Abraham #1102**

**Title: Abram, My Professor, and Me**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Yesterday we opened this new series in the Book of Genesis talking about how Abraham and his descendants, the Hebrew people, are a pilgrim people. They are forever traveling, always on the move and never stagnant, not standing for long in one place. And so as we read of them, we must learn to go along with them. We are going on a trip!

And we are going to have some helpful guides along the way. Today I want to introduce you to someone who will accompany us, especially here at the start, in the early going. This is someone who knows the way because he has spent a lot of time with Abraham. This individual has impacted my life as a teacher, a mentor, even a friend. As I introduce this man, let me start by pointing us to something in the Scripture that is true of us if we are Christians, this truth is in Genesis and chapter 12. I am reading Genesis chapter 12, verses 1-4.

I invite you to listen attentively to the Word of God.

**<sup>1</sup>Now the Lord said to Abram,**

**‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> 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.’ <sup>4</sup> So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him...”**

That was Genesis 12.1-4, the very Word of God to Abram, and, let me boldly state: the fulfilment of this promise is the reason I am a Christian. And the fulfilment of this promise is the reason *you* are a Christian, whether you be a Jewish Christian or a Gentile Christian. And that makes what I have just read in Genesis very, very important indeed.

You might ask, “What does God’s Word to Abram have to do with any of us being Christians?” The answer is quite a lot (as we shall see). But the truth is I had no idea the relationship between God and Abram (whose name later became Abraham), I had no idea how influential that relationship was to me when I invested my small and simple faith in Christ as a young teenager. And I was ignorant as to how prominent a man Abraham would become in my life as time went on and as my understanding of the Bible grew.

If you will allow me to share a personal story, I grew up in a town north of Boston, Massachusetts in the United States. You will recognize the name of the town because it is where the Post Office Box for *God Is* mail is received: Winchester. This is not Winchester, Virginia, more famous because of what took place there during the United States Civil War, no, I spent the first part of my life in Winchester Massachusetts. I am a northerner. And it was there my faith in Christ was nurtured and developed.

When it came time for me to go to Middle School (what was then called Junior High), my Mom sent me not to the Winchester Junior High, but rather to Lexington Christian Academy. And this school was located in the Lexington that *is* famous for another war – the Revolutionary War – the Lexington Battle Green being where those first shots were fired. The Lexington Christian Academy (or LCA for short) was where I went to both Middle School and High School and where my faith in the Lord matured some more. Still, I did not realize, nor (frankly) was I taught, despite being in a Christian school, about how blessed I had become because the families of the earth were to be blessed by God through Abraham.

In 1992 I graduated from the Lexington Christian Academy and packed my bags for the short drive up Route 128 (known nationally as part of I-95 North) to the Gordon College, located in Wenham Massachusetts. And that is where, majoring in Biblical and Theological Studies, I met one of the faculty members in the department, a man by the name of Marvin R. Wilson. Dr. Wilson.

As I think of him now I recall to memory the first time I looked up from my desk to see him saunter into the classroom, papers under arm – walking with that signature gait of his – and he put the papers on the podium and looked up through his circular, oval shaped eyeglasses and with a twinkle in his eye he said something like, “Alright, I am ready to begin. Let’s have a word of prayer and then we will start the class.” He prayed and as he did, I kept thinking, “There is something really fascinating and compelling about this man.” He seemed, this early on in the encounter, he seemed to just ooze biblical wisdom. He reminded me of a Jewish Rabbi.

Well, it would be this man, Dr. Marvin R. Wilson, who God would use to teach me that Abram and this promise God made to Abram (Abraham) is why I was sitting in that seat at Gordon College as a *Christian* young man. I think it was as a junior that I took the *Modern Jewish Culture* course taught by him with such skill and joy. And that course, and specifically the main text used in it, Dr. Wilson’s own book *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, it was what convinced me – with such clarity – that God’s relationship with Abraham is so essential to God’s relationship with me, indeed with every one of us.

I will be telling you more about the class *Modern Jewish Culture* in the days ahead. But let me complete this personal story with this: do you know who else grew up in Winchester Massachusetts and then went to Lexington Christian Academy and on to Gordon College (as professor)? Who else shared roots with me? That’s right! Marvin Wilson.

As you know, if you listen to me as a Jewish person you certainly know this, one’s roots, one’s heritage, knowing where one has come from is important and I have valued knowing that I have followed this man of God through some familiar places, like Winchester, and the same academies of LCA and the Gordon College. As you come with us, exploring the life of Abraham, you will hear me talk about Dr. Wilson and we will be using his book *Our Father Abraham* quite a bit especially as we navigate our way through this introduction.

As you know from your own life, we owe a lot to our mentors, teachers, and to those generations whom have preceded us. So, I want to honor Marvin Wilson who at age 86 is one of my forefathers in the faith who has taught me most richly and deeply about our mutual father Abraham and about how my roots as a Christian run deep through Hebrew soil.

Having shared this personal story, introducing you to someone who influences me as I attempt to influence *you*, let me tell you about the path we are going to take as we enter the life of God and Abraham. And, for the sake of using only one name, from now on I will use Abraham unless we are in the Scripture passages where his name was still Abram.

As we make our way to the verses I have read at the start, I want to first talk about the Hebrew roots of being Christian. (The Hebrew roots of being Christian.) I want to show you, from the Scripture, how every Christian person finds their spiritual origin in Abraham.

And who better to start with then the most prominent Jew, outside of Jesus, so the second most prominent Jew to Jesus in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul? Let’s read Paul for a bit and see what he teaches us about our Hebrew heritage.

Then, we will take up this question about why the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, is so valuable and important to us. Why would I spend so much time here on *God Is* in Genesis, for example? Maybe you have wondered this. Well, there are many reasons. We will discover them here in the early going of our new series *God and Abraham*.

Finally, I want to let you know that our introduction will take several days to do well. So, get ready to search other parts of the Scripture with us as we talk about the Hebrew roots of being Christian and of the significance of the Hebrew Bible to us.

Let me pray for us as we continue to prepare for our journey. Our Father, God, we thank You for bringing us together so that we can pick-up this Your Word – holy, inspired, inerrant, and infallible – and we can read about this man Abraham whom You called out of Ur and whom you led into that territory marked out for Your chosen people: Canaan.

Thank You, most gracious God, for the promises you made to Abraham, the promises You have kept all these years, and how we (as Christ's people) are part of the fulfilment of these promises. Instruct us, Lord. Open our eyes and let us see the Hebrew roots of being Christians. Help us to understand and grasp the value of what we call the "Old Testament," but what is the Hebrew Bible. As Paul the Apostle said, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." Whatever happened in Abraham's life is for our instruction. Oh help us to see that. Holy Spirit, make the text come alive to us, I pray.

And we thank You for men like Marv Wilson who have gone before us. And for all of our traveling companions who will help us learn Your Word, we are always grateful. I pray that what is said here will encourage us, strengthen us, convict us, and nurture us. In Christ's Name. Amen.

Join us tomorrow to understand the Hebrew roots of being Christian on *God Is*.

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