

Navigators Africa Staff Conference

27 February – 5 March 2009

Together advancing the Gospel with Courage

PROMISES, FAITH AND SACRIFICIAL COMMITMENT IN ADVANCING THE GOSPEL

Introduction

Participating in God's purposes is perhaps the greatest privilege a mortal can ever hope for. And this calls for a certain kind of faith and sacrificial commitment for those who are so privileged. This study seeks to help us gain a better understanding of the purposes of God and the kind of life He delights to use.

A. The Promises...

We want to align our lives with what God is doing. But what is God doing? This section captures for us the main theme in the Scriptures as God unfolds the fulfillment of His promise made to Abraham. "God made a promise to Abraham. And an understanding of that promise is indispensable to an understanding of the Bible and of the Christian mission. These are perhaps the most unifying verses in the Bible; the whole of God's purpose is encapsulated here." – *John Stott*

11. Beginning at Gen. 12:1-3, trace God's promises to Abraham (& the Patriarchs) in the rest of Genesis. List your observations.
2. From the following passages, note how the promise made to Abraham was renewed and expanded, how it was fulfilled in the rest of scripture.
 - 1d) Israel – Exo. 19:5-6; Deut. 28:9-11; Jos. 21:43-45
 - 2e) David – 2 Sam. 7:18-29
 - 3f) Prophet – Eze. 36:24-28; Joel 2:28:32
 - 4g) The servant of God – Isa. 42:6-7; 49:1-8; 52:13-53:12; 54:1-10
3. Look at the New Testament passages. How did Jesus and the New Testament writers understand the promise and its outworking?
John 8:56; Acts 2:14-40; Acts 3:24:26; Acts 13:23, 32-33; Acts 26:6; Rom. 4
2 Cor. 1:19, 20; Gal. 3:6-9, 14; Gal. 3:15-22, 26-29; Heb. 6:13-18; Rev. 7:9-10
4. What light do the following scriptures throw on how we may benefit from God's promises?
Heb. 6:12; Heb. 11:1, 6, 39-40
5. From your study:
 - a) How did the promises affect Abraham? What is the place of Sarah and Isaac in the promises?
 - b) What do you observe regarding the relationship of Terah, Lot, Ishmael & Esau to the promises?
 - c) To whom else, besides Abraham, was the promise in Gen 12:1-3 given? How was it fulfilled?
 - d) How do the Promises relate to the Great Commission?
 - e) How would the Promises apply to us today? What difference does it make to your life?

B. Faith...

Abraham staked his whole life and destiny on a 'word' he believed to be from God. But setting out from Ur was just the beginning. Living in tents, sacrificing his 'only son', etc were to mark the rest of his life from this point on. What was he doing in Canaan? What enabled him to overcome his challenges whereas the young nation of Israel, fresh out of Egypt could not? The Bible calls it faith. What is the faith that lays hold of the 'unchanging nature of God's purpose' (Heb 6:17) and overcomes challenges and obstacles?

1. Take Moses and any 2 other 'Heroes of Faith' in Heb.11. Study their lives in context (Old Testament):
 - a) What were the challenges they faced?
 - b) What informed their faith?
 - c) What was their response ... the outworking of faith?
 - d) What was the effect?
2. Consider the role faith played in the life and ministry of Paul.
Acts 26:1-23; 27:21-25; 1Cor 9:1-27; 2Cor 6:3-10; Gal 1:13-19; Phil 4:10-13.

What do you think influenced his commitment, attitude and lifestyle?

3. What further light do the following scriptures throw on the role of faith in the Christian life and ministry? How is an attitude of expectancy developed?
Ps 37:4; 130:5-6; Mk 11:22-24; Jn 14:13/15:7; Heb 10:35-39; Jas 1:2-8; 1Jn 5:14-15.
4. Pulling it all together:
 - a) What are some of the challenges to effective participation in God's purposes?
 - b) What kind of faith overcomes these challenges?
 - c) How can we develop this kind of faith?

C. Sacrificial Commitment ... in advancing the gospel.

“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish”. John 1:14 (Msg)

The Word put aside all the privileges and advantages of being God and became a mere mortal. Having made that sacrifice, Jesus also stayed on course in his mission despite all that could have deterred him (Heb 12:2). He had a sacrificial commitment in advancing the Gospel. And now, He sends us into the world as the Father sent him (John 17:18).

1. Do a verse by verse meditation on John 1:1-14 and answer the following questions:
 - a) What do you observe about Jesus and the gospel?
 - b) What does it mean that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us? Why did He do it?
 - c) How did the Father send Jesus into the world?
 - d) How should the reality that God became man in order to advance the gospel affect your life today?

Sacrifice

“There are in every generation those who shrink from the ultimate sacrifice, but there are in every generation those who make it with joy and laughter and these are the salt of the generations.” Patrick Pearse (1879 - 1916), Irish poet and nationalist.

What Paul said in Phil 3:7 is also true for people like Moses, Ruth and Daniel: “The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for”. (Msg). What did these men see? Why did they make the choices they made? What were they aiming for?

2. Study the following passages and note down your observations: Ex 2:11-13; Heb 11: 24-27.
 - a) What did Moses observe about the condition of his people?
 - b) How do you think the situation of the people affected him and why?
 - c) What choices did Moses make and why do you think he did it?
 - d) Look at the people around you, and beyond you into the Nations. How are their situations similar or dissimilar to that of Israel in bondage?
 - e) What might God be asking you to do about the situation in d) above?

Commitment

“When enthusiasm and commitment take root with a project, that project comes to life”. Robin Sieger. Value, passion, commitment are the trio necessary for the success of any enterprise.

3. Carefully study the following passages about people who were committed to the various things God laid on their hearts and answer the questions that follow:

Ruth 1: 16-18; 1Sam17: 26, 45-47; Esther 4:14-16

- a) How would you describe commitment to a cause?
- b) What was the important thing (value) that fuelled the commitment of the people?
- c) How was their commitment demonstrated?
- d) What is your passion, what value is informing it and what price are you paying to pursue it?
- e) How would you describe a sacrificial commitment in the advancement of The Gospel?

Application

1. What are some major challenges we face... you as a person and the Navigators as a Ministry?
2. In light of this study, what might God be saying to you... to us?