



GENESIS: THE FOUNDATION FOR EVERYTHING

A person stands on a dark, silhouetted hill under a vast night sky filled with stars and the Milky Way galaxy. The person is positioned centrally, looking up at the celestial display. The sky transitions from a deep black at the top to a warm orange glow near the horizon where the person stands.

A LIFE DEFINED BY FAITH IN GOD: LABORING FOR GOD

GENESIS 17:23-27

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How does God want you to relate to Him?

I. Look to God: (An emphasis on God's character)

Looking to God stresses our need to know and trust His character in His covenant relationship with us.

I. Look to God: (An emphasis on God's character)

II. Listen to God: (An emphasis on God's Word)

Listening to God stresses our need to know and trust His Word in His covenant relationship with us.

How are God's people affected when they don't live in the wisdom of His covenant design?

When we don't look to God to honor His character, we lose sight of the truth of who God is and, apart from a true knowledge of God, we can't know who God made us to be or why we are here.

I. Look to God: (An emphasis on God's character)

II. Listen to God: (An emphasis on God's Word)

Knowing God in His covenant love for you answers vital questions about your life:

- Why I am here = identity and purpose
- What I am to do = priority and direction
- How I am to live – attitudes and actions

- I. Look to God: (An emphasis on God's character)
- II. Listen to God: (An emphasis on God's Word)
- III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

Laboring for God stresses our need to know and trust His authority in His covenant relationship with us.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” (Gal. 5:6)

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

Abraham physically responded to God's covenant revelation in three related ways:

- He *“fell on His face...”* (vs. 3,17) = worshiped from fear and awe
- He *“laughed... and said in his heart...”* (v. 17) = joy and human limitation
- He *“circumcised”* his household (vs23-27) = obeyed from gratitude

“And 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 seek Him.”
(Heb. 11:6)

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

We must believe that He is, and that means that we must believe not simply in His existence, but also believe in Him as He has revealed Himself in the Bible, and especially in the Person of Jesus Christ.

This God-defined belief, this God-given gift of faith, is the bedrock of every true relationship with God.

A posture of the heart toward the Lord will tell itself in a posture of life toward the Lord over the course of time.

Abraham's faith progressed and it persevered.

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

Mark 10:17

Mark 10:22

Mark 4

Matthew 13

Romans 9:6-8; 10:1-3

Romans 9:31-32

Why all this talk about the posture of the heart, genuine faith, false faith, and true worship?

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

He “*fell on his face and laughed... and said in his heart...*” (v. 17)

Abraham's wonder = fear of the Lord

How are we to understand Abraham laughing in response to what God said to him?

- His heart's worship—his awe, respect, and delight in the Lord
- The wonder, joy, and sheer shock of his heart being stretched to the limits of faith, so that it reflects a measure of doubt due to this human weakness

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

Servile fear is “the wicked fear God because they have drawn an ill picture of him in their minds.... They perform only a little unwilling and unpleasing service, and as little as they can, because of their [mistaken and perverted understanding] of God.” (*Thomas Manton*)

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

Two contextual reasons Abraham's laugh is not a mocking laugh but a laugh of stunned awe and worship:

1. God does not rebuke Abraham. God gently confirms His plan to open Sarah's womb, and God affirms Abraham's concerns for Ishmael.
2. God provides the name Isaac. God didn't give this name to the boy of promise to chide or scold Abraham. Isaac isn't to be a reminder of Abraham's weakness, mocking doubt, or fear. Laughter is the name God gives to him because Isaac will bring much joy to his parent's hearts.

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

Abraham is exhibiting filial fear.

“What then is filial fear? It is that indefinable mixture of reverence and pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us.”

[A heart which fears the Lord] “...learns to see life and to live it on the basis of such intimate knowledge of God.” (*Sinclair Ferguson*)

Ferguson goes on to list several benefits of filial fear:

1. It pushes away all other fears
2. It prevents us from continuing in sin
3. It puts integrity into Christian character—saying no to sin, and living honestly
4. It promotes obedience in our lives.

III. Labor for God (An emphasis on God's authority)

He “*circum sized*” his household (vs. 23-27)

Abraham's willingness = fruitfulness toward the Lord.

Galatians 3:6-9

“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” (Galatians 5:14-16)

A person stands on a dark rock in the foreground, looking up at a vast night sky filled with stars and the Milky Way galaxy. The text "GRACE CHURCH" and "WILLIAMSBURG" is overlaid in white serif font.

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