

Let me share an exciting story of a dramatic conversion I heard about by email from Cousin Simon yesterday. The man writing works in Burundi for BBM - Burundi Bible Mission.

Dear brother in Christ,

There are moments in life when we are not sure whether we are dreaming or living a reality. Yesterday was such a kind of day. When my wife told me of your email, I was standing near a swimming pool ready to baptize an Imam, the third most senior Muslim in Burundi. I had had to stop a meeting I was having upcountry with the leadership team of the Great Lakes Initiative for Reconciliation to urgently come back to Bujumbura because this man was asking to be baptized as he thought he might get killed because there were already death threats from the Muslim community. He had come to BBM on Sunday (I was upcountry at the time) after Jesus appeared to him and to his wife on Saturday night and asked him to stop worshipping a dead religion. He said he did not know who the One he saw was. Elihud and Bosco at BBM explained to him that it was Jesus. They prayed for him and delivered him from many demons. He had been involved in all sorts of witchcraft and magic. After his baptism yesterday, we arranged to burn his tools, which included all sorts of things: clothings, Koranic books, bones, threads, pens etc. He resigned from his position on the Islamic Council for Burundi today and we are supposed to offer him, his wife and two children support. Of which kind, we don't know exactly yet.

When you consider what life has been like for you in your walk with God how would you describe it? A steady climb to glory? Or a bit up and down?

We don't tend to hear the ups and downs of people's stories, and the messy bits are almost always edited out. And that's no bad thing - we hear stories to encourage and inspire - to build faith. But in God's word we hear about Abraham and the messy bits have been left in.

Genesis 12: 10-20

To do good bible study you need to inhabit 3 worlds

1. the world of the Bible - we need to establish what was going on at the time and what it meant to the people of the time.
2. the world of today - how do we transport the timeless truths across time and distance into today's context?
3. the world of us - and once we have done that, what application does it have for us and what do we need to go away and apply if we are to benefit from the life change that the Word of God - living and active - can offer?

This chapter 12 is a classic snapshot of Abraham and his two personalities.

On the one hand - God has just spoken to him and given him an amazing promise in the first half of the chapter and in striking contrast, on his first outing he commits this huge lie in order to avoid trouble.

Proverbs 16:¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

How many of you have had a great blessing, or a word or a promise one day and then get brought down with a crashing jolt the next as 'reality' kicks in?

What was the real issue for Abraham?

He didn't trust God. Deep down he didn't trust that what God had promised was going to happen. He felt that if he didn't lie he would have been killed. But God had promised that all the people of the world would be blessed through him.

If God has given you a promise and a direction - a call - we have the decision whether to trust him or not, and I can tell you that deep down we don't. Our lives would look very different if they did.

From John Ortberg, quoting Michael Novak - there are three different kinds of convictions

public convictions - things I want you to think I believe even if I don't actually think them (does my bum look big in this - your response is a public conviction that doesn't actually mirror what you truly believe - eg from Bible Herod - come back and tell me about him so that I may worship him too.)

private convictions - things I think I believe (sometimes situations change and the reality of what you actually believe is exposed - eg if you think you are attracted to someone already attached - then they become free and available and you run a mile - there are people like this in society (they are called men). Eg from Bible - Peter - I will never desert you, and then does.

core convictions - everybody has a mental map - ideas about the way things are - you never violate your mental map. Eg belief in gravity.

Here Abraham wasn't violating his mental map that dictated that when push came to shove he needed to give God a little help.

We like Abraham need to learn to trust God more. To do this we need to become better acquainted with God. Know him better and we will know his ways and learn to trust him.

Jesus said to the disciples that they were going to cross to the other side of the lake. Then he went to sleep.

Jesus sometimes does that to us too. He gets us in the boat, tells us where we're going and then disappears, goes quiet.

Abraham gets to know God a bit better after a while.

So do the disciples. They remembered that afternoon very well. Do you know what they remembered most? That even the wind and the waves obeyed him. They remembered his authority.

And what do we remember about Abraham? That he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

'There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires.'

'There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.'

[Nelson Mandela](#)