

RICO: Radical. Immediate. Costly. Obedience.

Be a Disciple Worth Reproducing

Trainer Notes: Go through the first third, the Look Back, as you normally would, but move through it quickly to allow yourself time for this training. Then pray and go straight into the second third, the Look Up, which will be this training. Every participant will need a handout.

God chose Abraham to be the Father of our faith. God said that he would be the father of many nations, and his offspring would be as numerous as the stars or the grains of sand – that is a lot of multiplication.

God says twice why He picked Abraham - “because Abraham obeyed me.”

In the Bible obedience is almost always connected to love. You can see this pattern clearly in *John 14:15* when Jesus says, “*If you love me, you will obey my commandments.*”

Read *John 14:21-24*

The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what has happened that You are going to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will follow My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him. The one who does not love Me does not follow My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.

In *1 John 5:3* it reads, “*this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his command are not burdensome.*”

So, it’s not from obligation or duty, it’s out of love and gratitude. So, the Great Command is “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” *We do this by obeying him.*

If love is obedience, then we should be characterized by **R**adical, **I**mmEDIATE, **C**ostly **O**bedience (RICO).

Even though Abraham did some bad things, we find that his life was characterized by RICO. There are four stories in the book of Genesis that highlight Abraham’s obedience. Let’s look at each of these stories.

Genesis 12

We are first introduced to Abram in Genesis 11. He lived in the city of Ur with his idol-worshipping family. His father left Ur to go to Canaan. When he got to Haran, he stopped and settled there.

Then in *Genesis 12* God called 75-year-old Abram to leave his country, and his father's household, and go to a land that God would show him. He had grown up in two of the largest cities in the world (Ur and Haran), and he was told to live in tents in the wilderness, leaving family, safety, security, familiarity, and comfort, in order to go live a nomadic life without knowing where he was going. Yet he did not hesitate. He immediately obeyed.

Genesis 12:4. "So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran."

That's RICO: radical, immediate, costly obedience.

Hebrews 11:8. "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

Genesis 17

In *Genesis 17*, God reiterates his covenant with Abram and asks that Abram and his descendants be circumcised as a sign of the covenant. Obviously, there was physical sacrifice involved in circumcision, but there was also a safety issue. His great grandchildren would kill an entire tribe after they were circumcised because it left the tribe vulnerable.

God changed his name from Abram to "Abraham" which means, "father of a multitude." They had been waiting 24 years for a child at this point, and Abram was 99 years old. God also changed Sarai's name to "Sarah" which means "princess."

So, even though he'd been waiting 24 years. Even though he was undoubtedly disappointed by this long period of waiting. Even though he had to go ask over 300 men, men who were warriors, to do something very painful and potentially dangerous.

But the very day that God commanded him, he obeyed. Abram, his son Ishmael, every male born in his household, and every male he bought were all circumcised. *Genesis 17* repeats twice that Abram did it "the very same day."

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Genesis 21

We find the same pattern in *Genesis 21*. Abraham's son Ishmael began to mock Isaac. Sarah became upset, and asked Abraham to drive Ishmael and his mother away. This troubled and greatly distressed Abraham. But God said, "*listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.*" God said he would care for Ishmael and make him a great nation.

And in *Genesis 21:14* we read, "*Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy...*"

Abraham rose early the next morning and gave water to Hagar and Ishmael and sent them away.

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Genesis 22

In *Genesis 22:2*, God says to Abraham, "*Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.*"

God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac is the son of the promise. Abraham had waited 100 years for this boy, and his entire life was bound up in the child.

He could have said "Yes Lord but bring back Ishmael first." Or "Yes Lord, if Sarah agrees." Or "Yes Lord, when you give me another child."

But no, *Genesis 22:3* says, "*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.*"

"Early the next morning" he arose, saddled the donkeys, got firewood, and set out for the mountain. We know that at the last second God stopped him and provided a ram as a substitute but Abraham did not know that. He was ready to obey – it is hard to imagine a more difficult act of obedience. But Abraham did so.

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RICO and Multiplication

This is what God meant when he said, *"I chose Abraham because he obeys me."* Abraham loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and expressed it through his obedience. God still wants our love expressed in this way.

This is the kind of disciple God delights to multiply.

It's not that God won't use us if we don't have that level of obedience. God uses anyone. He used Balaam's donkey. But if we have anything less than that level, we must aspire to that level of love, until we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength as demonstrated by RICO.

Abraham demonstrated faith that manifests itself in obedience.

Move into the final third, the Look Forward, praying about how everyone will obey, train, and share in the coming week.