

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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ABRAM: THE MAN WITH NO PLAN

Genesis 12:1-9

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INTRODUCTION: In Genesis 11, we have the story of the tower of Babel and then we have another genealogy list. At the end of the list is a man named Abram. Our story picks up there and begins in chapter 12.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

² “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Here we have God’s promises to Abraham. Being thousands of years on this side of the story, let’s review to see if God’s promises came to fruition:

- God said, “I will make you into a great nation.” He did that.
- He said, “I will bless you.” He did that.
- He said, “I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.” He did that.
- God said, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.” He did that.
- He also said, “All the peoples on the earth will be blessed because of you.” He did that except for the nations who cursed Abraham’s descendants. On this topic, one commentator suggested an indirect blessing of the Jewish people on the rest of the earth: Because they were so blessed, they created new standards of living which made the rest of the known world aspire to be like them. They were strong, clean, and healthy among other traits.

And with the nation of Israel, God is not finished with them. The scripture tells us in the latter days they will come to know Jesus as the Messiah.

GOD’S CALL TO FAITH ECLIPSED ABRAM’S ROUTINE

SCRIPTURE: 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 set out from Harran.

Throughout biblical history, we have plenty of narratives about people who weren’t as obedient to such a tall order from God. God told Abram to go and he did. It was quite an undertaking. As we know from chapter 11, Abram had already left home once when he was younger. His father set out on a journey but then settled before he reached his destination. Abram already knew what it was like to pack up his belongings and move.

So the question is: What made Abram just follow God’s call without question? Sarai was not able to have children and God’s promise to him meant he would have children.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 12:5

He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

EXPLANATION: When we think of moving today, we think of leaving one house and going to another. That’s a lot of work. In fact, it’s so much work I don’t really want to do it anytime soon. But think about loading the moving truck with no destination in mind. With Abram, it’s even more incredible than that. He was a rancher. Anyone ever heard of a rancher packing up all his belongings and heading to a new location but having no idea where he was going? The success of a farmer or rancher is directly related to his land and how he cares for it. To leave the land behind but take everything else is just crazy.

A little aside here – I want you to note how Abram interpreted God’s call. He interpreted it to take everything. He and his wife Sarai did not abandon everything they owned and just walk away from it. That would have been the easy thing to do!

ILLUSTRATION: A man I know felt called of God to go into the ministry. He felt that following the Lord meant selling his house, all his belongings, and moving into a rent house not far from the house he sold. When he told me that's what he had done, I asked why... it wasn't like he had any plans for school or to move to a new city. He said he didn't really know why, he just thought that was the thing to do. I'm cautious not to criticize the guy because God works with us all in different ways. But in the end, it didn't work out for him. He went back to his old job. Had he heard more distinct direction from the Lord maybe things would have worked out differently.

EXPLANATION: When Abram followed the call of God, he took everything. Which would have taken more faith? To abandon everything and walk away? Or to take all that livestock? And all his employees? And all of their possessions? I'd say the latter, for obvious reasons! When faced with a decision, ask yourself what decision requires the most faith in God.

ILLUSTRATION: One night during my college years, I was walking along Cumberland Avenue at UT Knoxville when a man came up from behind and walked beside me. He began witnessing to me. I told him I was saved, and he quoted a few of Jesus' words to me and said if I was really a follower of Jesus, I would walk away from all my responsibilities and live on faith with no home or no knowledge of where my next meal would come from. If I were really a follower of Jesus, I would live like Jesus and his disciples lived.

What he didn't realize is that *I was* living by faith and I still am today. I've wondered what happened to him. You'll hear me say this numerous times as I talk about these people of faith – God challenges our faith in different ways. He challenged Noah's faith differently than he challenged Abram. Don't compare your faith journey with anyone else's.

ABRAM LEARNED OF THE FUTURE BECAUSE HE WAS OBEDIENT

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 12:6-9

Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

⁸ *From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*

⁹ *Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.*

EXPLANATION: What I like about Abram to this point is his simple obedience and trust in God. He heard God's voice loud and clear when it came to packing up and moving. When God showed him the land he would give his descendants, Abram worshiped God.

I want everyone to hear and understand the principle: Because Abram had been obedient, God gave him a glimpse of the future. Abram launched out by faith with the promise of being the father of a great nation. He was completely convinced that God would hold true to the promise.

APPLICATION: We want the shortcut, don't we? We want to know what the future holds and we don't want to go through what Abram went through. Don't expect God to give you a glimpse of the future, or even what could be, if you aren't willing to step out in faith and obedience to God. You may ask if I am saying that modern day believers can know the future...and I am saying yes to the point that God allows you to know. But if you cower in fear instead of faith, if you disobey instead of obey...then don't expect him to do any mighty works in your life. And why would he? There are no shortcuts to having a strong faith in the Lord. It comes over time, and for some people, more quickly than others.

From the tactical and practical angle side of this message on faith, you may have questions about what it means to take a step of faith. This may be a new concept for you. Perhaps you thought the Christian life was repenting of sin and believing in Jesus and that was it. It's more than that. Being saved - also known as being born again - also known as being a Christian - also known as being a follower of Jesus - means you have committed yourself to a lifetime of deepening faith and relationship with Jesus.

“But how do I take a step of faith?” you may ask. Sorry, but I don't have specific advice for you here. I could say, “Hey, sell everything you have and give the money to the Lord's work.” I could say, “Hey, find people who need the Lord and go tell them.” I could say any manner of things, but giving you a prescription is not what it's about. Again, God will challenge your faith differently than he will mine. Each

step of faith will be more intense than the previous one. If you are not an “ideas person”, and you have trouble envisioning yourself as a person who launches out in faith, here’s what to do. Do what Abram did. Keep it simple: First, be obedient. Go for it when you believe you have a challenge from God. Second, when you get a glimpse of what God has in store, worship him. With everyone hearing me today, that would mean a different story for each one of you.

Or you could do the opposite – you could do your best to keep God at arm’s length. You could do your best to stay in your safe zone where everything is predictable. You could do that, but have you ever thought how God could pull that safety zone rug right out from under you?

I entitled this message “Abram, The Man With No Plan”. But the truth is, there was a plan in place. Abram was following God’s plan.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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