

The Call of Abraham

I thought you liked it here," said Gina, remaining seated at the conference table.

"Are you old enough to retire?" asked Kirk, who was zipping his computer into its carrying case.

The conference room had cleared of the previous meeting except for Gina, Kirk, and Jordan. Gina had overheard Jordan talking about her tentative date of "retirement."

"I was just going to leave the company, but realized with my time of service, I could 'retire,'" Jordan replied.

"What are you going to do?" asked Gina.

"I am going to help my friend who was awarded a grant to operate a safe shelter for battered women," Jordan replied. "I plan to help with the administration, finances, cooking, and cleaning."

"That doesn't sound like retirement," said Kirk.

"God told me to help her," Jordan said. "My friend has been talking about this venture for more than three years."

"Are they going to pay you?"

"I'll probably get a small check," said Jordan.

"It sounds like a lot of work," Kirk critiqued. "Are you sure it's a wise decision to quit your job?"

"Why don't you wait three years and see how things progress? It might not turn out," offered Gina.

"I appreciate both of your concerns," smiled Jordan. "I don't know what will happen, but I've got to do what God says and go where He leads."

1. *Why do you think a person may not trust God in leading his life?*

2. *How do we develop a trusting relationship with God?*

3. *Is your level of trusting God keeping you from following Him wherever He leads you?*

God Calls Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3, KJV

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 12:1-3, NIV

¹The 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.

³I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

After God confused the languages of those who were building the Tower of Babel, He called one man to go to a land from which the Lord would create a people who were to serve as a beacon for those who wished to return to Him. Abram's (Abraham's) father had already started this journey to the promised land, taking his family from Ur to the city of Harran, which was in the northern middle of the Fertile Crescent (in modern-day Turkey). From this city, Abraham would continue on to Canaan.

In the ancient Middle East, offspring (and descendants) were where most people put their hope of "immortality." Children produced grandchildren, and so on—and therein lay the hope of legacy and remembrance. And so, to be barren during these days (or to be with a wife who could not conceive) was seen as a curse from God.

Instead of cursing, however, God blessed Abraham (before he had any children) by telling him that his offspring would become one of the great nations of the

world—not because of military might, but through that nation, God would bring his blessing on the entire world.

Of course, 2,000 years after the promise God made to Abraham, the Messiah, the Son of Man, came from Abraham's line through the tribe of Judah. In Him, the promise of God was fulfilled in its entirety.

4. *What did the Lord command Abraham to do?*

5. *What did the Lord promise Abraham in exchange for his obedience?*

Abraham and Lot Leave Harran

Genesis 12:4-5, 7, KJV

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Genesis 12:4-5, 7, NIV

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was 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. ⁵He 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.

⁷The 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.

The text does not tell us why Abraham took Lot, his nephew, out of all the relatives who could have accompanied

him. In 2 Peter 2:6-8, we are told that Lot was a righteous man who was tormented by the wickedness he encountered in Canaan. Perhaps Abraham saw the seed of faith in this younger relative and decided to take him along with him. Once in Canaan, the Lord appeared to Abraham and reiterated his promise of many offspring to him. In response, Abraham built an altar to the Lord in order to remember God's pledge to him.

6. *Which of Abraham's relatives accompanied him on this journey to the promised land?*

7. *What did Abraham do to commemorate his arrival in Canaan?*

God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 15:1-7, KJV

1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

Genesis 15:1-7 NIV

¹After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,
your very great reward."

²But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

7 And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

When Abraham and Sarah decided the promise of a nation through them must be fulfilled through a surrogate, God spoke to Abraham in a vision. The Lord made it clear to Abraham that while the promise of a great nation and an eternal legacy is promised to him, his best reward was God Himself, for He is the only source of meaning, purpose, and significance in this world.

While Abraham acknowledged this, he still suggested that his servant Eliezer would be the one through whom the promise would be fulfilled. However, the Lord made it clear that the heir to the promise would be the biological offspring of Abraham. God told him to look at the billions of stars as a visual representation of the number of descendants he would have.

For this deeply embedded confidence in God's ability and willingness to fulfill his pledge, Abraham was credited with righteousness. Paul later quoted this statement as an example of what saving faith looked like before the Cross (Romans 4:3).

8. *What was Abraham's concern about how God's promise to him would be fulfilled?*

9. *To what did the Lord compare the eventual fulfillment of His promise to Abraham?*

Fear

Fear hinders us from following what God calls us to do. When God led me to Africa as a missionary teacher, I followed. I knew God was faithful in the past and would go with me into the future. However, fear permeated me when God called me to an international marriage.

Thirty-eight years ago, during my personal time with God, He told me to enter a relationship with a Nigerian missionary who was pursuing me. My immediate reaction was, “No, I’m afraid!” I feared what would happen if my widowed mother in the United States became sick—how would I help her? I feared if I could handle the Nigerian extended family system. Could I handle constant interference from my spouse’s relatives? And most of all, I feared marrying a Nigerian. I had been in Nigeria for five years and I knew the culture. I didn’t know how I would merge my Black American culture with Nigerian culture.

But one day, God showed me 1 John 4:18: “Perfect love drives out fear...” The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart: “Have I not loved you with a perfect love from the moment you surrendered all to Me? Don’t be afraid of obeying Me now.” A one-year engagement, 37 years of marriage, and four wonderful children later, I’m grateful I followed God into the unknown.

When God calls His children into the unknown, fear is real. Yet, God’s love and promises can overshadow fear. The willingness to follow God wherever He leads becomes easier, the more we get to know God and His love for us. Wherever God leads His children, it’s always for the best.

10. *Why is it important to share with God when you are afraid of following Him into the unknown?*

11. *What role does spending time in God’s Word have in eliminating our fears?*

12. *Is God leading you somewhere or to do something that you are afraid to go or do? If so, what next step do you need to take?*

My Soul Says Yes

“My Soul Says Yes” is a song by Sonnie Badu:

“Where You lead me, I will follow/
When You call me, I will answer/
Oh my Lord, please teach me/ How to know Your way
Whatever it takes/ Whenever You want/
What moments You choose/ Whatever Your plan
Oh my Lord/Let Your will be done in me
My soul says yes/ Says yes to Your will.”

It’s easy to sing this song in worship on Sunday morning or at a conference, but following God begins with obeying Him in the little areas of our lives.

► *Do you trust God enough to follow Him into the unknown? What excuses do we often make for not following God’s leading in our lives? Has God asked you to do something recently that you are struggling to say “yes” to?*

KEY VERSE

And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. —Genesis 12:7, KJV

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. —Genesis 12:7, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of September 5 through September 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Luke 13:23-30—The First Will Be Last.
- Tue.** Psalm 147:1-6, 12-20—God Is Great and Gracious.
- Wed.** Psalm 75—God Judges Rightly.
- Thu.** Romans 9:6-16—God’s Word Does Not Fail.
- Fri.** Romans 9:17-29—Who Can Argue with God?
- Sat.** Genesis 28:10-22—God Blesses Jacob.
- Sun.** Genesis 25:19-34—God Is Free to Choose.