

Genesis 12:1-9, Hebrews 11:8-12
Journey into Faith
WRCoB 9.18.22

Of all the people on earth, why Abraham?

Why did God call Abraham
To be the pioneer of the faith
The father of God's chosen people?

Was it his special leadership qualifications?

Hardly!

If you read on into the story,
You'll find soon enough

Abraham was not only impatient and fearful
He lied to save his own skin

On one occasion telling the Pharaoh in Egypt
And on another occasion
Telling King Abimelech

That Sarah was his sister and not his wife
Fearing they would kill him to have her.

Was it because he was youthful and full of vigor?

Well again . . . hardly!
Abraham was 75-years-old when God called him!

Of course, if everyone lived to be as old
As these biblical characters were
75-years-old was probably the age of puberty.

And so why Abraham?

His name was Abram before it became Abraham.
Meaning “exalted father.”

And he enters the biblical scene
Pretty much out of nowhere
A descendant from Noah’s son Shem
From Ur in the Chaldeans.

I mean what kind of place is Ur anyway?

He traveled with his father, Terah,
His nephew Lot, and his wife, Sarai,
From their home to Haran.

It was there Abram received the call from God.

Gen. 12: 1 . . . ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.’

We don’t know Abram’s response
To the phone call he received from God.

Me? I’d have to go home
And talk it over with Judith.

She doesn’t like surprises.

Hey Hon . . . guess what . . . God wants us to move

Oh yea, where to?

*Well, hmm, don’t really know
God just said “I’ll will show you!”*

Well, that wouldn’t go over so well with Jude.

The passage tells us they simply went.

Maybe, here is insight into why God called Abram.
Dogged, faithful obedience

This was something Abram possessed
And something God wanted.

We see this dogged obedience
Play out to the fullest extent

When God commands Abram to sacrifice his only son Isaac.

Of course, God stopped him short!

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Abram packs and leaves for Canaan-land.

He needed more than just a small U-Haul.

He had his wife, Sarai

All the possessions they had acquired over the years
All their livestock

All the extended family

The whole kit and caboodle.

His nephew, Lot, who also traveled with them.

Had livestock and possessions too.

Let's just say it was quite the move

That began their journey of faith.

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Along with Abram's call to immigrate to parts unknown.

Came a promise, several actually

- Descendants ("I will make of you a great nation" -- Genesis 12:2)
- Land ("To your offspring I will give this land" -- Genesis 12:7)
- Blessing ("I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" – Genesis 12:2)

This is important stuff.

For what we find in these verses
Is what is called the Abrahamic Covenant.

It's really the beginning point in Israel's history.

Everything before Genesis 12 is considered prehistory.

Here is the beginning point in the histories
Of three major religions
Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Each of these faiths consider Abraham and Sarah
The patriarch and matriarch of their faith.

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God chose Abraham and his descendants
To be God's chosen people
And promises them a favored place in history.

Today, Jews still consider
The covenant of Abraham the overarching promise.

They continue to anticipate its fulfillment
They continue to fight for every square inch
Of what they believe is due them.

The age-old problem between Israel and Palestine.

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So again I ask, why Abraham?

The author of Hebrews explains it was Abraham's faith.

Abraham and Sarah left their homeland
And immigrated to Canaan

They did so because God had promised to bless them
To be the parents of a new nation.

With a voice from heaven, a call and a promise
Abraham and Sarah step out in faith
Into the great unknown.

Abraham, 75-years-old
His wife, Sarah, beyond childbearing years
An aging couple really

They leave everything near and dear to follow a promise.

Lewis Smedes,
A theologian in the Reformed tradition
Makes this remark concerning
Abraham's determined obedience

*In his journey into the unknown, Abraham embraced
ignorance, relinquished control, and chose to live with
confidence in God's promise to bless him in a new and
strange place.*

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Our journey with God
Is a journey not unlike Abraham and Sarah's.

We, too, step out into an unknown future
With an Abrahamic style of simple obedience
Confident in God's promises.

R. C. Sproul writes

*Abram's response indicates that he lived out the principle
Corrie Ten Boom later articulated. . . . that we must "never
be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."*

By faith, Freda stepped out and entered a doctoral program
She trusted her unknown future to a known God.

By faith, Benedict and Susan left their home in Cameroon
He a prestigious job in accounting, she a medical practice

To follow a promise
Trusting their future to a God full of promises.

Judith also, trusted her unknown future
And traveled to a foreign country
With faith that God was doing the leading.

Each of you, who have left home
And ventured into the obscurity of the future
Had faith in God.

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We as a church are not to be afraid in trusting
Our unknown future to a known God.

By faith, we journey forward.

God has called us, the West Richmond church
To move forward in confidence

To be a Christ-centered presence in the Richmond area.

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It may be true
West Richmond is a remnant of what she once was.

It may be true
She has seen a decline of attendance over the years.

It may be true, as someone once said
We have become an “aging congregation”

Brothers and sisters, this is not unlike Abraham and Sarah!

And that’s just the point.

If God can call Abram at seventy-five years of age
And Sarai beyond child-bearing years
To leave home to parts unknown

To have descendants that number the stars above

To be the father of three great religions
And to be a blessing to all people

Seriously, there just ain't no telling what God can do with us!

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Some might wonder, like I have, why Abraham?

But we could ask the same thing about ourselves
Why us?

Lewis Smedes; *What really matters is not whether Abraham is good or bad or cowardly or heroic, but that God pursues [God's] design for the welfare of the human family with people like that -- in other words, people like us.*

Why Abraham? Why not Abraham?

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Back in verse 2

I read again this promise from God to Abraham

**Genesis 12:2 NRSVUE I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you and make your name great, SO
THAT you will be a blessing.**

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Here is another important lesson for us.

Simply put, the lesson is that God blessed
Abraham and Sarah to be a blessing.

And that's God's call upon our lives too.

I think about the fact that three major religions
Trace their origins to Abraham
Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

They all look to the Abrahamic Covenant
As the beginning point of their faith.

And I think about how that is lived out today
PARTICULARLY TODAY
With all the conflict, hostility, violence, and division
In the name of God!

Is this what it means to be blessed to be a blessing?

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According to this lesson then
Blessings from God are meant to be shared
Are meant to flow on to others.

According to Rick Warren,
Pastor of the Saddleback Church in CA,

“This is the first law of blessing: it must flow outwardly. God promises that if we will concentrate on blessing others, God will take care of our needs.”

The business of the church,
The responsibility of the blessed
Is to be a blessing!

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Abraham and Sarah, pioneers of a new faith
Responded to the call of God.

They were an aging couple.

They were, what some might call “over the hill”

Some might consider their useful years long behind them
No longer a productive part of society

And maybe that’s the way people look at us.

Maybe people say that we are an aging congregation
Don’t expect too much from them

But like God’s call to Abraham and Sarah

Let us, too, step out in faith into an unknown future
Guided by the God known in Christ Jesus
Blessed to be a blessing!

The world awaits the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant
Now made possible through the good news of Jesus.

This is the call of God upon our lives
No matter our age or reproductive status

That through us, the church of Jesus Christ
All the families of the earth will be blessed.

May it be so!

Amen.