

**INTO THE UNKNOWN****Genesis 12:1-7****(Read Genesis 2:1-7)**

**INTRO:** On January 8, 1956 a Piper single engine airplane, piloted by Nate Saint landed on a sandbar in the Curaray River in the Amazon Basin of Ecuador. With Saint were his fellow missionaries, Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming and they were trying to make further develop a relationship with the fierce Hourani tribe who lived in the region. They had gotten to know some of the tribesman previously and they planned to bring the message of Jesus to them. Soon after the plane landed and the men were out of the plane, they were attacked by the Huaorani and all died. Elliot had once written in his journal "*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*" and he certainly walked his talk. Eventually his wife and others went to minister to the same people who murdered the young missionary men and now that tribe is filled with Christ Followers. Elliott and his friends heard to call to go into the unknown and they said yes.

In 1897, Jessie Engle and his wife, along with two other ladies, left for southern Africa to become the first BIC missionaries. They sailed to South Africa and then went by wagon pulled by 6 mules to Southern Rhodesia which we now know as Zimbabwe. They were called into the unknown and their obedience has grown into a BIC global ministry that is in almost thirty countries around the world. By the way, one of those two ladies was Francis Davidson, who, about 20 years later, was part of this congregation when it was known as the Chestnut Grove BIC Church.

In September of 1982 Kathy and I packed a Penske rental van with all we owned and we headed off to the relatively unknown frontier town of Ashland, Ohio. We didn't know anyone here, but we were welcomed by a moving crew led by Bob Sheetz and Chuck Burkett and others we don't even recall, and the love affair began. Our obedience to the call of ministry and ABC's call to live out the call to be the heart, hands, and feet of Jesus (even if you may not have called it that in those days) made our journey into the unknown the beginning of an amazing adventure.

The unknown can be a scary place – unless God's involved. And then it becomes an amazing journey as his will unfolds for the Kingdom. That's the way it was for Abram, who's name was later changed to the more familiar Abraham. The first eleven chapters of Genesis, which are also the first eleven chapters of the Bible, are a swift accounting of thousands of years of holy history from Adam to Noah to the Tower of Babel. It is a picture of humanity's failure to follow God's will and the consequences of that. One commentator said of this cycle that "*God's mercy always follows hard on man's sin.*" and that is evident in our text for today. Here in these seven verses we see the unfolding of God's redemption plan for all of humanity through one childless man who obediently went into the unknown because he took God at his word. Let's see how.

First we see that when he calls us into the unknown...

**God doesn't always give his reasons but he is generous with his blessings.**

- Imagine you're Abram. You've lived your entire life in the Chaldean city of Ur. You're minding your own business when, in some way (it doesn't say how God revealed himself to Abram), the Lord says to you, "*Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.*" Genesis 12:1b. What would your response be? I mean this is huge. What would you say?
- Would you try to get a little info on the request? Like, "Could I have some background on your thinking here, Lord? I mean, after all, big decisions like this shouldn't rushed into, right?" When the replacement window salesman comes calling and gives you "THE DEAL OF THE CENTURY" to replace all your windows with not just double pane windows, but triple pane windows, you need to do your homework, right? It's just not prudent to sign on the dotted line without doing your due diligence. Right? "How about some follow-up? Let me get back to you on that Lord. And while I have you on the line, is there a three-day recision, if I say yes and then get cold feet?"
- I mean, we should at least pray about it. But what happens when that call into the unknown, comes to you as you're praying? What if it's not a fast talking salesman, but the Creator of the universe who is presenting the proposal? That changes everything doesn't it? And sometimes there aren't reasons that are obvious right way.
- But even if there aren't reasons right way, there ARE blessings. And those blessings were front and center as God called Abram:

- *I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.* Genesis 12:2a. Abram and his wife were 75 and 65 years old. But this is a promise that kinda requires having kids and it's looking a little grim in that area for these two. But the promise is there, and it's God making the promise. And he promises to bless. Everything that experience indicates would mitigate against such a blessing coming to an elderly and childless couple. But when it's God making the promise, all humanly bets are off, because God calls the shots. Remember that from the sermon we had over the past two weeks? The real question we need to ask is who's calling the shots in our life? For Abram, God was calling the shots and he knew the promise was a nation as a legacy, so a nation it would be.
- *I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.* Genesis 12:2b. Abram was just a regular guy in a city full of regular people. God called him out to be extraordinary. We don't know why God called Abram in particular, but, as we saw before, we don't always know his reasons, but we can be assured of his blessings, so, "*If you say so Lord, make my name great.*"
- *I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse.* Genesis 12:3a. This is quite a pass. It's a visa to safe passage and extraordinary blessing. If you've ever studied how Abram's life unfolded as the Book of Genesis continues, you know that this is exactly how it was. In fact, we as the children of God, have inherited that legacy too because of the final blessing which is. . .
- *And all peoples will be blessed through you.* Genesis 12:3b. God's plan for humanity is carried out by an obedient man named Abram who's descendent was born in a stable in Bethlehem and later obediently went to the Cross for the sin of the world. That's how **ALL** peoples would be blessed. That's how you and I could be blessed and have been blessed.
- So God's reasoning may not have been evident, but his promises are sure. So, along with Abram's call into the unknown, what would your answer. You see...

#### **The call of God demands a response on the part of humanity**

- For Abram, the response was obedience. Verse 4 begins with , "*So Abram went,*" Now, in all fairness, we don't know what went through Abram's mind when God's call came to him. We don't know if he talked it over with Sarai, his wife, or Terah, his father. We don't know if he tried to bargain with God, trying to get just a little smidgeon of an idea of where God was planning to send him. But since the Bible usually records those kinds of things, it seems like Abram's answer was pretty much immediate. It was something like:

**God:** "Abram, go from your country and everything and everybody you know and go a land I will show you"

**Abram:** "Okay."

It seems like that's how it was. That's how obedient Abram was, and his faith was memorialized by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Romans, *Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.* Romans 4:3. Abram's faith not only blessed humanity, but it is memorialized as what righteousness looks like.

- Here's what it comes down to. Obedience brings blessings. And it's not just to the one who obeys, but it spreads out to others as well. Abram is a picture of that. Jesus is a picture of that. **WE**, are pictures of that. As we obediently heed God's call on our lives, he blessing spreads out to those we touch. That's how it happens.
- So, how is obedience working for you? When God calls what is your response? God called Jonah to go preach to a city full of horrendous people. Jonah said "NO!" and ran in the opposite direction. His disobedience got him a three day sentence in the belly of a big fish. His eventual, though reluctant, obedience to preach to the people of Nineveh resulted in the salvation of a people that anyone else would have thought unsavable. But God had a plan for them.
- I ran from a God's call on my life just long enough to realize that the direction I was going was downhill toward despair and that obedience, while not always easy, brought a deep-seated joy. God's call demands a response. What is God's call to you? Have you responded?
- F. B. Meyer wrote, "*Often the reason people do not believe in God is that they don't want to obey him.*" I think that this has been the reason for almost all "atheism". I have that in quotes because I believe that a true atheist is the rarest of creatures. I believe that most unbelief is a matter of convenience. "It's just inconvenient to believe in God because it cramps my style." The problem is, running from God sooner or later ends up in the deep and not everyone gets the option of a big fish to help them get back on track. Our response has eternal consequences and his blessings are out of this world.

**Conclusion:** That's all for now. Let me just say it comes down to this, when God calls you, whether it is to believe in his Son, or to go to a far off land that he will show you – obedience is the best way to go. For Abram, his obedience ensured that he truly was a blessing to ALL the families of the earth. Your obedience will carry on that legacy. In the eyes of the world it might be into the unknown, With God it's into his will and the blessing that comes with it. Amen.