

In The Beginning...God: Call of Abraham
Genesis 12:1-5

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INTRODUCTION

- A. Hey everybody – good morning. I’m Barry and I’m one of the ministers here at WellSpring. And if you are our guest today, it’s great to have you with us.
- B. Today, we are beginning a new series called, “In the beginning, God...”
1. Those are the very first words in the Bible – Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God...”.
 2. Before there was a you and me; before all that we see around us...in the beginning...God...God began creating, initiating, pouring Himself into His grand design. The Master Architect powerfully and purposefully spoke and the Universe came into existence. The sun, moon, and stars were formed. The earth took shape. Oceans and land were divided. Forests, deserts, mountain ranges, and plains were fashioned. Creatures, great and small, began breathing, moving, eating, drinking – creatures came alive at the sound of His voice.
 3. And then, God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - the Trinity) said, “Let us make mankind in our image” _Genesis 1:26.
 4. God created Adam and then Eve. He created the first two humans and now there are about 8 billion of us because... well...it didn’t take us too long to figure out how to make more. But let’s not forget, the first words God ever spoke to man were these: “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth...”
 4. But why did God create Adam and Eve. And what about you and me? Why are we here?
 5. He didn’t create mankind because He needed us. God is sufficient in Himself. He wasn’t lonely. He wasn’t bored. Creating Adam and Eve doesn’t make Him any happier or more fulfilled. God literally doesn’t need us for anything.
 6. So why are we here?

7. A clue for that is found In Isaiah 43:6-7, God says, "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, **everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.**" _Isaiah 43:6-7.

8. John Piper writes, "We exist to see and savor and show the beauty and worth and greatness of God of every sphere in our lives." _John Piper

9. In the beginning, God created everything we see and then created Adam and Eve to know Him and to glorify Him!

C. But there's a problem - the creation, designed by God for His glory and designed to sustain us and draw us closer to God, appears to be broken.

1. We see tragedies like the one in Uvalde and it's obvious – something's broken.

2. There is human trafficking and racism and greed and all kinds of brokenness in our world. Something's not right.

3. Even God's Word says in Romans 8:22, "For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain." _Romans 8:22

4. Something's wrong. All of us can see it.

5. Some people even believe God is the problem.

a. Why doesn't God protect the innocent?

b. Does He not care?

c. Is God sleeping?

6. It's none of those things. So, what is it?

D. In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, it didn't take very long for **sin**, for spiritual rebellion, to spoil what God intended for man.

1. We see it with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. They chose to disobey God and, as a result, guilt and suffering and death were introduced into the human experience.

2. By Genesis 6:5 it says, "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" _Genesis 6:5 (NIV)

3. So, God decided to destroy mankind with a world-wide flood. And everyone except for one man and his family, Noah, perished. And with that one family, God started over.

4. But even with starting over, sin didn't go away. It is the ever-present reality in our human condition. The ever-present core issue that leads to violence and racism and human-trafficking and greed and abuse – SIN – didn't go away.
 5. And by Genesis 11, we see that God's ultimate plan, to deal with the problem of sin, starting to take shape.
- E. In God's Word, in Genesis 11, we are introduced to a man named **Abram**.
1. In verse 26, we read that his father's name is Terah.
 2. We read that Abram marries a beautiful woman named Sarai. I get the impression that Sarai's dad was thrilled when she was born and he probably named her; because her name means, "My Princess."
 3. Ironically, Abram means "exalted father" and yet he and Sarai are childless – she can't conceive.
 4. I've known quite a few couples who have not be able to conceive and their pain is very real and raw. Abram's and Sarai's life is far from perfect.
 5. In Genesis 11, we also see that Abram has a nephew named, "Lot."
 6. We also see that Abram's dad, Terah, is from Ur of the Chaldeans and they all started a journey together toward Canaan, but the trip was pretty far and they ended up settling in a place called Harran.
 7. From Ur, headed to Canaan, but settled in place called Haran. (MAP)
 8. And during this whole time, God has His eye on Abram.
- F. This message is for you if you live in the tension.
1. If you live in the tension somewhere between "I really want to know God" and "I'm not sure God can be trusted."
 2. If you live in the tension between "What is God asking of me?" and "I'm not sure I can handle it or do it or even want to do it."
 3. This series is actually for those of us living in the tension as we deal with the question, "What does following Jesus actually look like?"
 4. If you are living with any of those tensions, this is for you.
- G. Our focus verses today are found in Genesis 12:1-5, when Abram's story really begins to take shape. In my Bible, the heading before Genesis 12 reads, "The Call of Abram." It begins...

12 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.^[a]

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.”^[b]

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. 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.

⁶ 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.

IN THE WORD

I. IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CALLED OUT TO ABRAM.

A. God called Abram.

1. God the Creator.
2. Said to – God the Creator purposefully reached out to...
3. Abram – a man, a person, just like you and me.

B. God was saying to Abram – I want you to something bold and something that appears to be reckless:

1. “Leave your country, your family, and your father’s household...”
2. *Okay Abram – I want you to leave what is familiar and comfortable to you. Leave your country, your people and your father’s family.*
3. That would be like God asking us to leave the United States, our friends, and our family.
4. “I want you to leave for a land that I’m going to show you.”
5. And then God starts making all these promises:
 - a. I will make you into a great nation.

- b. I will bless you.
 - c. I will make you famous.
 - d. I will even bless those who bless you.
 - e. I will also protect you by cursing those who curse you.
 - f. God even says, "All families on earth will be blessed because of you."
 - g. Now folks, God doesn't do hyperbole. If He says it, He means it.
 - h. "All families on earth will be blessed because of you."
 - i. Is your family blessed because of Abram?
6. Now let's put ourselves in Abram's shoes for a minute.
- a. My mind would be racing. I would be going over God's words in my mind. Over and over.
 - b. *You want me to leave my country, my friends, and my family?*
 - c. *And you say that you are going to do all these amazing things for me.*
 - d. I don't know about you, but I would have at least one question: *Ummm, God, where are we going?*

- C. We have to stop right here for a moment: God is asking Abram to take a bold step of faith. Faith. Faith.
1. The primary mark of a follower of Jesus, the main thing that is required to be faithful to God, is faith.
 2. What is faith?
 3. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." _Hebrews 11:1
 4. God was asking Abram to trust Him.
 5. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." _Hebrews 11:6
 6. God is calling Abram to take a step of faith.
 7. God is saying, "Abram, if you do this, then I'll do this."
 8. This trusting God, putting our faith in God to do what He says He will do, is the distinguishing mark of someone who is a follower of Jesus. It's not how much money you give. It's not coming to church. It's not serving at The Well. The distinguishing quality of someone who is a follower of Jesus is faith.

- D. Now let me throw this out and you think about how it makes you feel.
1. Here is God, the omnipotent, all-powerful, God of the Universe who could totally make us do whatever He wanted us to do. He could certainly snap His fingers and make us do anything that He wanted.
But...He...doesn't.
 2. Instead, He says, "Trust me and I will take care of you."
 3. This is God's offer to us. "Trust me and I will take care of you."
 4. He doesn't control us. He doesn't make us. He doesn't make anyone do what they don't want to do. Instead, He says, "Trust me."
 5. Why do bad things happen in our world. It's because God chooses to give all of us, even the most violent and evil and abusive people, free will. To be given the choice to know Him and trust Him is also to be given the choice to reject Him and embrace other things.
 6. And so many people say, "I believe there is a God, but I just want Him to leave me alone so that I can do what I want to do." And God says, "Okay."
- E. What is the opposite of faith? The opposite of faith is not doubt.
1. Writer M.T. Omoniyi says, "The opposite of faith is *not doubt* (where you question Gods ability or existence entirely), but instead *self-sufficiency* ... because sometimes you think you'd be better off just handling 'it' yourself."
 2. *Whether God is real or not doesn't matter to me. I just want to be left alone to do my own thing.*
 3. Like Abram, God says to us, "Trust me."
- F. I want you to imagine that a big flood comes to Spring Hill and you are up on the roof and the waters are rising. When along comes a helicopter. And the helicopter hovers over the roof of your home and they begin lowering a line with a serviceman attached to it. And it lands on your roof and says, "The water is rising so fast that we are going to go up together. You just need to hold on tightly to me and everything will be okay." And you look at the line and it's so thin and you are wondering, "Can it hold both of us?" And you don't like heights and you are thinking, "This is going to be so scary." But then you see that the water has continued to rise and that you only have a few moments before you are swept away. What do you do? Do you trust the man who is there to rescue you?

II. **IT'S NOT UNUSUAL THAT THE THOUGHT OF TRUSTING GOD CAN BE CONFUSING, FOR IT NOT TO MAKE SENSE, FOR IT TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE.**

A. Look at Abraham.

1. He was being called to leave so much of what was comfortable and familiar and do something risky.
2. He was also 75 years old and God is asking Him to move. Allied Camel Lines didn't exist then. There was no Two Men and a Donkey. I'm 56 and moving is hard on me. And Abram was 75. My dad is 75. Moving is going to be hard.
3. God also said that He was going to make Abram into a great nation. He's 75, and let's not forget, Abram and Sarai are childless.
4. *What do you mean, you're going to make me into a great nation?*
5. Our neighbors across the street just had a new baby – their third. I was talking to the dad a couple of weeks ago and asked, "Are you getting any sleep yet?" He said, "We had our first at 31 and now I'm 38. It's so hard. We aren't getting any sleep. It's so hard."
6. Abraham was just about twice my neighbor's age and God is telling Him that He's going to be the father of a great nation? That makes no sense in any shape or fashion.
7. Trusting God can be confusing. It doesn't always make sense. It can make us uncomfortable.
8. And while I would be having all these kinds of questions running through my mind, Abram never asks God, "Where are we going?" "How is that whole nation thing going to work?"

B. **Pretense - an attempt to make something that is not the case appear true.**

1. Why are we talking about pretense right now?
2. Because some of us don't believe that we can trust God. And some of us believe that I'm trying to convince you to trust God when you believe that you can't trust God. Pretense.
3. Some of us are saying, "Right now..."
 - a. I'm having a really hard time with God. He won't protect innocent children, He took away my mom or dad and has left me

grieving, my finances are a disaster. Why should I trust Him? What's He really ever done for me?"

b. Or I'm having a really hard time with the church right now and you want me to trust God, trust the church, trust Christians?

c. Or I'm having a really hard time believing the Bible anymore. Some of the things don't make any sense to me. Would a loving God really send people to eternal suffering? In the Old Testament, why is God so angry all the time? Why did He have the Israelites wipe out whole cities?

d. Or, I'm really having a hard time with Christian leaders. Preachers. Pastors. The preachers we see on TV. It's just a scam. It's only about money to them.

4. Pretense – the attempt to make something that is not the case appear true.

5. *Why do I need God anyway? Why should I trust Him? I can take care of myself.*

6. Because there comes a time that you can't.

C. My friend Bobby grew up in the mountains rural Southwest Virginia. His parents were horrifically abusive to him. His dad was an alcoholic and beat his mom and threatened to kill her. He threatened to kill all of them. In school, Bobby was always fighting. He was fighting because he just hurt inside so much and he was just angry. By his teenage years he was doing drugs and selling drugs and by 19 he was spending time in jail. And then, while in his basement, he felt so lonely and broken that he prayed, "God, if you can hear me...if you would make me feel just a little bit better...I will follow you all the days of my life." And that prayer, believing that God had heard him, made Bobby feel just a little bit better. And then he went to church and then he started reading the Bible. And over time, he began studying the Bible. Today, Bobby is married to an amazing wife. They have two pretty awesome sons. And the man who was once broken, is now the deepest and authentic follower of Jesus I know. All because Bobby realized, "I can't handle life without Him. I need Him."

Transition: There will come a time when you can't take care of yourself. When you have extinguished all of your options...except one. And it doesn't make sense

to trust God. It's confusing. Maybe you grew up in a home where you never heard any of this stuff about faith. So, what are you going to do?

Let's look at what Abram did, because...

III. **THE CALL TO LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH MAY BE CONFUSING AND MAY CAUSE CONFLICT. IN THE END, IT REQUIRES OBEDIENCE.**

- A. Maybe you've heard the story about the little girl who was in church with her parents. She stood up in her seat and her dad whispered in her ear, "sit down." And she just gave him a look and just kept standing. He leaned in again and said, "Sit down!" But she didn't. So, he grabbed her and set her down himself in her chair. She leaned over and said, "Daddy, I may be sitting on the outside, but I'm standing on the inside."

There is obstinance and there is obedience. And when God calls us to do something out of faith, we have a choice. We can be obstinate or obedient.

- B. The words of Genesis 12:4 simply say, "So Abram left." That's Abram's response. No questions. Nothing. "So Abram left." God said to Abram, "Trust me," and Abram did.
1. And because Abram trusted God, God did everything He said He would do.
 2. It required a big move, but ultimately, Abram and Sarai and Lot and his family, settled in modern day Israel.
 3. Though it took a while, 25 years later, even though Abram was 100, God gave him a son - Isaac was born.
 4. From Isaac would come two sons: Jacob and Esau. From Jacob would come 12 sons. Twelves sons who families would ultimately become twelve tribes of people who would be known as the nation of Israel.
 5. And from Israel would come one who would be born who would one day give His body and blood on the cross for you and me. And all peoples are earth are blessed through this descendent of Abram.
- C. You will never regret following God's call. You will never regret trusting God.

Corrie Ten Boom: "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." _Corrie Ten Boom

- D. But does God really have big plans for me?
1. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future." _Jeremiah 29:11
 2. God has plans for you. You might not see them. You might not know them. But God sees them. God knows them.
 3. God might be calling you to serve in a way that you never have before? God has a plan for you.
 4. God might be asking you to give sacrificially? God has a plan for you.
 5. It might be that God wants you to work to serve at a church as a minister. God has a plan for you.
 6. I would suggest you should worry a lot more if you aren't willing to trust God's call.
 7. If God is calling for you and me to trust Him – we should. We will never regret following God's call.

CONCLUSION

- A. God's call to faith, to trust Him, is what He longs to see in us.
- B. My younger son, Jake, is 25 and married; but when he was 10, he was the quarterback for his football team...

Let's be honest.... sooner or later, life is going to blindside you with something devastatingly painful. Other people are going to wonder if you are going to be okay. But guess, what God is not done with you yet. If you are breathing, God has a plan for your life. But you've got to trust God, get back up, and get back to living.

If we are going to live a life that is pleasing to God, we are going to walk...by faith. And God your Father is going to be cheering you on.

C. But maybe, today, like my friend Bobby, you find yourself broken and hurting. And you are thinking, “Maybe I should cry out to God and trust Him. Maybe I should put my faith in Him.”

God’s Word says in Romans 3:22, “For there is a righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” _Romans 3:22

If you believe that Jesus loves you so much that He gave His life for you...

If you are willing to follow Jesus rather than do you own thing without Him...

If you are willing to admit your need for Jesus in your life...

Today, we want to invite you to put your faith in Jesus and be baptized.

D. Closing prayer