



## Devotional

Genesis 12

Abraham is first introduced to us in the closing verses of Genesis 11 and the opening verses of Genesis 12. His name was originally Abram, and it was not until years later that it was changed to Abraham. The reason for this change was highly significant, and we shall examine it in due course, but for the present let us get acquainted with young Abram. The Spirit of God passes over his early life in Ur of the Chaldees with but the briefest notice and begins the sacred record with his encounter with God. This is where life truly begins!

In this meeting, Abram came face to face with a command. Abram was commanded to do three things: leave his country, his people, and his father's household. This is exactly the command that comes to every person who hears the call of the gospel today. We are called to leave our country—the place where we have been living, our residence since birth. This does not mean, of course, our physical residence, but rather the old life with all its ambitions, its loyalties, its worship of money and fame and power, and its imagined independence—which is really slavery—all that we have been by nature since birth. This is clearly a picture of the world-organized society with its satanic philosophies and value systems.

Abram was also told to leave his relatives. In the spiritual sense, these are the moral forces that shape our lives. Just as blood relatives affect us greatly on the physical level, so these moral forces at work today change our lives constantly and color all that we think and do. Others' opinions, human traditions, pressures from family and friends, the attitudes of our employers and others around us—these are the kindred we must be willing to forsake when we hear the call of God. We are to renounce this concern about what others think and be preeminently concerned about what God thinks.

The third thing Abram was to leave was his father's house—that is, the ties with the old man. In this sense, Adam is the father of us all. What theologians call our Adamic nature, is the father's house in which we all live. We are called to leave this, to no longer put any dependence upon our looks, talents, or any of our normal resources, but to begin to walk in dependence upon another to do through us what we cannot do ourselves.

Perhaps you have heard the living God of glory say to you, You must no longer depend upon what you have been depending on—the opinions, the attitudes, the philosophy in which you have been reared. These are wrong. They are based upon the lies of Satan, and you must not live on this basis any longer. You must learn to accept the truth reflected in the Word of God, though it cuts right across the philosophy of this world. You must, above all, leave your father's house, which is dependence upon yourself. **It is a simple but vital decision—you cannot stay in Ur and go to the land at the same time.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Devotional by Ray Stedman entitled "The Command" found @ <https://www.raystedman.org/daily-devotions/genesis-12to25/the-command> © 2006 by Ray Stedman Ministries.

# Open it

1. Have you ever moved? What factors were a part of the decision? What emotions did you experience at the time?

# Read it

Genesis 12

# Explore it

2. What did God call Abram to do?
3. What did God promise Abram?
4. How did Abram respond in verses 5-6?
5. What caused Abram to leave the land of Canaan?
6. What ploy did Abram use to protect himself from the Egyptians? What happens as a result?

# Apply it

## PRETTY PATHETIC

Chapter 12 of Genesis represents an abrupt break. Up until this point, Genesis has been preoccupied with global issues, most of them heartbreaking. God made the world very good, but in no time violence and evil take over. God's responses are mainly punitive—a massive flood, a breakdown in language. There seems to be no hope of redeeming his beautiful creation. But here, God narrows his focus to one solitary individual. The world is forgotten. Abraham and God occupy the stage.<sup>2</sup>

- 7. Look back over the first eleven chapters of Genesis. What events transpired during those times and how do those events make God's call of Abram so significant?**

## THAT'S WHERE I COME IN

Abraham was born and raised in Ur of the Chaldees, which is in modern Iraq, near Nasiriyah in the southeastern part of the country. Joshua 24:2 says that Abraham and his father worshiped idols. We can make some educated guesses about their religion by looking at the history and religious artifacts from that period.

Ur of the Chaldees was an ancient city that flourished until about 300 BC. The great ziggurat of Ur was built by Ur-Nammu around 2100 BC and was dedicated to Nanna, the moon god. The moon was worshiped as the power that controlled the heavens and the life cycle on earth. To the Chaldeans, the phases of the moon represented the natural cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death and also set the measurement of their yearly calendar. Among the pantheon of Mesopotamian gods, Nanna was supreme, because he was the source of fertility for crops, herds, and families. Prayers and offerings were offered to the moon to invoke its blessing.<sup>3</sup>

- 8. Abram grew up in a home devoting their time and attention to Nanna, the moon god. What does this tell us about his upbringing? What things were important to your family as you were growing up?**

- 9. How would this upbringing help Abram to hear from God? How could it have hindered it? What things in your upbringing helped or hindered you from following God later in life?**

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<sup>2</sup> Tim Stafford found @ <https://timstafford.wordpress.com/2010/09/20/life-of-abraham-bible-study-guide/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Abraham-religion.html>

## YOU SPOKE TO ME

It is important to note that God didn't appear to a group of people and then offer a general invitation to follow. We should also observe that Abram didn't seek out God for a relationship; God approached him. It's doubtful Abram had even heard of the one true Creator God before that point. By an act of pure grace, God dipped His hand into that idolatrous hole to select Abram out of all people. Why this particular man? Did Abram turn from the idols of his ancestors and seek God? Did he make himself worthy of divine mercy? Far from it!

The Lord chose Abram for reasons known only in heaven. We can say for certain that Abram did nothing to earn or deserve God's favor. Nevertheless, the Lord appeared to this ignorant, sinful, superstitious idol worshiper and said, *"Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you"* (Genesis 12: 1-3).<sup>4</sup>

**10. God took a man who seemingly had little or nothing to bring to God and yet God out of his grace called him to a life of great significance. What significant things does God call all of His children to?**

God's call often requires difficulty. God's call to Abram was not easy for Abram to follow. He was 75 years old, established in his community, and tied in closely with his extended family. God could have said, "I'll be your God and you can stay in Ur. You have contacts here, and we'll use those to further My purpose."

No, God told him to leave his familiar surroundings and his extended family and head off to some unknown destination. God did not even reveal at first where Abram would be going. He didn't show him color brochures of the swimming pools and golf courses in Canaan. There's a hint that he would face hostility: some would curse him (12:3). Travel wasn't easy in those days. There weren't motels and fast food restaurants along the Interstate highway. No U-Haul trucks. Abram couldn't call home and let everyone know how life was in the new place. He had to say good-bye once and for all to his country and relatives and set out to follow God.<sup>5</sup>

**11. God called Abram to a life he could not yet see. What would it take for you to trust God's plan for your life—even if it means leaving familiar and comfortable places?**

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<sup>4</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith (Kindle Locations 190-199). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc..

<sup>5</sup> Sermon excerpt by Steven Cole entitled "Great Privilege Great Responsibility" found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-25-great-privilege-great-responsibility-genesis-121-3>

While God may not ask you or me literally to leave our country or our families, He does call us to separate ourselves from all that would hinder our complete commitment to Him. The word "holy" comes from a word meaning to be "separate" or "set apart." To be holy is to be separate from sin and set apart unto God. The core of holiness, or separation, is not outward, but inward. We must break from our culture's sinful ways of thinking. We must become biblical thinkers who are able to evaluate our culture by the standard of God's Word.

We should evaluate the **greed of our culture** by what the Bible says about contentment and generosity. We should **evaluate the sensuality** of our culture by what the Bible says about purity and the sanctity of sex in marriage. We should evaluate our **culture's obsession with pleasure and self-centeredness** by what the Bible says about service and self-denial. Only when we think biblically about life will we act biblically and be holy people.

**12. God's calling demands us to leave important things in our lives so that we might follow God. What were those things Abram had to give up? What types of things have you had to give up in order to follow God?**

**13. How can seeking to live the "good life" or the "comfortable life" deter us from following God? Why does it take faith to say "no" to such a life and follow God?**

## **MY LUCKY DAY**

Everything within us recoils from making big changes without thorough planning. Most of us need to see where we're jumping before committing to a leap. But God called Abram to obey this call without complete information. Abram didn't know where he was going, so he couldn't trust in a well-thought-out, long-range plan. Nevertheless, the Lord gave Abram sufficient information to make a reasonable decision. When Abram encountered the Lord, he knew that God was real. The awesome splendor of God's presence left him no room for doubt. Moreover, the Lord gave him three specific promises that made obedience worth his trouble. While his neighbors thought he had lost his mind, Abram had good reason to trust in God, even without knowing every detail of the plan.<sup>6</sup>

**14. What did God reveal to Abram in Genesis 12:2-3 that would make this move less daunting? What do we know about God that enables following him easier?**

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<sup>6</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith (Kindle Locations 212-218). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc..

**15. In what ways are we blessed as children of God? How can we take those blessings and use them to bless others?**

*God promised Abram that there was a bright future in store for him and his descendants. God would use Abram as His instrument to accomplish his divine plan and purposes. While it was yet unseen by Abram, we know that God would fulfill these promises not only in the giving of land (Canaan) and an heir (Isaac) but the true fulfillment is that through Abram's line God would bring forth His son (Jesus Christ) which would be the greatest blessing given to the world. These promises would be enough for Abram to believe and that faith would be credited to him as righteousness. **All of this began with one step of faith.***

**16. The Bible is clear that “we are saved by faith alone, but that faith that saves is never alone.” How is faith demonstrated in action? Why isn't it enough just to simply believe in something?**

**17. It wasn't Abraham alone who followed God's leading but many others went with him. This means Abram shared with others what God was commanding him to do. How does faith grow in community? How can others help us as we step out in faith?**

## **I NEED YOU AROUND**

As Abram made his way to where God called him we are told Abram pitched tents, but he built altars. That which he was building for himself was temporary (tent). That which he was building for God was permanent (altars). When Abram died, the only stuff that remained from his life were altars he built for God. What a great reminder to us who seek to take hold of things that will not last. Abram teaches us to pursue the eternal over the temporal. The world falsely advertises we need stuff around us to find happiness. The Bible correctly declares we need God around us to find true happiness.

An **ALL IN LIFE** is one that is devoted to God not the things of this world.

**18. In what ways do you struggle holding tightly to the things of God and lightly to the things of this earth? How would total reliance on God affect your current decisions, time commitments and financial stewardship?**

## **DESTINATION FAILURE**

*I do not know if Abram should have gone to Egypt or not. The way this part of the story reads, it sounds to me like it was a bad decision on Abram's part to go to Egypt. "Nowhere is Abram directly condemned for his decision to go down to Egypt, but later developments make it clear that his actions did not stem from faith. Abram did not consult God, but acted independently. No altars were built in Egypt to our knowledge, nor are we told that Abram ever called on the name of the Lord there. His request of Sarai [later in the passage] also reflects his spiritual condition. It would thus be safe to say that Abram's faith failed in the face of that famine."*

*So we can't be certain, but it seems that God wanted Abram to stay in Canaan – even with a famine. Where God guides, He provides. It was not God's intention for Abram to leave Canaan and go to Egypt. Now a time of testing had come upon Abram. Not a time of plenty, but a time of wanting. A time of famine. Abram faced a choice. Either he could stay in the land that God had called him to, and trust in God to provide, or he could leave the land and trust in man, specifically the Egyptians, to provide.*

*Abram did what most of us do in times of trouble. Abram trusted in man. Abram stopped believing in God's promises, and left for Egypt. Through this whole chapter, we read of God speaking to Abram to tell him where to go. We read of God appearing to Abram. We read of Abram building altars and calling on the name of the Lord. We read none of those things here. In a time of trial, Abram ignored the promises of God, and turned to Egypt for help.<sup>7</sup>*

**19. What areas of your life do you look to for security? How do those things impact the way you follow God's lead?**

**20. How is God wanting to stretch your faith? What fears or concerns regarding the future keep you from being fully devoted and dedicated to following God in the present?**

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<sup>7</sup> Sermon excerpt entitled "Faith and Failure" by Jeremy Myers found @ [https://redeeminggod.com/sermons/genesis/genesis\\_12/](https://redeeminggod.com/sermons/genesis/genesis_12/)  
**Note: This study was compiled and questions were written by Pastor Tim Badal, Village Bible Church. [www.villagebible.church/smallgroups](http://www.villagebible.church/smallgroups)**