

Abram
and
Sarai

OBEDIENT

^ Moving Story

WESLEYS' THOUGHTS

Captain of Israel's host, and Guide
of all who seek the land above,
beneath your shadow we abide,
the cloud of your protecting love;
our strength, your grace; our rule, your world;
our end, the glory of the Lord.

By your enerring Spirit led,
we shall not in the desert stray;
we shall not full direction need,
nor miss our providential way;
as far from danger as from fear,
while love, almighty love, is near.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
Singing the Faith #459



BIBLE PASSAGE | GENESIS 12: 1-9

“Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

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⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. ⁹And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb."



DISCUSSION

This chapter in Genesis comes after a long list of ways that the people had disobeyed God causing much destruction and harsh consequences for themselves. Adam and Eve eating forbidden fruit; Cain and Abel ~ murder; the flood ~ for all manner of unrighteousness; Noah's drunken debauchery and the tower of Babel where people planned to become as great as God and were scattered across the earth unable to understand each other. Abram was probably born about then in Ur of the Chaldeans.

God now tries a different tactic. Instead of working with people in large numbers, He chooses to come alongside and build a relationship with one man. Abram is spoken to by God who tells him to leave his home land, his family and friends and his Father's house. In return God will bless him and his family, make of him a great nation, protect them from harm and, cause all people to be blessed because of him.

Abram is obedient and begins his journey. He must leave behind:

1. **LAND.** By now they are living in Haran, named after Abram's brother. Terah, Abram's Father has also died and is buried here. This has been their home for a long time. They will have to leave the known geography of the place; the familiar sights and sounds, the known customs, money, culture, language and ways that they know so well to travel to other places, with all the uncertainty of not knowing where that might be and how they will adapt to learning new ways and languages.
2. **LOVED ONES.** Leaving behind the extended family, the rest of his tribe, people who brought him up, taught him, nurtured and cared for him, Abram and Sarai must say goodbye, probably causing hurt and pain to others. What about those who aren't sure whether to go with them or stay behind? Terrible decisions to be made. Grieving for the loss of loved ones and the pain of separation on both sides.

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3. **HIS FATHER'S HOUSE**, which is now Abram's. He has status here. He is probably respected and honoured. He has authority and identity. People know who he is and his family. He will have to go where no one knows him or who he is or what he can do. He is leaving his inheritance, his roots and his ancestors.
4. **THE KNOWN FOR THE UNKNOWN**. Abram doesn't know where he is to go. God will show him but at the point of leaving he has no destination. There is no security or safety anymore. If things go wrong, no one to call upon. There are no maps or plans, no certainty or clarity.
5. **CONTROL**. Abram will leave behind control of his life, becoming impotent (in more ways than one). Having to trust in God for everything including his reproduction, life style, income and relationships. He will still have to lead his family through unknown lands, but he will not have the knowledge, respect or control he has always had in lands and peoples that he knows.
6. **BELONGING**. Now they will be "strangers in a strange land", the other, the outsiders, the immigrants. They will be treated as different to those around them who may discriminate, harm and curse them.

God promises:

- To make of Abram, a great nation
- To bless Abram
- To make Abram's name great
- To protect people who are friends of Abram and to curse his enemies
- To make Abram a blessing to all people

In short, God's promises of greatness and blessing, however grand they sound, may be cold comfort to one who is leaving everything to go to a place he knows nothing of, to live among people he knows nothing of, to effect a blessing he can hardly understand. Yet, with all these doubts and questions sounding in his skull, Genesis 12:4 comes as a thunderclap: "4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him".

Astonishingly, Abram, this 75 year old man and 70 year old woman~ go off into the wilderness without question! He couldn't have known it at the time, but in leaving Haran Abram altered human history forever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you reflect on this story, here are some discussion questions to guide you:

1. How do the 6 losses above translate into today's situations of migration?
2. Which of the 6 losses from Abram's list above speaks to you most? Have you experienced any of these? If so, share with another person how you felt.

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3. Abram had faith and trust in God and it was counted to him as righteousness. How can we live our lives today in faith and trust?
4. Abram and Sarai chose to give up everything to be obedient to God. Discuss the parallels to giving up everything to follow Jesus.
5. Abram and Sarai were blessed by God for their faith and trust. God's promises were true. What do we gain from having a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ?



RESOURCES

