

## The Decision to Go

1. Warm up: Jeff began Sunday's sermon by telling about his futile and misguided attempt to clean the drip pan on the church grill after our church picnic. He told how deflated he felt when he discovered he had invested lots of time and energy doing the wrong thing. Tell us about a time when you invested lots of time and energy in something only to later realize it was the wrong thing.
2. None of us wants to waste time doing the wrong thing, especially when it comes to life's really big decisions. Life's too precious to waste. So on Sunday we began a new sermon series based on Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde's [BUD-ee] New York Times bestselling book called *How We Learn to Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*. Her book is about how we can better discern what we're supposed to do at various decisive moments in life. On Sunday, we tackled Budde's first chapter, which is entitled *The Decision to Go – leaving one place, or way of being, to move toward another*. So that's what we're going to talk about tonight – those times in life when God's calling us to leave what's familiar and take a leap of faith into the great unknown. Let's begin by rereading Genesis 12:1-7, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. When Abram began to sense God calling him to leave the only place he'd ever known to go "to the land that I will show you," what do you imagine were his initial thoughts and feelings? What may have been some of the pros and cons he began weighing?
  - b. Why do you think God didn't just tell Abram his ultimate destination from the outset? Why wait to reveal that later?
  - c. God told Abram that the reason for making such a bold move was so God could make a great nation of his offspring, a nation that would eventually "bless all the families of the earth." Put yourself in Abram's shoes. If God told you what God told Abram, what would you think? How would you react?
  - d. When Abram began telling his family and friends that he felt called to leave Ur to travel to a yet-to-be-determined location because God wanted him to start a new nation that would change the world, what kind of feedback would you guess he got from his family and friends?
  - e. Why do you think Abram did it? If you were in his shoes, do you think you would have done it? Why or why not?
3. Because of what Abram did, he has become known as the Father of our Faith, *i.e.*, a model for what it looks like to navigate our life by faith, not by sight, trusting God to guide us. As such, Abram is an example that we're called to follow in those times when we sense God calling us to make some kind of bold decision to leave one place, our way of being, to move to another.

- a. Those kinds of decisions are scary. Most of us tend to be risk adverse. Even if where we find ourselves in life isn't so great, at least it's familiar, and that means it's comfortable – or at least more comfortable than taking a leap into the great unknown. Because of our fear of change and desire to be comfortable, it's easy for us to get stuck in life. Tell us about a time in your life when you knew you needed to make a big change, but instead consciously or subconsciously chose to stay stuck for a long while. What kept you so stuck?
  - b. Now tell us about a time in your life when you felt God calling you to make a big, bold change and you actually did it. What happened? How did it turn out? Are you glad you did it?
4. We all have Abrahamic moments in our life when God is calling us to leave the comfort of the familiar to set out to a very different place. Bruce Feiler calls these our "Life Quake Moments," which he defines as "transitions of such magnitude that they fundamentally change our meaning, purpose, or direction." But when we confront these moments, we often find ourselves wondering, how do I know that it's God who's calling me to make this bold change and not just some idea I've cooked up on my own. Jeff suggested this answer: "You'll know it's God who's calling you when the power of the idea inside you is so persistent, compelling, and resonate, you just can't shake it."
  - a. Do you buy that? Why or why not?
  - b. There was a time in the life of the prophet Jeremiah when he decided not to preach or prophesy any longer. But Jeremiah tells us, "When I say, 'I will not mention God, or speak any more in God's name, then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.'" Jeremiah 20:9. Have you ever experienced that feeling – an idea that was so compelling and resonate with your soul, it felt like a fire in your bones? What was the idea? What did you do with it?
5. When God calls us to do something bold, fear often stops us. The Bible says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." II Timothy 1:7. But letting go of fear is hard. So how do we find the courage to face our fear and move forward in spite of it? Answer: The same way Abram did.
  - a. When God told Abram, "I'm going to make a great nation of you," the Bible says, "Abram believed God." Bishop Budde notes that "believing God" is something more than just "believing in God." "Believing in God" simply means you believe that God exists. "Believing God" means much more. What's the difference?
  - b. Jeff described Abram's state of mind like this: "Abram didn't just believe God exists, he also believed in God's guidance and providence. He believed that God was guiding his individual life in real time. He believed God was taking him somewhere in his life – that's the providence part – the idea that God put you here for a purpose and to live fully, you need to live into that purpose. The idea that *you too* are a child of destiny. So Abram believed in God's guidance and

providence, and also in his own significance.” In this too, Abram is our example. God has also put *you* here for important purposes and God will also guide *you* into those important purposes of you listen and boldly follow. Do you believe that? Explain why you do or don’t believe that to be true of yourself?

- c. In your life right now, do you sense God’s calling you to embrace a Life Quake Moment? In other words, do you believe God’s calling you to “leave one place, or way of being, to move toward another?” If so, tell us about that call and what it might look like for you to respond to it.

## **Genesis 12:1-7**

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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>I 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.’

<sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

<sup>5</sup> Abram 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, <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup> Then 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.