

God Is Calling You

Genesis 12:1-8 (NIV)

¹ 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. 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." 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. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

Phone calls can come at the most inconvenient times: while you are in the middle of preparing food or sitting down for dinner with the family, while you are in the middle of working on the car or helping the kids get ready for school, while you're in the bathroom, when you're exhausted from the day or fast asleep. These inconvenient times are exacerbated by the fact that nowadays we have our phones with us everywhere we go. So, the call comes, you look at your phone, and more and more we are okay with swiping that red "decline" button and letting it go to voicemail. We're okay not answering the call.

But there are consequences to not answering the call. If someone is calling you in an emergency and you don't answer, you leave them hanging to fend for themselves when they need you. If a friend is calling to tell you about a great BOGO discount deal that they saw that they know you'd love, you just missed out on that. If your wife has called you repeatedly, desperately, you know that she is going to be hurt, upset, and mad that you didn't answer. You will have to live with the consequences of not answering the call.

In our first Bible reading for today, God called Abram (later, God changes his name to Abraham). The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." (verse 1) Was this a convenient time for Abram? Probably not. He was 75 years old, an established and successful cattleman with great wealth. He was probably thinking this is where he would live out the rest of his years, surrounded by his extended family. He was looking to wind down, not gear up.

How about spiritually? Was this a convenient time for Abram spiritually speaking? When we think of prominent people in the Bible like Abraham, we tend to think first of all the great things that they did, how faithful and pious and good believers they were. But where is Abram when we meet him here in Genesis chapter 12? It may be surprising to us to know that Abram's father, Terah, worshiped other gods. Later in Genesis we see from Abram's relatives that they too had household gods that they worshiped. This was not a family of exclusive believers and worshipers of the one true God. How much of this had bled into Abram's life? We don't know, but he was not coming from a "Christian" household. Abram himself may have been worshiping the same gods his father, Terah, worshiped.

Yet, in the middle of a family who worshiped idols, God called Abram. God didn't wait for Abram to clean up his act, destroy all his father's idols, become super devoted to him, and then call him. God took the initiative. God came to Abram, not Abram to God. God called Abram exactly where he was, sin and all. He called Abram out of that life into a new life that God would show him, in which God would lead him.

And what a call it was! Although God did not tell Abram his exact final destination, he did tell him what would happen while he took this call in a series of seven promises. Basically, Abram would become a great nation with so many people coming from his family. He would be blessed, prospered by God, and would be a blessing, help prosper, others. At the same time, God promised to protect him from anyone who wished evil on him. The greatest of the seven promises is the last one. "And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (verse 3) With this call, not only will your name be great, that you will be the father of many nations, that you will be blessed and protected, but I have called you to be the bearer of my promise. From you, from your offspring, I will bring the promised Offspring of the woman who will crush the serpent's head. From you, the Savior of all people, all nations will come. He will save the world. Through faith in him, I will declare people righteous, not guilty of their sins. I will cover them with his perfection by the gift of faith, not by anyone earning it by their own works. In this way, all people will be blessed through you, Abram. The Apostle Paul, also called by God from his life of unbelief and sin, wrote this same truth in Galatians 3:8 "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'"

This would certainly be one of those phone calls where you just sit there for a minute, your mouth open as if to speak but no words come. How do you respond to this kind of a call? Part of Abram had to be thinking, “God, do you have the right number? I’m not this great person or great believer. Plus, I don’t have any kids. How can I ever become a great nation at this age? I’m pretty well settled where I am at. Life is good, but you want me to pack up everything and head to a destination – where did you say I was going again? Right, you didn’t. You’re just telling me to blindly go to a place that you will show me. But what happens to my dad? He’s getting up there in years. I think I should stay and take care of him. Can I call you back?”

But Abram did not say, “God, do you have the right number?” Instead, he answered the call. “So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.” (verse 4) He answered the call based not on God demanding something from him but on what God promised to do for him. When God calls people, he deals in terms of promises, not demands. It’s the same with us.

God is calling you. He is calling you exactly where you are. For all of us, we heard God first calling us not when we were good, God-pleasing believers. We were all like Abram, surrounded in unbelief, worshiping other things as god – whether it be ourselves, our jobs, our status, our families, anything that was the most important thing in our lives and took top priority. God called all of us when we were nothing more than messed up, broken, lost sinners. We didn’t have it all together. We lived contrary to God, enemies to him. Our natural inclination was to hit that red “decline” button on God’s call to us.

However, something changed. When God called us, God the Holy Spirit changed us just like he changed Abram. He changed us when he called us with his promises. He told us that he had already worked out eternal blessings for us, that they had been earned and won by Jesus Christ, his Son, eventual Son of Abraham. He lived the righteousness required and gifted it to us, the perfect life needed to be right with God. We have that righteousness credited to us by faith alone.

By calling us with his promises and his promises fulfilled, God created faith in us, a trust in him. This faith led Abram to take God at his call and so pack up everything and go. This call from God came to us - maybe through parents who brought you to a baptismal font where water was applied to you with God’s call when you were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit who then made you clean, pure, and holy before God, belonging to his family. Maybe the call came through grandparents who brought you to God’s Word by bringing you to church where God continued to call you and lead you, shepherd you, through life. Maybe the call came through friends or neighbors or even strangers who sat with you and shared the Savior of all people with you, the one who works all things out for your good, the one who always listens to your prayers, the one who is calling you right now to journey with him and be with him forever in heaven.

God is calling you today. Every time that you hear his Word, every time you read it, every time you gather to worship God along with this preview of the great multitude of believers that is the Church, every time that you read one of the Bible devotions from the *Meditations* booklet, every time you take the five minutes to read one of the daily email devotions sent out by our national church body, God is calling you. He is calling you to take him at his Word, to trust him based on his promises – both fulfilled and future ones.

We might respond, “God, do you have the right number? Do you even want me – of all people? I’m not worthy. Is this the right time for you to call me? I don’t feel ready or prepared. I feel worn out and ready to break down. I really don’t want to deal with this right now. Can I call you back when it’s better for me?” It’s always a temptation to hit that red “decline” button on God’s call. Yet, in spite of us at times not answering God’s call, he keeps calling us. He’s persistent, wanting everyone to be saved. As long as you are here on earth, he is going to keep calling you, keep reaching out to you with his promises, his Word, so that you are counted as righteous by your faith in God just as Abram was. We respond by worshiping him and calling on his name and calling others to believe in him.

God is calling you with his promises. He calls you with the free and total forgiveness won for us by Abraham’s descendant, Jesus Christ. He calls us promising to be with us always to the very end of the age. He calls us to a blessed life, one that includes a forever heavenly home with him. Continue to answer his call as he leads you on through this life. Amen.