

Genesis 12:1-4

“The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

“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.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him;”

We're in the second week of our series called "Altar Ego." This series is based on the book called "Altar Ego," by Greg Groeschel. Let's recap a bit, an altar is where Old Testament people came to sacrifice to God, and an ego is who we think we are; it's really what we think about ourselves. Problem is too many of us have a poor view of who we really are. Some of us think too highly of ourselves, while others think too lowly of ourselves, and neither have an accurate view of who God knows we are.

Last week, we talked about sacrificing feelings of inadequacy. Remember God sees more in us than we think. Today, what we're going to look at and hopefully, by faith we're going to sacrifice our need for control.

How many of here this morning, really like to be in control? Or better yet have to be in control? Some may be finding themselves trying to raise the hand of the person sitting next to them, if you are you need to take a really good look at yourself because this message is specifically for those of us who really like to be or have to be the ones who call the shots.

I'm talking to everyone here this morning who has to have their hands on the control knobs with no thought of ever allowing anyone else to do what it is you do. Everything's got to be done the way you do it and you are really

not open for anyone to step in for fear of not being in control. You may accept ideas but you have to be the one to do it. And if we'll be honest with ourselves and look at our lives, we'll find we all at some point try to control two broad categories of things.

Most of us, try to control people or we try to control the circumstances which in turn will control the people involved. Let's face it we all try to control people. There may be someone in your life where there are one or two things about them that you just don't like. Last week we read in **Ephesians 2:10**, *“For we are God’s masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he prepared and planned for us long ago.”* We are God’s masterpiece and He has plans for each of us, but there are those of us who look at others, not ourselves and decide our plan is better than God’s and we feel it’s our job to show them this.

His colleagues knew better. “They knew there were three others ahead of Mr. Haig in the constitutional succession,” Mr. Allen wrote in 2001. “But Alexander Haig’s demeanor signaled that he might be ready for a fight, and there was no point in provoking one.”

Hours after President Reagan was shot, on March 30, 1981, Secretary of State Alexander Haig wrongly declared himself the acting president. “The helm is right here,” he told members of the Reagan cabinet in the White House Situation Room, “and that means right in this chair for now, constitutionally, until the vice president gets here.” Mr. Haig then asked, “How do you get to the press room?” He raced upstairs and went directly to the lectern before a television audience of millions. His knuckles were whitening as he held the sides of the podium, his arms shaking, Mr. Haig then declared to the world, “I am in control here, in the White House.” These words sound familiar to anyone?

We strive to help others see what we see, and get them to do what we want them to do. And as a result we will manipulate, bribe, threaten, and even offer rewards and/or withhold rewards to direct people to the place where they can see the light so-to-speak. It may be church members, family members, friends, co-workers, our children, maybe even your spouse, but we want to and in many cases believe we have to be in charge.

Beside people we even try to control the circumstances. Think about this with me we usually want to look just perfect; we want our houses to be perfect; we want our children when they go out in the public to be perfect; we want to control our present schedules and our future schedules as well and in some cases even control the schedules of the people we claim to love. We want to control everything about what other people think of us and/or what they do.

The question is why; why do we want to be in control? Why do we have to be in control? Why? Because our egos are out of control. Because we really believe that we know what's best, which in essence kind of makes us Godlike.

Ken Blanchard wrote a book a few years ago about Ego's entitled *Edging God Out, E-G-O*. He wrote of doing this our way and not trusting God and forcing God to the sideline only to be called upon when all else fails. **Proverbs 3:5-6** explains it best for us control freaks "*Trust in the Lord,*" with what? "Trust in the Lord with some of our heart and lean on your own," what?

This version says, “*Lean not on your own understanding.*” In how many of our ways? In what? “In some of our ways, acknowledge God.” And what’s going to happen? “And we will make our paths straight.” No it’s

Now, some of you, you may not have been around the church or the Bible, and you hear that and you go, “Well, sounds pretty good. Sounds like a good plan for me.” But let me tell you, that’s not what the real translation says. The real translation says, “*Trust in the Lord with **all your** heart and **lean not on your own** understanding; in **all your** ways submit to **Him, and He** will make your paths straight.*”

What’s really interesting is the more that we try to control something, the more we fear losing control. And the more we fear losing control, the more we try to keep control. And suddenly, we spiral into a cycle of fear. I know many of you right now, you’re thinking, “Oh, I hope old so-and-so is listening because they really need to hear this.” The challenge is control it’s very difficult to see in the mirror. It’s very hard for us to see our own need for control in the mirror because we really think and actually believe with all our heart, with all our soul, and mind we know what is best. We’re edging God out, and we don’t even know it.

Let's look again at our couple Abraham and Sarah who had a tremendous problem, like us, with wanting to control the situation and outcome and how this just causes more problems. God called Abraham to go and because he did go God said He would bless him with being the father of many nations. Just go and trust God.

Early on in their lives, when Abraham and Sarah were going, Abraham became worried about Sarah's safety, thinking that some men might do her and him harm. So, rather than trust God to take care of Sarah's safety, Abraham took control himself and he lied about who she was. He said in **Genesis 12:13** *"Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."* Now remember I said God had told him He would make him father of many nations? When God didn't do what they believed God promised to do, and do it in their timeframe, they did like we do they took control in **Genesis 16:1-2** *"Now Sarah, Abraham's wife, had borne him no children ... so she said to Abraham, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."*

In other words, I know God promised something, but He's not doing it in my timing. Therefore, I am going to take control because I know what's best for me and those around me. I'm going to edge God out and I'm going to take control.

When Abraham and Sarah edged God out, it's impossible to describe all the chaos caused by what taking control did, not just in their lives, but for centuries and centuries to come. In fact, if you read on in the story, this slave Hagar gave birth to a son named Ishmael. And sometime later, God did bless Abraham and Sarah with a son named Isaac. As the boys grew there was so much tension between Hagar and Sarah and Ishmael and Isaac something had to be done.

And here we are, centuries later, and the descendants of Ishmael, the Palestinians, are still at war with the descendants of Isaac, the Jews. And from the lineage of Ishmael we have Muhammad, and the Muslim nation, and from the lineage of Isaac the Christians. See all this chaos in our world today and it all traces back to when a couple decided to take control and to edge God out.

Now, chances are, all of you are sitting there thinking, “Okay, I understand what you are saying and I would never do anything like that. You may be a single girl, and the clock is ticking and you love Jesus and want a Christian man. But since there is no Christian man around, you settle for a male, notice I did not say a man. And you say, “Hey, I can do this I’ll take control.” And you do something, you manipulate the situation, you compromise, and you settle for something that’s less, far less than God’s best because you’re going to take control, and you’re going to edge God out.

It may be something financially and you rationalize, you compromise, you take control. And you say, “We’ll do this right now and later once we’re situated and things settle we’ll” and we take control of something that really belongs to God, and we edge God out. Maybe we want something and we want it real bad but you can't afford it. So, what do we do? We edge God out and anything and everything to get it.

Here’s the big question for us this morning, and I hope everyone will participate, I want you to ask yourself, and be totally honest: “What are you trying to control?” What are you trying to control? What is it that you’re trying to control? Is it people? You know, your children? Maybe it’s your

grown children. Maybe it's the way they are living or raising your grandchildren because you know they're not doing it right. Maybe it's coworkers; maybe it's what people think about you. Maybe it's an area within the church; an area you have to always be the one. I want us to think about this "What are we, what am I trying to control?"

What are you trying to control? When you honestly admit that you're trying to control something or someone ask yourself these three questions:

- 1. Is it worth my concern?** Is it worth fighting about?
- 2. Is it really mine to control?** Like the future what could happen.
- 3. Is it really God's to control?**

This is it, if we're, if you're going to call yourself a Christian -- -- if you're going to call yourself a Christian, you cannot be in control. Because to follow Jesus, to truly follow Jesus we are to completely surrender control of our life to Him. God has to be in control no if an or buts. What is it you are having to control?