

### **Genesis 12:1-5**

*“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. And 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. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.” 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. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.”*

As I returned for my second year playing college football I was arriving on the practice field three or four days later than everyone else. After stretching and some offensive line drills all we came together. Our quarterback stepped into the huddle and then called a play. He said “Blue Over Flip Zac 73 Boston F arrow X curl.” Then we all said break and walked up to the line.

As we approached the line our right offensive guard, who was a freshman asked me, “What does that mean? What do I do?” Standing on the line and facing the opposing defensive line is not the place to go over the play just called. Since this was neither the time nor the place for instructions I just said hit the man in front of you.

“Blue 73 Chicago F arrow X curl” is clear to everyone right? As a center I knew when the quarterback called “Chicago” the play was a pass play which meant pass blocking for us offensive linemen ... the color blue meant the play was hopefully going to the right, red hopefully went left ... F arrow X meant the receiver on the right went five yards and turned towards the near sideline expecting a pass; if it had been red the receiver on the left went five yards and turned towards the near sideline expecting the same.

This is the same way God sounds to many, most actually, every time He leads us to do something. Many times God just doesn't make sense. Remember last week we talked about God's original plan for us was to live in perfect fellowship with His within a perfect environment. But because of Free Will mankind chose to be selfish and minister to himself and as a result God had no choice but to remove man from this perfect environment.

God decided He want us to return so we could experience the very best life had to offer together. Looking back over this plan of God most would consider it utterly impossible. If you or I were in charge of creating this new environment or as Scripture puts it "New Nation," we would have chosen a strong young man and woman full of vim and vigor, full of energy and passion. We would have chosen a couple who could have lots of children, but that's not what God does.

God not only begins building this "New Nation," with a couple who are past child rearing age but the woman He chose was unable to have children. Think about this for a moment. Not only were Abraham and Sarah beyond the age to have children, but even as a young woman Sarah could not have children, and this is who God placed all hope on creating this "New Nation."

God begins by inviting Abraham to leave his homeland. Abraham is asked to leave the only land he has ever known Harran (was a city close to the border of modern-day Turkey and Syria.) More than just leaving the land he knew God was asking him to go to a place He would show him about later. Genesis 12:1-2 *“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. And 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.”* Hebrews 1:8 is slightly different for it says *“Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go.”*

Abraham and Sarah followed God's call and went expecting to start this “New Nation” in God's name, but again God didn't make sense. Ten years went by since they had left their homeland and they still had not reached this Promised Land and they still had no children ... Abraham was now 85, and Sarah was 75.

Sarah reached the point where she thought maybe God needs help so she helped out. Every time we decide we are going to help God something always happen, and it's usually not very good. She had a surrogate step in, which Abraham never complained about, and this led to disaster.

Thirteen more years go by and still no children; Abraham is now 99 and Sarah 89. These two individuals are knocking on the door of 100! Who in their right mind would believe they would be having any children? No one that's who! Exactly one year later Sarah, now 90, gave birth to a son who they named Isaac. These two left everything and followed God in faith to reach this point, but God was not finished yet.

When Isaac was around 15, God came to Abraham and once again asked him to do something which made no sense at all. God's request not only did not make sense, but it was completely ridiculous. At this point with Isaac 15 Abraham was now 115 and Sarah 105 – optimal child rearing ages. God says to Abraham in Genesis 22:2

*“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”* Was that crazy or what ... this makes no sense, no

sense at all. Let's take this a step further as to why Abraham obeyed this ridiculous request, it is found in Hebrews 11:19 which reads "*He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead.*" He had so much faith in God he believed Isaac would be brought back so why not. In a matter of speaking Isaac was, but come on, doing what God asks here makes no sense.

In case you did not know, the hillside on Mt. Moriah where Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him just happens to be the same hills near Jerusalem where Jesus would be crucified nearly 200 years later.

The reason this makes no sense is because of how limited and limiting, our point of views are. It is us who limit God it's not God. Up to this point nothing God has said to Abraham has made any sense from a logical or rational point of view. God's ideas seldom do make sense to us. Think about this for a moment; Build a boat nowhere near water; I'm sending a flood, heck it's never rained; Sell all you have and give it to the poor; Love your enemies. Do any of these statements make sense?<sup>i</sup>

In his book *Shattered Dreams*, Pastor Larry Crabb claims that we are motivated to seek God's face only when we have lost everything else that is secure in our lives. Pain is often the pathway to greater understanding of

God. Pastor Crabb also charges that our churches are full of people who are altogether way too comfortable to seek God's face.

As Rev. Crabb writes, "Satan's masterpiece is not the prostitute, drug addict, or the bum. Satan's masterpiece is the self-sufficient person who has made life comfortable, who is adjusting well to the world and likes living where he/she is, who longs only to be a little better" "and a little better off" "than he/she already is." This idea clashes with the American Christian view that security and comfort are blessings from God. Maybe, just maybe all this security and comfort we speak of are just masking our spiritual deadness. God's calling takes us out of our comfort zone in order to build our character.<sup>ii</sup>

God doesn't make sense. One of my good friends and I would like to think best friend, who took part in our wedding has a sister who rejected anything to do with God. My friend would talk to his sister and yet she continued to turn from God. My friend's mother would tell him to pray for her, pray that God would send someone into her life to help show her, her need for a real relationship with God. One day this godly woman was outside in her yard when a stranger came and brutally raped her. I say brutally

because before he left he took a screwdriver and took out her eyes so she could never identify him.

She finally recovered from her attack and was able to go home, but family and friends struggled with why this would happen. Why; why would this happen to such a godly woman. My friend and his sister along with friends would stay with her and assist her so she could stay in her home and not have to leave.

One day while I was there with my friend this woman told me of how her daughter had turned her life over to God and was now living her life for God. That's enough right there to praise God, but it was what this woman said next which has stayed with me and haunted me. She said "Kevin, if it took this event, the rape and lose of my eyes to help my daughter see God more clearly then it was worth everything." God doesn't make sense because of our limited view of God. This woman now blind saw and still sees and understands God more clearly than any of us.

Just yesterday I read about this young girl a senior in high school, Alyssa Josephine O'Neill. On Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> Alyssa called her mother and asked her to go to Starbucks, the coffee chain, because she wanted to try their new

Pumpkin Spice Latte. They never got to go; because the next day Alyssa died from an epileptic seizure.

Alyssa's father said "We tried to think of something that we could do that would be a little bit positive." He and his wife, Alyssa's mother Sarah, went to their local Starbucks and bought Pumpkin Spice Latte for themselves, as well as the next 40 customers. All they asked that they write #AJO on the cups, and explain to the customers why their drink was free.

What this couple was not expecting was that customers who received their drinks would respond the exact same way, by paying it forward. Soon enough, the O'Neill's #AJO campaign spread throughout their community, the country, and the world.

Next thing you know, someone donating \$600 at a different location, "It just spread like wildfire." said Alyssa's mother. The acts of kindness in Alyssa's memory aren't limited to the seasonal beverage. The O'Neill's hope that people will be inspired by this to do other good deeds to help improve the lives of others. Alyssa's mother said "Just take the five minutes out of your day to do something nice. It doesn't have to cost you a dime." Her father said, "We'd like to pay it forward and try to make everybody a little bit

of a better person, because that's what Alyssa did.” Why would God allow someone so young to go?<sup>iii</sup> We can't see it or understand it because our vision of just who God is much too limited.

We miss so much because we are limited in our thinking. We say they are too young to understand God, or I am too old to do anything. Age is not and has never been a deciding factor in the call of God. King Uzziah and King Josiah were only sixteen when they sought after God. In contrast, Anna was 84 when she was called into service. God first called Abraham when he was 75 years old - yet Isaac was not born until Abraham was 100. For a quarter of a century, his last quarter Abraham remained steadfast in his active and living faith, trusting in the faithfulness of God to the established covenant he promised.

Instead of trying to fully understand God with our limited vision just step out in faith. Trust God with everything and in everything. Let me close with Romans 8:28 *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

You are called, now by faith are you ready to go?

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<sup>i</sup> Randy Frazee, *The heart of the Story; God's Masterful Design to Restore His People*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2011) pp. 35-40.

<sup>ii</sup> Larry Crabb. Shattered Dreams (Waterbrook, 2001). Cited in Leadership, Fall 2001, p. 119.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://shine.yahoo.com/ellen-good-news/parents-pay-forward-pumpkin-spice-lattes-221300973.html> accessed 9/2013.