



STEP 1: GOING WHERE GOD COMMANDS

Over the next few months we're going on an adventure! We're going to be looking at the life of someone who lived circa 4000 years ago – a man who stepped out in faith, and started a journey that has inspired 3 religions, changed the lives of billions, and paved the way for the coming of Jesus.

Who is it? Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. But also the spiritual father of everyone who puts their faith in Abraham's God. And a picture of what that faith actually looks like. Let's take a look at how his journey begins:

Genesis 12:1-9

The Chinese philosopher Confucius is reputed to have said: "The journey of 1000 miles begins with one step." Faith, too, is like a journey that requires a step on our part – and that is certainly the case for Abram. At God's command, Abram takes his wife Sarai and their servants, leaves the city of Haran in Mesopotamia – SE Turkey – and heads for a land that God has prepared for them. The land of Canaan.

But this is more than just a physical or geographical journey. It's a spiritual, personal journey. And you can see it in God's command to Abram. In the Hebrew of vs1, there's a tiny preposition between "Go" and "from your country," which is rarely, if ever, translated. The entire phrase is *lekh-le-kha*, which literally means, 'Go to you.' So a word-for-word translation would sound like this:

"Go to you, from your country, your people, and your father's house, to the land which I will show you."

Let's think for a minute about what God is saying here:

1) "Go To You ..." What does that mean? It means "Wake up to yourself; see yourself as you really are." A bit like the prodigal son in Luke 15, who 'came to himself.' Abram might not have realised it – or been willing to admit it – but this is the kind of person God was dealing with here:

- **Idolater.** The people of Mesopotamia had a bunch of gods and goddesses. And none of them true!
- **Coward.** Almost as soon as he arrives in Canaan, Abram runs away to Egypt to escape a famine.
- **Liar.** He pretends – not once but twice – that his wife is his sister (suffice it to say, it does not go well!).
- **Cheat.** Not only is Abram a liar, he manages to con both an Egyptian pharaoh and a Canaanite chieftain.

Glowing! One of the mantras of today's world is "Be true to yourself." The Bible says, "Be true *about* yourself." Be honest. Because journeying with God means realising we are not the people we could / should be. Think Moses (Exodus 3:6), think Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5); think Simon Peter (Luke 5:8).

What about you? Have you 'come to yourself' yet?

2) "From Your Country, Your People And Your Father's House ..."
I.e. God calls him to leave his past behind him. To turn his back on the world he has always known.

It's quite common to hear people say, "I can't help it – it's my background" or "it's my culture." Or "I can't help it – it's how my friends act" or "how my friends talk." Or "I can't help it - I was born this way," or "I've always been this way," or "my mum was the same," or "my dad was the same."

I.e. we make excuses for staying as we are, where we are.

But God doesn't call us to make excuses – He calls us to change direction, take a step of faith, and embrace the future He has for us. And that means we have to be willing to let go of the past, of what's familiar, safe, comfortable, and trust God enough that we allow Him to do His work in us.

No matter how risky or scary or crazy that may seem.

In order to go somewhere, you have to be willing to leave somewhere. Have to. So let's pause for a moment and ask ourselves: "Where am *I* coming from? What is God asking *me* to leave behind?"

3) "To The Land Which I Will Show You." Not just the geographical land of Canaan, but a place of legacy, of honour, of security, of blessing. You can see it in the promises God makes here. He promises:

- **A place of legacy.** Father of a whole nation (pretty remarkable considering Sarah couldn't have kids!).

- **A place of honour.** His name will be 'great', respected by billions of people, thousands of years into the future.
- **A place of security.** God promises to look after him and those who bless him. And deal with their enemies!
- **A place of blessing.** To us. Because through Abram's family tree the Saviour of the World would be born.

I.e. God doesn't just see us as we are, He sees us as we will be. And He has the power to transform us into that 'will be' (Ephesians 1:3-14 stuff). Some of us here are spiritual parents, leaders of God's people, owners of talents and abilities galore, and channels of blessing to those around us – but we've never trusted God enough to discover it. Or use it.

Do you know who you are, who you *really* are? In Him?

Stepping Out In Faith

So Abram obeys God, takes his wife Sarai and all that they have, and travels 500 miles south until God tells him to stop – in Canaan.

But that's not where the story ends. It's not even where the story begins. It begins with God calling Abram, making Himself known to him – an act of grace, a goodness he doesn't deserve. Before Abram leaves Mesopotamia, before he even starts to believe, God speaks to him. Which is why the first thing Abram does when he arrives in Canaan is what? Build an altar, and give thanks (vs6-9).

The point is: it's God who initiates it all. Everything else from here on is an outworking of that. But -

For Abram to fully unlock all that God has for him, he has to respond. He has to be willing to risk everything. To come to himself. To turn his back on his past. To discover this God and what this God wants to do with him. And so must we. Let's imagine for a minute: what if Abram had never left Mesopotamia? Where would we be now?

No Abraham. No Isaac. No Jacob.

No nation of Israel. No tribe of Judah.

No King David. No Davidic line.

No Mary and Joseph. No Jesus of Nazareth.

I.e. there would be no salvation, no blessing of the nations. And no us! To quote another journey-er, Neil Armstrong: "One small step for (a) man ... one giant leap for mankind"!

Like Abram, Jesus is calling us all – higher, deeper, closer.

Will you go?