

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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The Dusty Road To Canaan

Dear Friend,

Recently, I found myself reading the account of the man named Abram as he followed God into the vast unknown. It is certainly appropriate timing for me to be reading about this man of faith considering the fact that Debbie and I have made a very similar commitment to follow God into the vast unknown land of Knoxville, TN. Just like Abram, we too have no idea what God's exact plan is for us here, other than knowing that we are to share the love of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world wherever we go.

In case you are not familiar with Abram maybe you will recognize him by the name God gave him after they entered into a covenant relationship; Abraham. But, their entering into covenant didn't happen immediately. There were many things that had to take place prior to God entering into a covenant relationship with Abram. In this lesson, we want to look at a few of those things to see what we can learn and apply in our own lives.

Sadly, Christians often discount the events of the Old Testament and miss valuable lessons that would help them understand more about their heavenly Father. Yes, Abram was spiritually dead so God did have to deal with him a little differently than He deals with us who are born again, children of God. Yet, the fact remains that Abram had to have faith in God's word in order for God to work on his behalf. We too must have faith in God's word in order for God to work on our behalf.

God doesn't do anything outside of faith being released in His word. We might think He does, but we would be wrong. Christians want to try and beg God to heal them or bless them and those faithless prayers fall to the ground void of any power to come to pass. As much as God loves us, He can only do what we have faith for Him to do, faith that comes from His word alone. (Romans 10:17)

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Another trap that Christians fall into is “wishing” God would do something for them. This is just as much a trap as begging God. When we “wish” God would do something we do not believe that it is already done according to His word. “Wishing” puts the event off into the future. Believing it is done because God’s word says it is done puts the event into the here and now. Faith is now. Abram had faith in God and took God at His word and it all began with God’s first command to Abram. (Genesis 12:1)

‘Now the Lord had said unto Abram, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.’ ”

For us today living in a world where international travel is commonplace, this command from God might seem pretty simplistic. In the US, we travel from one state to another effortlessly and consider visiting other countries a pleasure instead of a chore. Taking a promotion to live across the country or around the world is just part of living in our modern world. That was not the case for Abram.

This command from God to leave his country and family and separate himself from his father’s house was the equivalent of financial suicide. In Abram’s day, the family unit was what provided financial stability to its individual members. Collectively they benefited from each other’s efforts, protection and family loyalty. For a person to separate from the family unit meant they were on their own to fend for themselves in an unforgiving world, where only the strong survived.

Besides that, there were no grocery stores or hotels along the way where they could stop and rest or get a bite to eat. Whatever they had with them or could kill along the way was their food supply. Tents were their shelter. The comfort Abram and Sarai knew before was now a thing of the past as they headed out into the vast unknown with no idea what the future would hold.

Look at these words, ***“unto a land that I will show thee”***. Whether we are dealing with an Old Testament figure or New, these words from God could just as easily be spoken to us today. In fact, Debbie and I can attest to the fact that God is still directing people to leave all they know and follow Him. He revealed to the two of us, individually, that He wanted us to move to Knoxville, TN. God did not give us all the details as to what He wanted us to do here. We have some idea, but nothing concrete. What we know for sure is this; we are in the land He showed us and He will lead us step by step into His perfect will.

I believe God wants us to appreciate some details in Abram’s experience that are generally overlooked. In other words, let’s really get inside of Abram’s head, if you will, and consider what he must have contended with in himself in order to follow God. Abram was a person like you and me. He needed food and shelter

for himself and his wife. There were no Cracker Barrels or Holiday Inns awaiting him along his path to provide him with food and shelter. In fact, there were no highways or cars to carry him safely to his destination. He traveled along dusty paths with no state police to protect him. God would have to become his protection.

Think about how Abram's thoughts must have raced the moment he heard God tell him to leave everything and everyone he had ever known behind and head out on a journey to an unknown place. Generally speaking, people do not like "change". Our soul likes everything to stay exactly the same from one day to the next. Christians often fanaticize about "one day" following God. But, like it or not, in order to follow God we are going to have to be willing to take steps into the unknown and do things we may have never done before. We are going to have to be willing to break out of what we have come to know and trust in order to step out and follow God.

Don't you think Abram had to have some reservations? Sure he did! I wouldn't be surprised if Abram didn't think God was asking too much of him. Here is a clue that shows the struggle Abram obviously had. By beginning to read Abram's account in Genesis 12:1 we can easily miss some very important points that we must consider. Look back at Genesis 11:31-32.

"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there. (32) And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."

What we see here is Abram's father responding to what God had commanded Abram to do, leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land God would show Abram; the land of Canaan. Apparently, Abram told his dad what God had commanded him to do. Maybe Abram was looking for something from Terah, like moral support or encouragement. Terah took it upon himself to pull up stakes from Ur of the Chaldees and go with Abram to the place God commanded Abram to go. They also brought along Lot, Abram's nephew. Was there anything wrong with this?

It was not what God said to do!

Why did Abram allow this to happen? Why did Abram allow Terah to interject himself into God's plan? Apparently, Abram was struggling with completely obeying what God asked him to do. Maybe he was afraid of the unknown?

Maybe his financial insecurities weighed on him like a noose around his neck? “God, what are we going to eat? Who is going to protect us? What financial security am I going to have out there all alone?”

It wasn't until after Terah died that Abram was able to proceed with his journey. (Genesis 12:4)

“So Abram had departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”

Notice, Abram was not departing out of Ur of the Chaldees, he was departing out of Haran. God had given Abram the command to leave his country and kindred when he was still in his country, Ur of the Chaldees. So, what did Abram's disobedience cost him? Did Abram's disobedience result in their extended stay in Haran until Terah's death? If that is the case, then Abram's choice delayed God's plan in his life.

Why didn't Abram just obey God from the beginning? I believe Abram disobeyed God out of fear. As a result, his fear temporarily altered the execution of God's plan for him and could have permanently changed history had he not chosen to leave Haran after Terah's death. How many people do you think would have come apart like a cheap watch following such a devastating blow like the death of a dearly loved father, the patriarch of the family? But, to Abram's credit, he chose to follow God even though he still wasn't completely obedient because now he brought along his nephew Lot.

We can become “Monday morning quarterbacks” and say; “Well clearly Lot was supposed to stay in Ur of the Chaldees with Terah”. Yes, in hindsight that is most likely exactly what should have happened, yet it didn't. Apparently, Abram's insecurities got the best of him. Even at that, God was still able to use him. Following Terah's death, Abram didn't run back to Ur. Instead, he headed out to follow God. Praise God, Abram didn't give up.

The dusty road to Canaan was just as daunting as ever. The dangers were still there. The “unknown” was just as “unknown”. For us today, we might think; “One of these days I'm going to do what God wants me to do. Maybe, when the kids are out of school? Or, maybe after I retire and I have all my finances in order? Maybe, I'll wait till all my family agrees with me that this is God? Maybe, I'll wait till I have all the details, all the money I need, everyone is in favor of the plan, then I'll go?” No, just face facts, if you are waiting on any of these things,

you are going to live and die in Haran and all that God intended for you to accomplish for the kingdom will be lost.

This is not meant to condemn anyone, but for some of us it is time to face the cold hard truth. We have been barely surviving in Haran long enough. Our land of Canaan, whatever it is that God has set out in front of us to do, is awaiting us. Our dusty road to Canaan might be filled with all kinds of scary unknown situations, but at some point we must be willing to face our fears and refuse to spend the rest of our lives frustrated in Haran afraid to go on into all God has for us in Canaan.

We can tell you from experience that there will be uncomfortable times ahead of you when you strike out down your dusty road to Canaan. You may find yourself selling your beautiful home, traveling across the country and having to stay in a hotel until God's next step for you is made known. Are you willing to leave the comforts of all you have come to know and love to follow God into the unknown? Following God always requires faith, and it also requires your willingness to do what might not be comfortable for the sake of obeying Him.

I encourage you take a good long look at where you are today and ask yourself if you are in Haran, Ur of the Chaldees, or are you somewhere on your way to Canaan? The most fulfilling place you will ever be is where God wants you to be, doing exactly what God wants you to do. But, to get there you will have to leave "normal" behind and head down that dusty road to your Canaan.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins