

The **Call** of God  
The **Response**  
of the Faithful

September 28, 2008  
Genesis 12-21 (12:1-3, 15:1-6, 18:1-19, 21:1-7)  
The Call to Go and Trust

*“Abraham did not become our exemplar in faith by having it explained to him but by engaging in a lifetime of travel, life of the road, daily leaving something of himself behind (self-sovereignty) and entering something new (God-sovereignty).”*

- Eugene Peterson

“Sent to Follow”

Don Huddleston shared the giving and receiving of blessings with people in Tijuana. He encouraged us to watch for the places where we can be generous and trust that God will help us be generous.

*A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.*  
Proverbs 22:9

*Faith designates a way of life that takes place in an intimate web of visible and invisible, silence and speech, light and darkness, chaos and cosmos, knowledge and mystery, God and us. It is far too complex to explicitly define or explain. And since all the dimensions and elements are re-configured uniquely in each human soul, there is not immediate model that can be copied or followed. It cannot be predicted or programmed; it can only be realized by participation, by setting out and continuing on a journey, a way, the way of Abraham, the way of faith.”*  
- Eugene Peterson

**To Get Started . . .**

John described the story of Abraham and Sarah as a “Quest Story.” Do you have a favorite “Quest Story?” Share about a key character or scene in this story?

Share one thing from the sermon that really spoke to you.

**Read the attached text. It walks through the story of Genesis 12-21 using some passages of scripture and some summaries.**

Identify all the places God makes a promise to Abraham and Sarah.

Mark the places where God gives instructions to Abraham and Sarah and circle the verbs in that instruction.

What do you learn about God from this story?

What do you learn about humanity from this story?

**Apply It**

In what ways is the story of Abraham and Sarah similar to your story?

Tell about a time you responded to God’s call to go (literally or figuratively). What did you leave behind?

*Abraham responds to God’s promise and blessing with faith. And, because he knows he is blessed by God he is able to be generous and bless others.*

Allow some time of silence for everyone to write a list of the ways they are blessed.

To what degree do you really believe yourself as blessed?

In what ways do you have trouble being generous with these blessings? Is it trust that holds you back, uncertainty about how to share this blessing, or something else?

Share with one another ways you are able to bless others from your blessings.

In what ways do you find purpose in your life by being a blessing to others?

**Pray Together!**

Take a moment of silence to consider what you are passionate about – what you love to do. This is something you are blessed by.

What can you do this week to be generous with this blessing in a place of scarcity? Ask God to help you be generous.

**Live It**

- Spend more time letting God speak to you through the example of Abraham - Read Hebrews 11:8-12 and Romans 4
- How did you do last week in spending more time talking with God than about him? Keep talking with him!
- Watch for places to be generous.

## **Genesis 12-21 (New International Version) – text and summaries**

### **Chapter 12 - The Call of Abram**

1The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go 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.

3I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”

[Abram chooses to leave and takes his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, with him. They move from place to place. During this time God promises to give the land occupied by the Canaanites to Abram’s children (Gen. 12:7) and Abram becomes very rich (Gen. 13:2) but he does not have any children. After many years, Abram and his household get caught up in a battle between the kings of the region (Gen. 14).

### **Chapter 15 - God's Covenant With Abram**

1After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:  
“Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your reward will be very great”

2But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”<sup>3</sup>And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

4Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”<sup>5</sup>He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

6Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

[Many years later Abram and Sarai still don’t have any children and make a plan for Abram to have a child with Sarai’s maid, Hagar. This child is named Ishmael (Gen. 16). Several more years later God reminds Abram of his promise with him and establishes a covenant with him. Through the covenant Abram’s name is changed to Abraham and Sarai’s name is changed to Sarah. The practice of circumcision is also established (Gen. 17).]

### **Chapter 18 - The Three Visitors**

1The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.<sup>2</sup>Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

3He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.4Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.5Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”  
“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

6So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs (That is, probably about 20 quarts, about 22 liters) of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

7Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.8He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

9“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.  
“There, in the tent,” he said.

10Then the LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.11Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.12So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my husband is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

13Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’14Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”

15Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”  
But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

16When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.17Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?18Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.19For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

[Genesis 19 & 20 includes a couple more stories that further define this journey as one of disobedience and obedience; faith and unbelief; judgment and promise.]

## **Chapter 21 - The Birth of Isaac**

1Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.2Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.3Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.4When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him.5Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”7And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”