

"Go!"
(Genesis 12:1-9)
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NIV Genesis 12:1-9

¹ *The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household 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.*

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

⁴ *So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.*

⁶ *Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

⁸ *From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*

⁹ *Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.*

For every Christian there are two callings or invitations that God gives. The first is the calling to sonship. This is the calling of adoption. It's the calling of relationship to God. It's the calling of salvation. Unless a person receives this calling, they cannot even be a Christian. Every person who is a real Christian, is one, because they have been called by God to be one. This is without exception.

Many Christians, for various reasons, think that this is the only calling that they are to receive and respond to. However, there is still another calling, a second calling that goes out to all who've received the first calling. This is the call to mission.

Now let me make an important distinction and at first it may seem like theological hair-splitting, but I hope you'll see why this distinction is important. It's the distinction between *mission* and *missions*. What's the distinction? *Missions* is that enterprise which means going cross-culturally to engage in the work of sharing the gospel with people who have yet to hear the gospel. This is what we mean when we say, "Young Nak Church is very missions minded."

Mission is engaging in the work of the gospel in all its totality. It would include serving the church you are in, submitting yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, helping the poor in your city, loving your neighbor, being a positive witness in your workplace, raising a godly family, and so on. *Mission* is a very broad term. *Missions* would fall under the broader umbrella of mission.

It's an important distinction. God has called all Christians everywhere, every single one of us who are Christians, first to sonship and then second, to mission (which includes missions). Let me give you a couple scriptures.

Mark 8:35

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for **me** and for the **gospel** will save it.

Mark 10:29

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for **me** and the **gospel**³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.

So you might be a Christian that thinks for some reason that you're exempt from the second calling. You're not. In actually you're not exempt from the calling, you're disobedient to it. Oooo, that stings doesn't it? Well it's true. I believe God would want us to soften our hearts, to listen to his voice with the ears of our heart, to the calling that he has for all of us. The first calling to be his son or daughter is always followed up by the second calling—a calling to Go!

I want to warn you. Many of you are going to feel uncomfortable this month, because every speaker is going to challenge you with this calling.

The Lord of the call.

Who is it that's calling us? It's God. It's our Creator. It's our Heavenly Father. It's Yahweh, the covenant God, God of promises, God of blessings.

I remember when I was growing up dreading whenever my dad called my name. Because it was never for anything good. It almost always meant that I was in trouble. My dad woke up early and left for work very early. And he would always rail on us about losing stuff whether it was our keys or wallet or whatever. And he'd always say things like, "when you use something, put it back where you found it" for a tool or kitchen utensil. And then he'd say, "be like daddy. Wallet in back right pocket. Keys in left front. Coins in right front. If you always keep it there, you'll never lose it." So it was one of those mornings and my brother and I were fast asleep warm and cozy in our beds and we hear the thundering call of our father. "John, Peter, wake up!" And we're thinking we're in big trouble. So while we're scraping the cobwebs off our eyes, he standing near the front door, all already to go to work, and he bellows, "where's the shoe horn!?" So off we run to do a mad search for the shoe horn and I think my brother and I were thinking. "Man, we have to find it or he'll be so mad." But at the same time we're also thinking, "Man, if we find it, he'll probably smack us with it." It was a no win situation.

I wouldn't doubt if many of us think that if God were to call us, that it couldn't be for something good. He's calling me because I've done something wrong and he wants to have "a talk." Or we may be thinking that if he calls me that means he wants to mess around with my life, to rearrange everything, just to give me a hard time. So this fear of losing control of my life or not getting the life I've always wanted or perhaps there's the fear of losing what I've attained, or the change from a comfortable life to what I perceive would be an uncomfortable life. And in the midst of all these

worries, we forget, once again, who it is that's giving the call. Who is God to you? Is he your enemy? Is he getting back at you? Is he out to spoil your life?

Late last year, Linda and I made one of the best parenting decisions of our lives. We're quite proud of it actually. We decided that our three kids, aged 16, 14, 11 will do their own laundry. Now why did we do that? Well, because Linda hates doing the laundry. Now we won't deny that that's not true because it is. She in fact dislikes the folding of laundry. But another reason for why we did this is because we love our children. We don't want them to be responsible. Now they are beginning to learn their own personal laundry schedule. We want them to understand that clean laundry doesn't magically appear every few days by the laundry fairy. We know that some day they'll be on their own and will have to do it themselves. Now here we are, sinful and imperfect as parents, dumping the laundry duties on our children under the guise of teaching responsibility to our children. How much more so with a God who loves us with a perfect love, who has forgiven us all our offenses, who has invited us into a Father-child relationship, who wants to make us into all that he's created us to be, he said that he send his Son and that his Son came to give us a full rich life. And all this was made possible because he sacrificed his own Son to death on the cross, so that our offences would forever be erased. It is this God that is calling you.

Once we know who it is that is calling us, the rest are just details.

The Details of the call

The call has details and a lack of details.

¹ The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

Here are the details. Go from your country, your people, your father's household. You see the progression? From general to specific? But we might look at that and say, that's definitely not specific enough.

Then there are the lack of details of the call.

God tells Abraham, Go to the land I will show you. Which land? Which direction? He doesn't say...yet. He just says, start packing and start moving. Which for us implies some really important lessons—that in our waiting for more specifics we might in fact, disobeying. We need only to obey what's been revealed. Not what has yet to be revealed, right? We can only obey what's been told us. And God in his wisdom only reveals things to us on a need-to-know basis.

Now why does God do that from time to time? Sometimes he gives some pretty specific details and other times he doesn't. Why is that? I think the main reason is to generate trust. God doesn't reveal everything, the end result, every detail because he wants to teach us to utterly depend on him, step by step. This is the means to the best life.

This was how it worked for Linda and me. We had been married less than a year and I would soon be graduating from seminary and I knew I needed to find a full-time gig somewhere. So every night we prayed. Lord guide us. Lord lead us. Lord show us the next step. Man those were exciting times. And one day I said to Linda that I sensed God was calling us out of our Sweet Home Chicago. And her response was, "me too." That's all we got at that time. Leave Chicago. So we kept praying...and the next prayer was "where?" And I think at this time God was testing us with this. "Will you really go wherever I ask you to go (Canada)? And will you do

whatever I ask you to do?" And we said yes and yes. Lord whatever, wherever, we're yours. May 1, 1995, we drove our moving truck, vehicle in tow through Detroit and into Windsor. God never said to us. "Now look here's the plan. 8 years as youth, and then you'll get a bit restless, but don't worry, at that time the current EM pastor will move back to the States, and then I'll have the church invite you to be the EM pastor and..." He never works that way because he wants us to trust him. In trusting God he can do far more in and through us, than he could if we knew all the details.

The call always involves the leaving of what is familiar and comfortable.

Adoniram Judson was a pioneer missionary to Burma in the early 1800s. He was one of the first, if not the first American overseas missionary. And before he left for Burma via India, he asked his future father in law for his daughters hand in marriage and the letter to him went like this.

"I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home, and died for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?"

This story is not too far from my own story. When I was in university dating Linda, I was pursuing bio/pre-med. I think Linda's mom was thinking, "hold on to this guy, we'll soon be in the money." But as I sensed the call to be a pastor, thankfully Linda was fully behind me and knew to some degree what she was getting into. I painted for her a bleak picture of the life of a pastor, myself not really knowing what the picture was supposed to look like. But she hung in there. Well at some point Linda's mom must have asked her, "What's Peter up to? How's his pre-med? And she must have told her that Peter is going to be a pastor. Because soon after my wonderful mother in law, whom I love, started setting her up with other men, knowing full well that we were seriously dating.

I know people today who say the same thing. They tell their sons, be anything but a pastor. And they tell their daughters, be anything but a pastor's wife.

The calling of God is not to pastoral ministry or to missionary service exclusively, though it can be. The calling of God is to the ministry of the gospel. This is everyone's calling. It's a calling to leave the comfortable behind, implying what? You cannot do both! You cannot pursue comfort and the gospel at the same time. Leaving your comfort zone can mean asking someone at the cafeteria, you mind if I sit here and strike up a conversation. Leaving your comfort zone may mean stopping the hoarding of your money and sharing it instead. Leaving your comfort zone may be the ceasing of excuses and just obeying. Leaving your comfort zone may be downsizing your life, so you can be less tied town and more mobile and more free to respond at a whim to God's call. Brothers, sisters, let me look you square in the eye and ask you, "when was the last time you were put out, inconvenienced, bothered, sacrificed, because of your response to the call?"

Finally, let's look at the Blessings of the call.

These blessings are both personal and cosmic. This is the nature of God's blessings. There's always a personal aspect where the blessing really touches you and blesses you. But there's always a cosmic, beyond me aspect to God's blessing, that we often times forget. It's like the kid at Christmas who's so excited about the present she received that all she can think of is hiding her gift under her bed, so that no one can steal it, none of her siblings can touch it. I think we're often times like that with our blessings. Listen to God's blessing to Abraham.

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.

³ 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 first, Abraham was blessed personally in many ways.

Financially—Land, cattle, property, servants. He became a very wealthy man.

Family—He was given children. And his descendants grew and grew and grew.

Spiritually—His spiritual blessings were first and foremost his salvation. In Genesis 15:6 it says,

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

He had a deep and intimate relationship with God.

He was led by God throughout his journeys

He was invited by God to be a part of his plans.

The blessing of knowing he will be a blessing.

David. Who am I?

¹⁸ Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said:

"Who am I, Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? ¹⁹

And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant—and this decree, Sovereign LORD, is for a mere human!

²⁰ "What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign LORD. ²¹ For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant.

²² "How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears.

These blessings that Abraham received personally from God are amazing.

For each one of us, we too have been blessed in so many countless ways. We don't have the time to list them all. You know what they are.

But at the same time his personal blessings were the launch pad to cosmic blessings. God says to Abraham,

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

All the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you! This is an unfathomable blessing. How was that going to happen? 1. Through a son—Isaac. Through a nation—Israel. Through a savior—Jesus Christ. Through a new people—the church. He's talking about us. You and I

being here, saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in this church, receiving this calling, is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Meaning what? God will always keep his end of the bargain! He will always fulfill his promises.

So for us too we are called to mirror our personal blessings into cosmic blessings—to be a blessing to others. This is the call to mission and to missions.

There are 7 billion people in the world today.

Over 300 million Arabs. 68% of the population are unreached.

Over 150 million Iranian-Median peoples. 99.4% are unreached.

1.5 billion South Asian peoples. 91.4% are unreached.

170 million Turkic peoples. 97.7% unreached.

Joshua Project tells us that there are almost 17,000 ethno-linguistic people groups on planet earth right now.

7000 of them are unreached. 2.84 billion people on planet earth (41.6%) do not have a self sustaining Christian witness among them. 2.76 billion live in the 10-40 window (10-40 degrees north latitude). North Africa, the middle-east, India, China, SE Asia, Japan, Indonesia, North Korea are all there.

This is the final frontier to which God is calling the church to go and penetrate.

Friends, most all of you have responded to the first call of God, have you responded to the second? Go.