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## Genesis 11:27-12:9

*The Genesis of God's People: Into The Unknown*

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### Introduction: (S1)

1. J.R.R. Tolkien wrote a little book called *The Hobbit* that changed literature forever.
2. At the beginning of the book a wizard named Gandalf travels to hobbit town to find a burglar.
3. He needs a small stealthy hobbit to help him go on a great quest, and he asks Bilbo Baggins to join him.

"I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone! I should think so — in these parts! We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!" — J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

4. Has God invited you on an adventure, and you've been telling him no, it'll make me late for dinner?
5. Today we're reading the story of God inviting a man named Abram to leave everything and follow him.

### I. God invites you into the unknown. (Gen 11:27-32) (S2)

#### A. Abram knew God's plans a lot less than he thought.

1. Abram's family worshipped the wrong god; in Ur there was a ziggurat to the moon god Nanna.
2. Abram's father Terah is named after the Hebrew word "yerah" which means "lunar month."<sup>1</sup>
3. Sarai, Milcah, and Laban all have names that reference moon deities and worship in some way.
4. Abram worshipped the wrong God but God chose to save him anyways (like Noah).

#### B. How well do you know God's plans?

1. Chances are, we know God's plans a lot less well than we think.
2. We know about God's **big plans** by reading the Bible, going to church, and seeking to obey him.
3. We try to know God's **personal plans** by praying and listening to the direction of the Holy Spirit.
4. God gives us opportunities to be apart of his **big plan** by changing our **personal plans**.
5. Knowledge about changes to experience of when God invites us to follow him.

(God invites you into the unknown.)

### II. God invites you into the unknown by faith. (Gen 12:1-3) (S3)

#### A. God invites us into the unknown by faith. (12:1)

1. The very first thing God says to Abram is a command, "Go!..."
2. He tells him to leave his homeland (country), friends (people), and family (father's household).
3. God is asking him to give up his identity and security so that he can find new ones in God.
4. God calls us to forsake something good, so he can give us something better.

#### B. God promises three blessings to Abram: place, people, presence, each is received by faith.

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<sup>1</sup> New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis Chapters 1-17 by Victor P. Hamilton (page 363)

- (1) **Place**—“Go... to the land I will show you.” (S4)  
a. **Abram receives the blessing of place by faith.**

**Hebrews 11:8** By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. (NIV®) (S5)

- b. The land God leads him to is Canaan, the future home of the nation of Israel.
- c. Abram knew God was promising a “place” that is something more, an eternal homeland.

**Hebrews 11:9a, 10** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country... For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (NIV®) (S6)

- d. Abram only received the blessing of the promised land because he believed.
- e. He believed enough to obey—his faith was an active faith, not just mental assent.

- (A) If you’ve purchased a house recently, you know it can be a stressful experience. (\*S7\*)

- a. Imagine a realtor shows up at your door unannounced.
- b. He takes you to the most beautiful house in all of Westford.
- c. He unlocks the door, takes you in, and shows you around.
- d. The family who owns the house is eating dinner, but he doesn’t seem to care.
- e. He says, “I’m going to give you this house, all you have to do is move in.” (squatter)
- f. What would you do—what you believe and move in or call him a madman? (S8>)

- (2) **People**—“I will make you into a great nation... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

- a. The word “nation” is used to describe foreign states (Egypt, Babylon, Assyria).
- b. God is promising a people that far surpasses Abram’s familial ties or nationalism.
- c. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth—Shem’s family became the semites.
- d. Ham’s family became the Canaanites, the historic enemies of the semites. (Gen 9:25-27)
- e. God is promising Abram a family that even encompasses his enemies. (serpent’s line)
- f. **Abram receives the blessing of people by faith.**
- g. Sarai was childless and too old to have children (Gen 11:30)

**Hebrews 11:11** And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. (NIV®) (S9)

- h. At the time, Abram is 75 years old—they’re both elderly. (Isaac is a miracle)
- i. The only way they’re going to receive the blessing is if God supernaturally intervenes.
- j. They type of faith they have is actually resurrection hope—life out of death. (same as us)

- (3) **Presence**—“I will show you... I will make you... I will bless you.” (S10)

- a. God is promising Abram that he will walk with him into this uncertain future.
- b. It’s a long walk, about 500 miles from Haran to Canaan (month’s journey).
- c. It’s a dangerous walk, the land of Canaan is full of his historic enemies.
- d. But if God walks with Abram, he’ll be safe.
- e. He arrives, builds an altar, and worships, acknowledging that God is with him.

f. I'm coming back to God's presence in a moment, just remember place, people, and presence.

(B) Where is God asking you to **go** by faith?

- a. Maybe he's asking you to move, to start something new, to recommit your life to Christ.
- b. If you repent and believe in Jesus, you receive that same eternal homeland as Abram.
- c. If you know your homeland is secure, there's no place you shouldn't be willing to **go**.
- d. When we go, we get out of our comfort zone, and that's when God uses us.
- e. In 2009, I moved from CO to VA because of a job, and I thought I'd gone far enough.
- f. Then God called me from VA to MA... (place, people, presence)

(God invites you into the unknown by faith.)

III. God invites you into the unknown by faith so that you might know Him. (Gen 12:4-9) **(S11)**

A. God is the blessing.

1. The first three verses say the word "bless" or "blessing" five times.
2. Remember in Genesis chapter one God blessed people?
3. What was the blessing? It was God himself walking in the garden with people.
4. When did we lose God's presence? When Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out.
5. God is restoring his presence to us, not through works, but by faith.
6. Verse 7 says, "The Lord appeared to Abram..."
7. He heard God, and when he obeys God, he gets to see God.

B. Gary was a 34 year old employee at the U.S. Department of Justice.

1. He had a wild dream to found a non-profit to fight injustice all around the world.
2. He'd worked on his plan for three years, but had to actually step out in faith.
3. The act he remembers most is walking into the Department of Justice and turning in his badge.
4. He tried to be "very brave and very safe" by asking for a "yearlong ... absence" but they said no.
5. He got very nervous and very afraid, but he realized it was his pride; his kids wouldn't starve.

*When I am [older], do I really want to look back and say, *Yeah, I sensed that God was calling me to lead a movement to bring rescue to people who desperately need an advocate in the world, but I was afraid of getting embarrassed and so I never even tried?...**<sup>2</sup>

6. Gary Haugen founded the International Justice Mission that now has a \$47 million endowment.
7. They fight sex trafficking, forced slavery, child abuse, and more all over the world.
8. The reward of stepping out in faith is getting to see God in action.

C. God uses our faith and obedience to bless others.

1. God tells Abram that he's going to use him to bless all peoples on earth—that's a big promise.

**Galatians 3:8** Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (NIV®) **(S12)**

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<sup>2</sup> Sermon illustration via [PreachingToday.com](http://PreachingToday.com)

2. The "Gentiles" are all those "nations" who aren't Jewish.
3. What is that gospel God was preaching to Abram?
4. He was promising a special descendent would come through Abram and bless us all. (S13>)

**Galatians 3:16** The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. (NIV®)

5. God is the blessing that came in a baby named Jesus to rescue any who would trust in him.
6. Just like Abram, Jesus obeyed God on a long journey through life, even to death.
7. He died to pay the penalty for your and my lack of faith and obedience.
8. He rose again in victory over and sin and in triumph to new life.
9. Now if you put your faith in Jesus, you get his perfect faith on your life.
10. Knowing that you’re safe in Jesus, gives you the **courage to go**.

D. How might God use your active faith to bless others?

1. It would be pretty cool if God is calling you to become a missionary in a foreign land.
2. It would be pretty cool if God is calling you to share Jesus with the next cubicle over.
3. It would be pretty cool if God is calling you to change careers so that you can change lives.
4. It would be pretty cool if God is asking you to step out in faith and serve at Cornerstone.

(God invites you into the unknown by faith so that you might know Him.) (S14)

Conclusion:

1. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo initially turns down Gandalf’s invitation to go on an adventure.

“Then something [courageous] woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.”  
— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

2. If you’ve turned down God’s invitation to walk by faith into a new adventure, it’s not too late.
3. You can go and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword.
4. God invites you into the unknown by faith so that you might know Him.

**Hebrews 13:20–21** Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV®)