

Explore: When God calls

October 2, 2015

• *The Explore the Bible lesson for Oct. 18 focuses on Genesis 12:1-9.*

There is no biblical evidence of God calling anyone to something easy. If we could press play on the DVD of Abraham's life, this is exactly what we would discover. Even just the first verse of our lesson screams out four things most people do not want to do:

1. Leave your land.
2. Leave your relatives.
3. Leave your father's house.
4. Go to the land I will show you.

Leave your land

In the ancient Near East, leaving your land was much different than what we think of as simply moving. Even in our modern world, who really enjoys the moving process? I would gladly flip hamburgers for a lifetime long before I would work for a moving company. But for Abraham, leaving his homeland meant a change of language. It meant he would lose his livelihood, as he literally would have left his land behind. His land would have been used to raise livestock, to farm and to produce. It goes far beyond our "move-to-another-city" type thinking. Moving for Abraham and his family would have been extremely difficult and costly.

From outward appearance, God already had blessed Abraham. Now, God called him to a very difficult task, but one in which he would be even more blessed. Abraham was faithful and obeyed.

Leave your relatives

This also was quite different than in our time. Leaving your relatives meant you probably never would see them again, depending on the distance you were traveling. The nation God established through Abraham was fiercely loyal to family. Just read Matthew 1. Later, Israel would be called to honor fathers and mothers in the Ten Commandments. In its original rendering the fifth commandment had nothing to do with little children obeying their parents. That's Paul's biblical addition in Ephesians 6. It had everything to do with grown adults ensuring their aging parents were well take care of. Leaving your relatives meant not only your family safety net would be gone, but more importantly, it meant your own parents could become destitute.

But Abraham was faithful and obeyed.

Leave your father's house

Leaving your father's house meant you likely were leaving behind financial security. To drive this point home, think about Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. Do you remember what happened? The prodigal broke normal protocol by asking his father to give him his inheritance while the father was still living. This was an immeasurable insult. So for Abraham, he was walking away from financial security. He was walking away from an inheritance. He was leaving the potential of comfort for the great unknown.

We all understand having parents around, even when raising your own children, can be very helpful. Do you remember the TV show "The Waltons"? The entire family lived under one roof. The married couple, their children and grandparents were all together. This was very common just a few generations ago.

This is exactly what ancient people in the Near East would have been like. It's why we find verses that say things like "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and all your household." The "household" even included servants or slaves. They were considered, to some degree, part of

the family, for they were part of the household.

Leaving the household meant to leave more than just your parents. It meant to leave your immediate community.

But Abraham was faithful and obeyed.

Go to the land I will show you

This phrase reminds me of family vacations when I was young. About half of the time, my dad wouldn't even tell us we were getting ready to go on vacation. We would just wake up one day, and my dad would say: "Pack up. We are going on vacation." Sometimes, we would even get in the car with no idea where we were going. This wasn't because my parents wanted to surprise us, but because my dad literally didn't know. He would get behind the wheel and say, "Let's see where the wind blows us." But, we always had a good time.

Who would ever do this in moving? Answer: Abraham and his family. They were so incredibly faithful to God. But God was so incredibly faithful to them. Agreeing to "go to the land I will show you" showed enormous faith on the part of Abraham and Sarah. I imagine if God said go to a certain place, it would have been much easier, not nearly as stressful. But to not know the destination—and to follow God regardless—showed amazing trust and strength.

But Abraham was faithful and obeyed

Our calling to be faithful

When you consider all of these points, from a human perspective, it really doesn't make sense. From a human perspective we can ask, "Who would *really* do this?" Most often, what God calls us to not only is difficult, but seems impossible. That is the point: What seems impossible for man is

possible with God.

So, those missionaries God is calling to Africa, only God can do that. And the church that is desperate to turn around, only God can do that. And that family member who is a prodigal, only God can turn her around.

Our calling is simple: Be faithful to God's call. He will do it, even the "impossible."

Application ideas for your Bible study group:

1. What difficult thing has God called you to do in the past? What was the blessing for faithfully following? What difficulties did God overcome for you?
2. What difficult thing did God call you to, but you did not obey? What was the result of disobedience? What kept you from being faithful to God's call?