

## Are We Supposed To Be Friends?

Genesis 12:1-9

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Can you imagine being 75 and moving 500 miles and starting over,  
a new life,

a new job,

knowing no one,

owning just what you brought,

Imagine doing that without knowing why you were going –you were just asked to  
having no job,

no destination set,

just going to a place you would be shown?

Can you imagine doing this because someone told you to do it, someone you hadn't met  
before?

Today we are going to look at a man and a family that did this, started over at age 75. The Bible has a lot of stories where God tells a person to do something or go somewhere, some even at what might be considered a ripe old age, and they do it. Moses was 80-81 when God told him to go to Egypt and get God's people and take them back to the land of promise. For the next 41 years Moses did just that. Joshua was over 60 when God appointed him to take Moses' place, which he did for 50 more years.

Today, we'll meet another oldie –75 year old Abram, living in Haran, a caravan stop on the Silk Route between China and Eastern Europe,, a place of world commerce. Haran is in modern day Iraq, and the events we will look at took place in about 1925 BC, long before they had cars or planes. They walked and rode on camels, 10-12 miles a day, slowly moving with herds and tents and lots of people, for several hundred miles.

Abram was going to a place he had never been, to do something he had never done, at the direction of someone he was just learning about, a new friend, the Lord God of all. Let's listen to Abram's story in Genesis 12:1-9

- 1 The Lord 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 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 (Christ reference)
- 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 Haran.
- 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran, 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 (Abram) built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.
- 8 From there he went on to 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.

There are some words in this text that I have highlighted for the viewers. They tell the story of what God was doing in this episode.

**Go**—God said, and Abram **went**,

**Blessed**— God **blessed** Abram 7 times,

Promised—God **promised** the land to Abram's offspring.

In time Abram realized who it was that was calling and sending him, so each time he stopped, he built an **altar**. From then on Abram **called** on the name of the Lord.

Abram is a great teaching story for us. When God calls, we are supposed to say yes, and go. Going and doing!. Obedience—Abram's obedience to God's call. Faith-, Abram's faith – believing in God and relying on God. Trust-- Abram's trust –doing what God asked. Abram didn't have to; Abram could have said no, or let's try that later, or I'm too old, or I'm not sure it will work. But he didn't; he listened to God, he went, he did what God challenged him to do. He took the risk. He went to a foreign land, he settled among foreigners, and he always worshipped the Lord, always, never saying, I've done enough, or I'm going home. Abram was chosen and commissioned, but for what he knew not.

Go, God said, and I will go with you.

Go and I will show you what I want you to do.

Go and I will bless you and all that you do.

That's the way it is with God—God will come to us, call us, send us, go with us, lead us, show us, use us, bless us, if only we can hear when God calls, and if we will but say yes and go and do. As God did with Abram, so God is willing to do with us, if we will but listen and say yes. As with Abram, the journey will be more than we ever could imagine. But, we have to say yes.

Another point in this story is the theme that permeates the whole of Scripture, God wants us to be friends, not the TV show idea of Friends, not Face Book kind of friends, but friends in the Biblical sense, two people in a relationship that lasts no matter what!

The word friend, which is at the heart of every relationship, has a long history as a word. Back ten thousand years ago when Indo-European was the language of all peoples from the edge of China across to western Europe, the root word for friend contained the three letters-- "P-R-I" or "pree, or phree. As the word morphed into our language today through its Latin, Greek or Nordic root languages, the "P-r-i" became "free" and then "friend." The idea behind the word was freedom, meaning you were free to choose who you liked, who you hung out with, who you loved. With family you have an obligation to love, after all, they are your relatives, people of the same blood or married to them, even



though you might not like them, but with friends, you are free to choose who you will like; you are not in bondage, you don't have to have anyone as a friend; it's only the ones you choose who are the ones you love. They are your friends. And that's where relationships are formed.

Something we should note about a friend--The more experiences you share, the more time you spend together, the closer, the deeper, the relationship becomes. Friendship requires work and effort; it doesn't just happen. It's a time we take down the walls and let others into our bubble, let them see us naked--remember Adam and Eve? They realized they were naked after they ate the fruit, what that really means is they realized how much of themselves they had exposed to God, their friend.

Now, think about your friends—I am sure you have some, that if you didn't see for a while, or were separated for a period of time, as soon as you got back together, you would pick right up, right where you left off. That's how friends are, that's how relationships work.

Remember, this word friend has at its root the idea of choosing, of loving freely. Friend is a word we should associate with God, a word we should use to describe what our relationship is and should be. We don't have to love God, we don't have to worship God, we don't have to walk with God, we don't have to do what God hopes we will do. We are free to say: NO. Abram was free to say no, and stay in Haran, but he didn't, he listened, and when God said I want you to go, Abram went. What an extraordinary act, listening, believing, relying on that belief—it's the definition of faith--, Abram went. He didn't just say yes and then not go, Abram went. No qualifications, no hesitations, no provided this or that happens first, no ifs! Abram went. God called, God said go. Abram listened. Abram went.

So where are you? God is calling. Are you listening? Are you making time for God, every day? Are you hearing what God is asking of you? Are you ready to go or is there something that has to be shown or proven or cleared up or explained or guaranteed, before you can just do it? That's what faith is! Just doing what God asks!

God wants us to answer yes, wants us to go, wants to go with us, wants to show us the way, wants to send us. God wants us to be friends, but God will not force it. Can you remember your parents setting up a play time for you with someone you didn't know or like? Friendships can't be forced.

Now, I want you to think about your close friends. I want you to think how many close friends you have ever had. Sure, we have had hundreds, maybe thousands of acquaintances, people we know, but how many close friends do we have or have we had? The kinds of friends you can always talk to, always pick right back up with, always tell whatever it is that you want to, even the most intimate or serious things! Friends who will listen, friends who don't judge, who just love you as you are, who will always be there, who only want what's best for you! Not parents, not family necessarily, not bosses or teachers, Just friends, no matter what, friends, who will always be there, who will always come, who will always help! That's what God is asking of us. Can we be friends? Can we be in a relationship? Can you trust me, and accept me, and listen and respond willingly with a yes?

Scripture is full of stories of men and women who were God's friends. Adam and Eve, Noah, Enoch, David, Isaiah, Solomon, Paul in the New Testament, the Apostle John, and the greatest model -- Jesus. Jesus came to show us what the model ought to be for a friendship with God, --you see, Jesus always made time for God, always talked with God, always listened to God, always walked with God, always tried to do God's will, not because he had to, but because he wanted to. The theme of friendship is in the beginning with Adam and Eve, it is all the way through Scripture, and it will be our joy in the end when God comes and lives with us.

Christ at the last supper told his disciples that they were not just there to serve him and support his ministry, but they were his friends, and he said it even more pointedly when he said you will really be my friends, if you do what I asked of you, that is, to love one another, as I have loved you.

I want to close with words from James 2:23, where James is writing of Abraham's great faith. James writes:

2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it (his belief and response to that belief) was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the "friend of God."

Wouldn't that be a wonderful epitaph for our tombstones –God's friend. All we have to do is say yes, and then act like a friend –by loving, freely. It's not too late. Ask now, pray now, "Jesus, come into my life and change me, Take me away from my separation from God. Let me walk with my new friend and hear his voice." If you will do this every day, you too will be in relationship with our friend God.

### Genesis 3

- 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He (the serpent) said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"
- 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat from the trees in the garden,
- 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"
- 4 The serpent replied, "You will not certainly die.
- 5 For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened. And you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
- 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.
- 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
- 8 Then the man and the woman heard the sound of the Lord as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.
- 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"
- 10 He (Adam) answered, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."
- 11 And he (God) said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"
- 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it."