

Created and Called - Genesis 12:10-20

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- **We need to make sure we read the Old Testament in the proper context**

- It is not a collection of stories with little morals attached to them
- There are often objective descriptions of events that may or may not have some spiritual lesson hidden within
 - Can't "force" something that isn't there
- If we are going to pull anything out of an Old Testament narrative, we have to be sure it is consistent with the rest of Scripture

- **Initial observations**

- We see God very active at the beginning of the story, calling Abram out of his pagan life
- He then continues to be active as Abram travels into the land, we see him saying "to your offspring I will give this land" (v. 7) and Abram builds an altar to the Lord
- In verse 10, we see God somewhat disappear from the narrative
 - Odd that God would be so active in bringing Abram and his family into the land and then immediately be okay with them leaving
 - We can make an assumption that it was probably not God that called Abram out of the land even though there was a famine there
 - At the very least, we do not see any indication that Abram consulted with the Lord before taking off for Egypt
 - This decision to go to Egypt cause a downward spiral of deception

• **Walk through the narrative**

- **We see this journey that Abram has begun in faith is soon tested by famine**
 - Abram is described as a hero of the faith elsewhere in Scripture, particularly in the "hall of faith" in Hebrews 11
 - He has taken a great step out in faith to follow God, but now that faith is tested by a decision point - the famine

- **At this point, Abram decides to take a step in fear and head to Egypt**
 - Is this objectively wrong? No.
 - Common for this area due to the wealth and plenty found in Egypt
 - Wrong because it is done without consulting the Lord or listening to his voice
- **Does not appear that Abram was planning to stay in Egypt**
 - Hebrew word *gur* meaning “sojourn”
- **Before he gets to Egypt, Abram hatches a plan to keep himself and his family safe, a plan that seems pretty odd**
 - Culturally, powerful rulers would simply take what they wanted - including wives!
 - This conversation must’ve started pretty well - “you are so beautiful...”
 - Sarai must have been very beautiful - her 60s translate to our 30s-40s
 - Not technically 100% a lie - Sarai is Abram’s half-sister
 - Common in Bedouin nomadic tribes
 - Was Sarai in on this? Probably not - most women don’t want to be dangled out as bait to keep their husbands safe
 - This is not the last time this will happen
 - Abram and Isaac both called their wives their sisters
 - Genesis 20, 26
- **The plan backfires**
 - Abram and his family aren’t able to sneak in and out of Egypt
 - Although they had to hope Pharaoh would just leave them alone, he didn’t
 - Sarai is taken into Pharaoh’s harem
 - We are not sure what their endgame was...
 - Abram profits greatly because of Sarai, but he has also lost his wife and the promise of the offspring
- **Consequences**

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- God finally intervenes, after Abram has messed everything up in an attempt to preserve what God had promised them
 - Isn't God's grace amazing?
- Pharaoh and his household are plagued with some kind of skin disease, and find out somehow who Sarai is
- Pharaoh is angry, and justifiably so, at least as much as a ruler that kidnaps women can be
- He sends Sarai back
 - It does not appear they have had a physical relationship yet - most scholars agree
- This has to be an awkward ride back to Canaan
 - "Abram's lack of trust in God (doubting that he would keep his promises) had reduced him to a scheming, small little man. This great giant of faith had become, for the present, a very small man. And he felt it." - Kent Hughes
- **Principles from the story of Abram going to Egypt**
 - The motivating factor behind Abram leaving the land that God had given him and going to Egypt was fear - fear that his family would starve
 - God had just said that he was going to give this land to Abram and his offspring
 - Abram has followed God in faith up to this point
- **Fearful decisions tempt your heart away from God**
 - **Principle #1: Uncertainty tempts us to fear**
 - "transition from the plane of faith to fear" - Derek Kidner
 - The unknown causes us to be afraid - and to make plans that will clear up the unknown
 - We try to determine "God's will for our life" in times of uncertainty - often using circumstances to try and figure it out
 - **Dangerous to try and figure out God's will through circumstances alone**
 - Parallel between principles found here and in James 4

- Read James 4:13-17

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—
14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. **15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. **17** So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- We are uncomfortable not knowing what's next
- This discomfort can easily become fear, especially if there is danger present
- James is clear that plans made apart from the Lord are sinful, even if they appear to be rational
- We may even think that we are doing God a favor
 - Abram had gotten a promise from God - and in his mind he may have been trying to protect it
 - God is able to fulfill his promises without our meddling
 - **You cannot say you want to know God's will, and then plan away any possibility of him revealing his will to you**
- **Principle #2: Fear controls us**
 - We do not typically define fear for what it is
 - In our culture, fear has a lot of names ("wisdom," planning, being a good steward, etc.)
 - We *always* want to think we can control our fear but our fear winds up controlling us
 - We will never be "done" being afraid
 - Abram arrived at a place where he never thought he would be
 - He wandered off into the loneliness of fear-based decisions, having to make more and more decisions and deceptions to protect himself and his family
 - Involving God in our decisions keeps us from letting fear control us - fear and God cannot coexist

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- We can see how fear has led us into places that we never thought we would be
 - Personally
 - Culturally
 - Politically
 - Fear is like a drug - just ONE MORE decision and then we'll let God take over
- **Principle #3: Fearful decisions have consequences**
 - Just because everything turned out alright in the end, Abram's deception still had consequences
 - Embarrassment and shame
 - Jeopardized the very promise he was trying to protect
 - Strife with the herdsmen of Lot
 - Tension over the Egyptian maid Hagar
 - We cannot think that we will escape fearful decisions unscathed
 - There is more at work here than just fear - there is a spiritual element
 - Satan is at work trying to derail God's plan (a "roaring lion")
 - Satan attacks and exploits mankind's weaknesses
- **Principle #4: God's plan always comes to pass**
 - Fear is sinful
 - But just as God's grace can cover our other sins, it can cover this as well
 - We see how God protects his people and keeps his promises - sometimes in spite of his people
 - Philippians 1:6

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
 - Matthew 6:25-34
 - We move from fear into repentance as we recognize the marvelous love of the Father that calls us into a relationship built on love, not fear

- 1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

- We have a God that loves us and desires for us to seek him, and not take fearful steps based on our circumstances

- Conclusion

- There is hope for you in the knowledge that the love of God conquers all our fears and that he desires to lead you
 - Fear is a cruel master, it drags you from here to there based on whims and circumstance
 - The will of God is sure, and although it can be hard to know exactly what to do, we can be sure in a few things that we know the Lord desires of us. As we lean further into our relationship with him, our “plans” and their importance begin to fade as we move our focus toward the Father
- Romans 8:26-38