April 25/26, 2015

The Unknown is a Worthy Adventure

Creative Encounters That Changed Things

Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21

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Good morning! It's good to sing together with you this morning. I don't know what kind of week you've had. For some of us, it's been a crazy week. You come in here (whew!); take a breath. I know we've had a pretty big week with the youth. We've got a big high school event—*The Finale* this afternoon, which you are all invited to if you'd like to come. Some of you guys went to the concert that was here on Friday night and had an incredible time. Some of you guys have work stuff going on, family stuff going on.

The last couple of weeks we've been challenging us all to stop from the noise and the businesses to get silent before God and look for new and creative ways that we can encounter Him. We've been looking at creative ways that God encountered us people—humanity—through Scripture. This morning we're going to look at that again. If you'd like to turn to Genesis, Chapter 12, that's where we'll be looking.

I don't know if you're anything like me, too. When I was little, I used to lie in bed at night and I'd stare up at the ceiling, and I'd try to get a grasp on how *big* God is, and it would just blow my mind. I would try to think of eternity: How can time never end? I'd start to think of God's power—this limitless power. I'd continue to think about his omniscience and His omnipresence and all the "omni-things" that God is. And I would just think this God is SO big, and I couldn't wrap my mind around it, so I would just fall asleep.

It seems like the older I get, the more I try to limit God—smaller and smaller and smaller. It seems like different situations happen or I get caught up in my routine, and all of a sudden I've got God in this small little box, and I put Him on the shelf at times. When I need things, I come and get Him. When I get in other situations, I look at my box and go, *"I don't know if God is big enough for this one."* But I want to encourage you and remind you today that we serve a *big, big* God. Would you pray with me?

> *Father, thank You for moments like this when we can stop; we can pause; we can open up Your words; we can be encouraged and challenged. God, I pray that this morning we would have a posture of heart that is open and willing to hear from You. God, we are asking You this morning: Would you speak to us? God, we don't just want to hear it; we want to listen. We want to follow through. We want to walk out of this room changed, having an experience, having a time where we've heard and we've met with You. God, we want to be moved, so we're asking that You would do that this morning. We pray this in Your name, Amen.*

If you're in Genesis chapter 12, we'll start in verse 1. It says this:

Now the LORD said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house
To the land which I will show you;" (*NASB, Genesis 12:1)

Okay, let's stop for a second. It seems like we're kind of just dropped right into the middle of a story here. So what's coming before this? Where is this at? Who is this Abram guy? Well, as we look at chapter 11, we find that we've just come from the story of this *Tower of Babel*. Humanity has kind of come to this point where they think: *I am in no need of God. How about we build this tower—in a sense this tribute, this monument to ourselves and our greatness, that we can make a name for ourselves?* They decided: *Rather than go God's way, let's focus on us. I think we would be a better god than God*—which is really nothing new. If we think back to the beginning of time, Adam and Eve were faced with a similar choice. They thought: *You know what—I think I'd like to be like God.* Or their son Cain comes with an offering, and as he comes with his offering, God tells him to do it one way, and he decides: *Oh, I've got a better way.* He gets mad at God for not accepting or appreciating his work with it. Actually, he gets so frustrated that he ends up killing his brother, Abel. You remember the story; it's nothing new.

But then Adam and Eve have another son, Seth. Now it's interesting. In chapter 4 of Genesis it says that in those days the **men began to call upon the name of the Lord**. Seth heard the stories from Mom and Dad, heard the stories about how God would come and walk with them, realized how *big* this God was, and He ventured out in step with them. But none of us are justified with God because of our families. Not one of us is right with God because of Mom and Dad, or Grandma and Grandpa, or someone else. You see, this personal relationship with God is an immensely personal thing.

And so we find in Genesis 11 that it goes from this spiraling downward to this genealogy—this list of names, and oh, we love lists of names like this, don't we? We spend hours in them just reading through how long were they alive, and who had who? And we're going through these names—or else you just flip the page—one or the other. But we get to this list of names and it goes through this, but about verse 27 in chapter 11 this genealogy switches up a little bit. It's not just a list of names that connects Abram to the events that have taken place before him. Actually, it's something very different. It's an introduction to what's to come. And in verse 27 we meet a man named Terah. It tells us that Terah is Abram's father. It tells us that he lives in a place, a land, a city called Ur.

Now a very interesting thing is when I think of Ur, I think: *Oh, it's probably some city in the desert somewhere.* But Ur, at this time, was an incredible city—incredibly advanced for that time. I've heard it said that they even developed some kind of central heating system for their homes. They had libraries. This was the place to be. Every modern amenity at that time was found in Ur.

But Ur was very interesting because Ur was also known as the center of pagan worship. In fact, one of their main gods was this lunar god, this *moon* god. And as we read through this list of names—Sarai, others—it seems like their names were even derived from these gods.

So they continue to spiral down. In fact, it tells us that Terah, whose son is Abram, his father was Shem, and his line went all the way back to Seth. Remember what we said about Seth? What we find in Joshua 24:2 says:

> **...From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, *namely*, Terah, the father of Abraham, the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.**

It shows us that there is a spiraling down. Humanity has decided to go their own way, do their own thing. And to put a period on this hopelessness, we look in Genesis 11, verse 30, and it says **Sarai, Abram's wife, was barren; she had no child**. Now the first readers would have been reading through this, and they would have been on the edge of their seats. *"Oh, what is going to happen?"* The last family that had any knowledge of this living God, that has served this God in any form, has now turned to other idols, turned to other gods. And not only that, there is no next step. They've come to the end of the road. It seems like there's a dead end.

Now just sit in that for just a minute because we've all been there. We've all been in those spots where we get to the end of the road and it seems like there's no other way. That's it. But the beautiful thing about this is: This is not a story about Terah; this is not a story about Sarai. It's not even a story about Abram. This is a story about God, and this story is a way bigger story. So we come to verse 1 (chapter 12) and it says this: **Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go."**

Now it's interesting that he says to, **"Go,"** as we get into this intro from here. The actual word here is, *"Get thee out." Okay, from where you're at, get out.* But then he goes on to tell him to, *"Go. Leave your country, your relatives, your father's house. Leave the place where you live, the people that you know, your family. Leave it all."* But not just that, he's going to tell him where to go. *"And go to a place I will show you."*

Isn't that like God? He tells them more about the things he already knows than what He's asking him to step into. *"Leave all this." "God, I know what You're asking me to leave. I see it; I feel it; I know that. But I don't know what you're asking me to step into."* But He tells him to go, and it's interesting that He says, *"I will show you."* God is actively going to walk alongside Abram through this journey.

In verse 31 it appears that the whole family of Genesis 11 had set out at some point. They've gotten as far as Haran but they stop there. I'm not sure why they stopped. It could have been that Haran was a lot like Ur—the fact there's a lot of the same worship that was going on there. It had some of the similar amenities, similar city. I'm not sure. Maybe it was a little more predictable or comfortable. Maybe it was that Abram was waiting for his aged father. I'm not sure what the reason was. But the author makes the point that the object that we're supposed to see, the main point of this is not that they'd stopped, but it was that he was *going*.

So why would Abram go? Why would he leave this stuff, and why would he go? Well, in verse 2, maybe this gives us some of the answer. He says:

> **"And I will make you a great nation."** (Vs. 2a)

"So is the reason He's asking me to go is so I can be great—so I can be a great nation?" It's kind of humorous because they have no kids, right? Sarai is barren. In the *Tower of Babel* these people were just trying to be great themselves, so the point wasn't probably for Abram to be great. Maybe it was another thing, because he goes on to say:

> **"And I will bless you,**
> **And make your name great;"** *(your name: Abram)***.** (Vs. 2b)

Now some of you guys have been confused already because I've said *Abraham*, I've said *Abram*. Who is this guy? Is this the same person? What's going on here? The best way I've heard it explained is Abram means *Father* or *Daddy.* And Abraham means *Father of many,* or we could say *Big Daddy*, okay? So Abraham is the same person as Abram. God gives him the name *Abraham* down the road. Is it so that his name would be great...so that everyone would know about him?

The interesting thing in this story is the greatness of Abram came *after* his story had finished. Who would have thought at that point that all these years down the road we would sit in Lincoln, Nebraska, and talk about this guy named Abram? Who would have thought that three of the major religions of the world, the majority of the population of the world would call Abram the *Father of their faith*? Was the point that Abram wanted to be great or he wanted his name to be great? I don't think it was that. In fact, people in chapter 11 were trying to make a great name for themselves. So it had to be the blessing. Yeah, that's it. It's gotta be the blessing, because:

> **"And I will bless you,**
> **And make your name great;**
> **And so you shall be a blessing;**
> **And I will bless those who bless you,**
> **And the one who curses you I will curse.**
> **And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."** (Vs. 2-3)

Apparently this blessing is a big thing. No one is going to receive God's blessing apart from His blessing through Abram. So this must have been it—the blessing—because we all love blessing, don't we? Oh, we love blessing! We pray for blessing a lot. "*God, would you just bless us? God, would you just heap it on us?"* Think about your prayers. What do you pray? We pray, *"God, would you give me that good job? And, God, would you make my kids behave? And, God, would you make me comfortable? And, God, while you're at it, would you give me a good retirement? Would you give me that big house, and security?"* And we just want to sit in familiarity, with comfort and security. And we say, *"God, I'll follow you anywhere,"* and then we just want to kind of drift through our lives in this comfort and security until one day we fall asleep and we kind of wake up in heaven.

Do you think of that? Think of security? Now, security is not wrong. Security is not the wrong thing. Comfort is not wrong. It's where are we looking for our comfort. Where are you hoping for in your security, your safety? What is it that makes you feel safe? I am no more safe in my living room at home than I would be on a narrow mountain trail with God if that's where He asks me to be.

Why would Abram want to leave this comfort, this familiarity, the things that he knows, the security? William Wallace said, "Every man dies, but not every man lives." And if we're not careful, we can walk through life seeking comfort, familiarity, security, and miss out on living. Because there's somebody else who left. Jesus left. He left His security, His comfort, His familiarity, and came so that we may have life, so we'd have it to the fullest.

So Abram is sitting here now wondering, "What am I gonna do? This is gonna involve change?" See, blessing is not the point. If we just seek to live a life to be blessed, we're going to feel empty. God only blesses us so that we can bless others. That's a huge point! So He's given each of us gifts and abilities, talents, time, stuff—all of which we can use to bless others.

So he's faced with a choice: Should I go, or should I stay? Now, if I stay, there's comfort, right? There's perceived stability. There's safety. But if I go, there's blessing. There's sacrifice, because going will always cost you something. There's risk. But if I stay, there's boredom; there's status quo; there's perceived security. If I go, there's risk; there's hope; there's adventure. If I stay, there's familiarity; there's control. If I go, there's fear; there's change; there's trust.

Now this change that would happen, we all say is something we love. I'd say I love change, but then when things really start to change, I start to get uncomfortable. Just think of your normal weekly routine. How much of your normal weekly routine looks exactly the same? You might say, "Ah, not that much." Yeah, I know for some of you, if you would tell me that, I would say you are wrong. You know why? Because last time I was up here, I saw some of you in the exact same spots. In fact, I can find you there every week.

A pastor told a story about his family growing up. It was in a church much like this. His family went to church one Sunday and as they walked in, they all walked in together. He was a little kid, and he saw his parents go to "*their seats*". *(laughter)* And as they walked in to their seats, there were some visitors there, and they were sitting in *their seats*. *Ohhhh!* And so the mom looked at his dad and she said, "What do you think we oughta do?" Now, there were 2,000 other seats that they could choose from. His dad looked at his mom and said, "I think we oughta go home." And they did! They left and went home!

We don't like change. Try doing stuff different this week. Try putting the other shoe on first. Try putting your other leg through your pants first (and get somebody to spot you). Try to drive a different way to work. Try to go to a grocery store in a different spot. In fact, most of us, if we find ourselves at different times going to the grocery store, and then we find ourselves halfway to work because we just kind of went on autopilot and started driving that route that we always go.

Change can be tough. Change can be difficult. When God asks Abram to step into something different, it's challenging. But you know what I'm finding? I'm finding that there is no other way that I grow so beautifully and so intimately with God is when I step out of my comfort zone, because I realize it's not about me. I realize it stretches me and it challenges me, and it takes me to those places that I haven't gone.

One of the big reasons that we decided several years ago to move to Lincoln, Nebraska, is because we thought: This is going to be different. We thought this is going to be way different than what we've been doing. This will be different than what we know. This is gonna stretch us, and quite frankly, we're just not equipped for what it is that we're gonna be doing. But I feel like that's the exact spot that God wants us to be in because it forces us to depend on Him.

My wife and I have told each other we want to intentionally continue to position our lives in spots that are going to stretch us and challenge us and grow us. Whether it's large things or small things, we want to continue to seek that out.

I have a relationship with a friend. He's a great guy. They've recently had a young daughter, and they invited us to this party. Now he's moved here from Africa. He's still learning the language and still getting acclimated to just a lot of things in America. So this was a celebration with all of the "fixins" from back home. In fact, as my wife and my kids all walked in, we stood out a little bit in the setting. Everyone else had the traditional clothes on for celebration. When it came time for the food, we kind of walked up to the table and thought: *I don't even know where to begin. Let's just go with this.* It was some of the most unique stuff we've ever seen. In fact, one of the kids came up to me. He must have noticed that I didn't quite fit in. He said, "Hey, do you speak Arabic?" I said, "Nope." Then he goes, "You can't be here unless you speak Arabic." And I thought, *"All right."* So I asked him to teach me a word, so he told me *Hi.* I said, "There. I speak Arabic." *(laughter)* We started playing some soccer and he forgot all about it. It was all good. You know, we were a little uncomfortable throughout that celebration of about six hours but it was good because it stretched us. It challenged us.

What are you doing right now in life that if God doesn't show up, you're gonna fail?

So Abram went, even though he wasn't holding his son in his hands, even though the realtor hadn't given them the keys to their home in Canaan, even though he had no idea of this danger that he was going to face when they got into Egypt, or his fears they faced. They stepped out and they went. So it says:

> **So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.** (Vs. 4)

He's no spring chicken, and going doesn't make him any younger. Verse 5:

> **Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.**

Notice they took *everything* with them. This was a one-way trip. They weren't turning back. God had said to go, and they were ready.

> **Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite *was* then in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD**

who had appeared to him. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev. (Vs. 6-9)

And they lived happily ever after. Right? Keep reading. In the next verse we find famine. (Of course!) And then they go into Egypt, and he has this great idea: *My wife is beautiful. I'm scared of what Pharaoh will do. "Honey, let's just tell him you're my sister*." Because of his fear it lands him in some trouble. He ends up with he and Lot down the road, separated out. In fact, he has to go at one point to rescue his relatives that have been taken captive. And then he gets to the point where he's in this battle with the four kings from the north.

Going isn't always easy. It's not always safe, as we think of it. But it's worth it.

So if you would turn with me to chapter 15, we go through all of these pieces, and then we get to the spot where in verse 15 it says: "**After these things**…" After what things? After the first recorded battle in the history of Scriptures? After he's just waged war and God's given him the victory?

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram… (Genesis 15:1)

You go, *Okay, I get it. This guy has actually got it easy because God keeps actually literally showing up and telling him things. If God showed up literally to me and showed me things, I would do it.* Right?

Do you realize the last time that God showed up and spoke to Abram in recorded Scripture that we have was when he was 175? And then in the recorded Scripture that we have, there were eight other times that God showed up and had conversations with Abram—eight other times in his whole lifetime! We wake up every day with God's Word and God longing to continue to speak to us.

It reminds me of a prayer that my son said when he was four. I went into his room and was tucking him into bed. And as he lay there, I just prayed for him, and I remember praying, "*God, would you continue to have Asher just seek after You, to follow You with all of his heart? Would you have him to live his life for You?"* So after I get done praying (he's four at this point), and he says, "Daddy?" I say, "Yeah?" He said, "Can I pray?" I said, "Okay." And so he started praying: "God, will you talk to me so I can hear You when I follow You but I don't know where you went?" *(laughter)* I thought this is so brilliant because often times I feel that way.

But Abram was sent out by God, and God said, "I will be with you." Not only that, He met Abram in those times when he needed to hear from God. It wasn't on Abram's timeline all the time. In fact, God knew where Abram was at, at this point. He came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram. I'm a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. Don't fear."

What are the things that you fear in stepping out of your comfort zone and the change that could happen in doing something big for God? What are the fears that hold you back? Is it what other

people will think? Is it that maybe I'll get into it and I won't really like it? Is it that I'm going to fail? What holds you back?

The pastor that founded this church, Curt Lehman, was an incredibly wise guy, and he said this: "Growth produces change, which can lead to insecurity. Insecurity leads to fear and, unchecked, fear can lead to inactivity and immobility. Fear can put you back on the couch. And if you're not careful, you'll live your whole life in fear on the couch."

God shows up and He says, "*Abram, I'm with you. Don't be afraid. I'm your shield. You've just been in battle, but I'm here with you, and it's going to be worth it. Your reward is going to be great."* Verse 1:

> **..."Do not fear, Abram,**
> **I am a shield to you;**
> **Your reward shall be very great."**
> **Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."** (Vs.1b-3)

In other words he's saying, "God, this servant that I have is going to be my heir." He's probably speaking of the servant that also shows up in chapter 24. "I have no kids. You've promised me this, but nothing has changed up to this point. I'm still childless." I'm so grateful that we have a God that can take questions, because then he goes on in verse 4 and says:

> **Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."**

It seems impossible, but God is going to make the impossible possible. Verse 5:

> **And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."**

I love it how God continues to answer Abram. God says, *"Hey, Abram, I want you to go." ("Go where?") "I'll tell you later. I want you to go to this land that I'm going to show you later."* He says, *"I'm going to give you a son." ("How? I'm old. My wife's barren. It's impossible.") "Ahh…you'll see."* And then once he has the son, He says, *"I want you to take your son and I want you to sacrifice him."* And he says, *"Why?"* God says, *"I'll tell you later."* And Abram becomes this incredible man of faith. God doesn't spell it all out. He gives him what he needs at the point that he needs it to keep him dependently walking together with Him.

If you've ever been outside on a really clear night in Nebraska, where there's no other light around, and you look up in the heavens, you see it exploding with stars. I wonder what Abram was thinking that night as he thought, *"This is crazy! I don't know, God, how You're going to do it, but I trust You. I believe in You."* In fact, the next verse says:

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Vs. 6)

You see, you can believe *in* the Lord without believing the Lord. I do it all the time. I trust in God; I'm following God, and I get to a spot where, "*I feel like I'm going to kind of just sit back and worry about this, because, God, I know You tell me not to worry about anything but instead to pray about it. But I don't know if I trust that; I'm just going to worry about it for a bit."* I get in other spots where I say, *"God, I don't know that I'm equipped. I know You tell me You can do everything through me. You're going to give me what I need, but I don't know that I have this."* You can believe in the Lord without actually believing what He says is true.

But Abram believed. He followed. Verse 7:

And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." (And Abram comes with more questions.) **He said, "O LORD GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?"** (Vs. 7-8)

And then this is where it gets good. Hang with me, because what God does next blows my mind.

So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. (Vs. 9-10)

What in the world is going on here? If this were me, I totally would have heard what God said. *"Go get me these animals and then come back."* And I probably would have been like Abram. I would have just said, *"What do I do? I'm gonna cut 'em up?"* And so I cut them up and then God shows up and says, *"Why did you cut these animals in half?" "I don't know. I thought we were grillin' out. I'll find some duct tape. I'm not sure…" (laughter)*

Actually Abram knew exactly what was going on. We don't have a lot of this to compare to in our culture. We live in a written culture. Abram lived in an oral culture. In that day and age, covenants were made by this means. So when I wanted to make a covenant, I wanted to come together with someone else and covenant before them, I would take an animal and I would cut it from nose to tail on opposite sides, place it apart. And as I was "covenanting" with these other people that were with me—often in that time maybe it was a king or a lord and a servant— and the lord would go through and then the servant would walk through the middle of these. And it was a pretty graphic thing as they're stepping and splashing through the blood of the animals, and they're seeing them on each side. And as they pass through they're saying, *"If I don't keep my covenant, may what has happened to these animals happen to me."*

And as Abram is setting this up, he's realizing: *Oh man, this is a two-person thing because God promised me that He wanted me to go and that if I went, He would bless me and He would, through me, bless the whole earth. And He would give me this land and He would make a great nation. But now God is going to ask me for a covenant that we're both entering into. He promised me, so I stepped out in faith.* But where is He going to go now? Then verse 11:

The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror *and* great darkness fell upon him. (Vs. 11-12)

He's sitting there thinking; the consequences of not keeping a covenant are pretty great. Then in this dark place God speaks of these dark things that are going to happen:

God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." (Vs. 13-16)

Amorites were the majority of the population and the predominant group that was in Canaan at that time. So He gives him this picture. It's almost as though He says, *"Hey, I'm gonna give you this home, this estate, but it's not going to come into your family until four generations later."* But He's spelling out more of this picture that He's painting before him, although all the pieces are not yet there. And then it goes on in verse 17:

It came about when the sun had set, (after Abraham's been sitting there, thinking about it for a long time) **that it was very dark, and behold, *there appeared* a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying...** (Vs. 17-18)

Now this picture of God's presence is seen in other spots—a picture of fire, of this cloud. So God comes before him and He walks through these pieces. Actually, the literal word there in verse 18 for **made a covenant** is *cut a covenant.* But what's incredible is He never asks Abram to walk through. God walks through the pieces. He makes a covenant of what He promises to Abram will happen, and if God doesn't keep His covenant, may this happen to Him. But He also makes the covenant for Abram. "*Abram, you covenant to follow Me, to obey, to follow, to do what I'm asking. If you don't, may this happen to Me."* God takes on the covenant for both of them, which blows me away because He continues to expound on this covenant through the rest of the Old Testament story until one day His Son is sent and His body is ripped to pieces with a whip and with nails and with a spear, taking on the punishment that should have been Abram's, that should have been ours, so that we can truly live with Him. What an incredible God! He said in verse 18:

...To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:
the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite." (Vs. 18-21)

And then he continues on:

I don't know what the *unknown* is that God is asking you to step into, but I know that we can step into it because we have hope in this God. I know that we can step into the unknown because of what we *do* know. Hebrews 6 says this:

> **For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULITPLY YOU."** (Hebrews 6:13-14)

Verse 17 goes on to say:

> **In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath.** (Hebrews 6:17)

So by two unchangeable things—His Promise and His Covenant—in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have a strong encouragement to take hold of the hope that is set before us. This hope we have is an anchor of the soul—a hope that is both sure and steadfast.

I don't know what God is asking you to step into, but I know it's going to be incredible. I know it's probably going to be outside of our comfort zone at times. It may seem a little unsafe. In fact, there was a couple that grew up around here, one out on a farm. She grew up in Lincoln. They both went to the university. He studied dentistry and went on to get his masters. She studied and got her masters in math and teaching. And they both got married and moved to Iowa, and they met Jesus. Then they started thinking of ways that they could use the gifts that God gave them to bless others. So from the dentistry practice that he had, they really felt compelled that He was calling them to Africa, and they moved to Africa. For fourteen years they lived there, serving, giving in the unknown. After that they moved back and set up another great practice. Things were going well. Life was kind of heading back on that *American Dream*. He was going to retire, and retire well. They had all these things in place. My older brother who actually lives in Papua, New Guinea—lives in a tribe there with New Tribes Missions—came back and was speaking at a church, and this couple happened to be there. And he just mentioned that on the mainland on the field, they could really use a dentist. Something sparked within these guys, and they said that they just had to go and talk with him. And so my brother was actually packing up to fly back over for a long time, so it was a big ordeal packing up again. And they said, "We've got to meet with you." And not long after meeting, they find themselves on an airplane heading not into retirement as they had planned, but heading into the unknown, heading to go help and serve as a dentist in Papua, New Guinea. And they did that for several years.

I know another couple that felt compelled to stop where they were living in the city, to sell the home that was comfortable that they worked on, because they really felt compelled to reach another part of the same city, and they thought: *we have to live there.* So they followed God in the adventure.

I don't know what God is going to call you into. Maybe it's a conversation. Maybe He's calling you to step out of your comfort zone. Maybe he's calling you to who knows what. But I know that God will reveal that to you and to me. And as He does, I know that I can step out with

confidence and that I don't have to fear because this incredible God says, *"I will be with you,"* and He says, *"Look at what you've learned from what I've done with Abram."*

God, thank You that You call us into an incredible adventure. God, thank You that, in the unknown, there are so many truths that are known and that will forever be the same because You are a God that does not change. God, I know that some of the unknowns may make us scared. They may be things that are a little fearful. They may be things that stretch us and challenge us. God, thank You that it's worth it. God, I pray right now as You would speak to our hearts and You would challenge us, that You would reveal those things that You're asking us to step into, to go out and, God, that we would do that with confidence because of who You are. We pray this because of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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