



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
LEWISVILLE

# Session 1

## Called to Unknown Places

### Summary and Goal

God the Father redeems us, calls us to a life of faith, and reveals the plans He has for us.

#### **Main Passage**

Genesis 12

#### **Session Outline**

1. God Calls Abram (Gen. 12:1-3)
2. Abram Obeys God (Gen. 12:4-6)
3. God Assures Abram (Gen. 12:7-9)

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#### **Theological Theme**

Through Abram's call we see the Fatherhood of God on display.

#### **Christ Connection**

When God called and revealed Himself to Abram as His Heavenly Father, redemption was at the heart of His message. This redemption was made complete in Jesus Christ.

#### **Missional Application**

God calls us to His mission over our comfort and preferences.

# Historical Context of Genesis

## Purpose

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity.

## Author

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11, 13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19, 26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17, 45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

## Setting

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

## Special Features

The Book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb *bereshith*, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk *Geneseos*, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.

# 1

## Condensed Leader Guide

# Called to Unknown Places

### Introduction

- What changes would you welcome in your life today? Why? What changes would you resist? Why?
- In the past, how has God used change in your life to draw you closer to Him? Initially, did you resist or embrace that change? Explain.

Genesis 11:27-32 introduces readers to Abram and his family. Abram's father, Terah, had accompanied his son and family as they departed Ur, but Terah never made it past Haran. Nevertheless, Abram's journey was not complete.

### 1. Calling and Promise (Gen. 12:1-3)

God called Abram to leave his land and relatives and move to a new, unnamed land. Abram was called to God's mission over his own preferences and was sent by God on the adventure of a lifetime. God promised to make Abram into a great nation, representing an entire line of people. Then He promised to give Abram a great name and a new land. Finally, God told Abram that all the people on the earth would be blessed through him.

#### ? For Further Discussion

Living as people who are sent on mission is a blessing to us, and through it God blesses those around us. Describe how you have experienced this truth in action, either as the recipient or giver of God's blessings.

- These verses record God's initial sending out of Abram. What were God's plans for him? What response was required of Abram?
- Note how many times God said "I . . ." in these verses. What do these statements reveal about God?
- What are the three main promises God made if Abram would obey Him (v. 2)? Discuss briefly how these promises came true later on.
- Does our culture make it easy or difficult to respond to the kind of call Abram received from God? Why?

## 2. Trusting and Obeying (Gen. 12:4-6)

Abram set aside his preferences for God's mission. He left with Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all they possessed. Abram chose to obey God's direction even though he had to leave behind his own father and everything else he had known. Abram's example of faith teaches us that true faith leads to obedience of God daily. The best choice for us as Christians is always obedience. God calls us to obey so we can experience a life of fellowship with Him. Our obedience also demonstrates our faith in Him.

- ❓ Abram left behind everything he knew, including family, to live on mission for God. What are we called to leave behind to be used by God?
- ❓ What does God intend for us to learn about Him when we leave behind the past and all its comforts?
- ❓ How has obedience helped you have fellowship with God? What value is there in linking together with others as you seek to live in obedience to God in everyday mission?

## 3. Confirmation and Remembrance (Gen. 12:7-9)

Since God promised to show Abram the land, God would go with and ahead of Abram on his journey of faith. Abram's faith and trust were in God's words, presence, and leadership, not in his own knowledge. Though Abram didn't know where he was going, he knew who was leading him.

- ❓ Why do you think God chose to reveal Himself to Abram only after he had arrived in Canaan?
- ❓ Why was it important for Abram to build altars along his route and not wait until his final destination? How might we build "altars" like this in our own lives?
- ❓ What blessings would Abram have missed if he had refused to follow God? What blessings would you have missed if you had refused to respond to God's call in the past?

## Conclusion

- ❓ Share about a time in your own life when your faithful obedience to your heavenly Father led to further revelation of His good character or His plans for you. What did you learn about Him?
- ❓ In what ways might comfort, security, or other people be keeping us from eagerly following God's call as individuals? What about as a church?

### ❓ For Further Discussion

How should today's discussion encourage us and challenge us as a group during this time of transition at First Baptist Church Lewisville?



## Expanded Leader Guide

# Called to Unknown Places

### Introduction

- ❓ What changes would you welcome in your life today? Why? What changes would you resist? Why?
- ❓ In the past, how has God used change in your life to draw you closer to Him? Initially, did you resist or embrace that change? Explain.

God has been sending out His people to live on mission for Him from the very beginning. Although humankind's sinfulness has scarred every part of creation, God is at work, bringing it back to wholeness. God cares about the world and its people, and He uses every means necessary to draw us to Himself and reveal His glory in our lives. Today we will look at the example of Abram. Abram was sent from his home and country to the place God showed him. There God promised to bless him so that others may be blessed through Him. As God's children, we are the ones through whom God seeks to do good today—the people God uses to bless the world. Living as people who are sent is a blessing to us, and through it God blesses those around us.

Genesis 11:27-32 introduces readers to Abram and his family. Abram's father, Terah, had accompanied his son and family as they departed Ur, but Terah never made it past Haran. Nevertheless, Abram's journey was not complete.

## 1. Calling and Promise (Gen. 12:1-3)

- ① These verses record God's initial sending out of Abram. What were God's plans for him? What response was required of Abram?
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- ① What are the three main promises God made if Abram would obey Him (v. 2)? Discuss briefly how these promises came true later on.

God called Abram to leave his land and relatives and move to a new, unnamed land. Abram was called to God's mission over his own preferences and was sent by God on the adventure of a lifetime. God promised to make Abram into a great nation, representing an entire line of people. Then He promised to give Abram a great name and a new land. Finally, God told Abram that all the people on the earth would be blessed through him.


- ① Living as people who are sent on mission is a blessing to us, and through it God blesses those around us. Describe how you have experienced this truth in action, either as the recipient or giver of God's blessings.

To do all God called him to, Abram had to let go of his community, security, and identity. The faith Abram needed to succeed in the future was the same faith he needed to trust God with the changes he faced in the present. When we find ourselves in new seasons of life, apprehension, uncertainty, and fear can fill our minds. Only faith in God's promise enables us to survive and to thrive.

To Abram these promises must have seemed extravagant and unlikely. His wife was barren. How could he be the father of a great nation if he could not produce one son? How could his name be great on the earth if


there was no son to carry it on after he died? Up to this point in his life, Abram had never owned a piece of land. How would he come to have this promised land that God spoke of?


In receiving these words, Abram very likely felt a sense of isolation. No one could relate exactly to how he felt because no one else had received this same call. In times of isolation, we are often tempted to respond in fear and unbelief, yet, like Abram, God invites us to respond to Him in faith.

 Does our culture make it easy or difficult to respond to the kind of call Abram received from God? Why?


God's call in Abram's life and the promises of blessing may seem extraordinary, but in Abram's example we see a simple picture of living out everyday mission for God. As Christians, we are a part of the great nation God promised to Abram, which began with the Jews and continues today to all who have faith in Jesus. The ultimate blessing we have from God is our relationship with Jesus, and the ultimate way we can bless others is by inviting others to share in this journey.

## 2. Trusting and Obeying (Gen. 12:4-6)

 Abram left behind everything he knew, including family, to live on mission for God. What are we called to leave behind to be used by God?


 What does God intend for us to learn about Him when we leave behind the past and all its comforts?

Abram set aside his preferences for God's mission. He left with Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all they possessed. Abram chose to obey God's direction even though he had to leave behind his own father and everything else he had known. Abram's example of faith teaches us that true faith leads to obedience of God daily. The best choice for us as Christians is always obedience. God calls us to obey so we can experience a life of fellowship with Him. Our obedience also demonstrates our faith in Him.

-  How has obedience helped you have fellowship with God? What value is there in linking together with others as you seek to live in obedience to God in everyday mission?


Because of his trust in and commitment to God, Abram set out for an unseen destination. He did not know where he was going. Abram's life was directed by His confidence in God and His promises. Today, we please God when our actions demonstrate that we trust in Him alone. He desires our prompt obedience to His leading, for our own good.

### 3. Confirmation and Remembrance (Gen. 12:7-9)


-  Why do you think God chose to reveal Himself to Abram only after he had arrived in Canaan?

Upon Abram's entry into Canaan, the Lord confirmed the promises and recognized Abram's act of obedience. First, He appeared to Abram at Shechem, his first residence in the land. This theophany (appearance of God) reassured Abram of the Lord's presence. Second, the Lord reassured Abram by reiterating two promises: that he would have children and land.

Since God promised to show Abram the land, God would go with and ahead of Abram on his journey of faith. Abram's faith and trust were in God's words, presence, and leadership, not in his own knowledge. Though Abram didn't know where he was going, he knew who was leading him.




-  Why was it important for Abram to build altars along his route and not wait until his final destination? How might we build "altars" like this in our own lives?

Abram responded to God's promise with an act that would become a trademark of his life—he built an altar where God had appeared to him in Shechem and a second altar in Bethel to worship Him. Abram was aware of God's guidance in his life and responded with due reverence and respect.

-  What blessings would Abram have missed if he had refused to follow God? What blessings would you have missed if you had refused to respond to God's call in the past?



## Conclusion

-  Share about a time in your own life when your faithful obedience to your heavenly Father led to further revelation of His good character or His plans for you. What did you learn about Him?
-  In what ways might comfort, security, or other people be keeping us from eagerly following God's call as individuals? What about as a church?
-  How should today's discussion encourage us and challenge us as a group during this time of transition at First Baptist Church Lewisville?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank God that He is our heavenly Father, which means He redeems us and continues to reveal Himself to us in every circumstance and transition of life. Pray that as a church body, we would be open to listening and following when God speaks. Pray that we would be driven by our relationship with Him and take seriously the responsibility He has given us to bless others in response to His blessing us.*

## Family Discussion

### Family Discussion Questions for Children

- *Where is a place you think would be fun to live? Where is a place you would not like to live? Why?*
- *God told Abraham to go to an unknown place. What would be scary about that? What did Abraham have to believe about God to obey Him when He told him to get up and go?*
- *When is it hard for you to obey God? Why should you?*

### Family Discussion Questions for Teens

- *What is a change you are afraid God might ask you to make as you follow Him? What are some ways God has already led you out of your comfort zone?*
- *In the next few years, your life will be all about transition. What are some things God wants to teach us in the transitions of life when we're uncertain and pushed out of our comfort zone?*
- *How can you prepare now so that you're ready to obey God when those times of bigger transitions come?*

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- Trusting God to Lead Us

### Main Scripture

- Exodus 13

### Session Outline

1. First Things First (Ex. 13:1-2,11-16)
2. Remember This Day (Ex. 13:3-10)
3. Guiding the Way (Ex. 13:17-22)

### Memorize

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” —Matthew 6:33, ESV

## Extended Commentary

### Genesis 12:1-9

12:1. The story of Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12-25, begins with the first three verses of chapter 12. We need to understand the geography involved in Abram's call. He was born in Ur about 2166 B.C. as the "Old Akkadian" age had just finished and the Sumerians, former rulers of the Mesopotamian world, had come back into power. This offers us one of those important historical pegs on which to hang our understanding of Abram's era since we can link him with the famous Hammurabi.

This is quite different from our understanding of a desert nomad who made his way across the wide spaces of the Fertile Crescent. But we notice the past tense of the first verb in chapter 12, the Lord had said. According to Acts 7:2, Abram's call came while he was still in Mesopotamia, before the family trip to Haran. We must assume, therefore, that he always knew that the years he spent in that cradle of northern Syria were only a temporary stop in God's ultimate plan for his life.

We can see why God had to separate this new leader from his cultural surroundings. He had designed a new nation apart from the Sumerians and the Babylonians, opposed to their idol worship and cultural practices bathed in paganism. To make that possible, God selected one man and his family and 120 took them away. Let's not forget that Abram was seventy-five years old when he responded to the call of God and left Haran.

12:2-3. Abram stepped out in faith as Hebrews 11:8 clearly reminds us. But when God calls us to personal sacrifice, he compensates by great promises of blessing. These verses offer God's promise to Abram which broadly unfolds into three general areas—land, descendants, and blessing. These two verses center on the blessing and offer a sevenfold promise. Although they are clear in the text, it may be worth listing them separately.

1. I will make you into a great nation.
2. I will bless you.
3. I will make your name great.
4. You will be a blessing.
5. I will bless those who bless you.
6. Whoever curses you I will curse.
7. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

This blessing theme began in Genesis 1:28, appeared again in 9:1, and we shall see it throughout the narrative of Abraham and his descendants (12:1-3; 13:15-16; 15:5, 18; 17:6-8; 22:17-18; 25:11; 26:2-4; 27:27-29; 49:28). Peter used the seventh promise in his great sermon in Acts 3, and Paul wrote about it in Galatians 3.

12:4-5. We cannot tell from the text whether Lot continued with Abram because he sensed something of God's vision for the future or whether Abram had simply become a new father figure in the absence of Lot's father, Nahor. Possibly Lot was traveling on Abram's faith, a faith that responded immediately.

At seventy-five Abram was still a middle-aged man. Nor was he from a poor family, since we gather that this move involved a great deal of luggage (tents, garments, flocks, herds) and many people (children, relatives, slaves). The text shows us a pilgrim who refused to be bound to a comfortable lifestyle simply because he had acquired and accumulated the things of this world.

12:6-7. Abram headed east and south through Syria into Canaan. So Abram came south to Shechem and stopped at the site of the great tree of Moreh. Canaanite peoples worshiped a local deity at this famous shrine developed around a large tree mentioned again in Genesis 35:4 and Judges 9:6, 37.

Geography is always important as we follow Abram. But in these verses we begin to sense the pagan opposition he would face. Maybe Abram felt a 121 sense of his minority faith in alien surroundings, so God stated: To your offspring I will give this land. This is the second of four references to the land in this chapter.

Here Abram built his first altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. Here we have the first witness to the true God in the land of Canaan that was inhabited by the sons of Ham. We are not told how God appeared to Abram, but this was not an unusual experience for the patriarch of faith.

Notice that God gave the land not just to Abraham but to his offspring. Galatians 3:16 provides a fascinating commentary on this promise: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." Obviously the gift included Isaac, Jacob, and thousands of others who possessed the land in Abraham's name and to a limited extent, still do. But the link between Abram and Christ forms the very foundation of the Jewish nation and its relationship to God.

12:8-9. Apparently Abram lived two other places in Canaan before his next international trip—first at Bethel and then down in the southern regions of the Negev. Bethel lay just north of Jerusalem, and it became a very important town in the history of Israel. In fact, only Jerusalem is mentioned more often than Bethel in the Old Testament. Continuing to establish God's claim on the land, Abram built a second altar in Shechem, a location that will reappear frequently throughout the Old Testament.