

Genesis: The Call of God. The Purpose of Life.

Genesis 12:1-19

MPS The call of God brings purpose to life when we walk by faith to His command through Jesus Christ.

OBJ Every person can pursue life purpose in Jesus by three reminders.

INTRO **Do you know your life's purpose?** I posed this question recently on Social Media out of curiosity. The range of answers was almost as varied as 24 hours of Missouri weather.

In Gen 1-11, we surveyed the question of Provenance, of origin or beginnings. In this section we saw a lot of “firsts”, such as the creation of all things by God, the beginning of sin by temptation and rebellion, the impact and influence of sin on individuals, the pervasive spread of sin through every people, and the impact of sin overall on society.

Today we turn our attention to Genesis 12-36 and consider the question of Purpose. In Genesis 12-36 we will read of God's work through the history of the Patriarchs, His calling a man to form the nation of Israel as His holy people. My hope and prayer for each of us is that as we study, we consider God's purpose for our lives by the call He has placed on us in Jesus Christ.

Christian, does ANY part of your life make sense without Jesus first? It should not because it cannot. The parts of your life you hold outside of full surrender to God's Word, either by intentional or passive disobedience, only thwart God's purpose for your life.

The call of God brings purpose to life when we walk by faith to His command through Jesus Christ.

READ Gen 12: 1-19

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved to the hill country 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. ⁹And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

TRANS First, it would help us to have some introduction to Abram and why God called Him.

Abram was from Ur (Iraq). He lived about as long before Jesus walked on the earth as we do after, 1900-1800bc. All we know about Abram's background is principally found at the end of Genesis 11. Joshua (24:2) tells us that Abram's father, Terah, worshiped the moon deity in Ur, for whom he was likely named. Terah moved his family to the land of Canaan but stopped in Haran (Turkey), a 700-mile journey. Then while living in Haran, Terah died and God called Abram. Abram took his family and belongings, journeyed south and pitched his tent at Shechem.

WHY did God choose Abram? This is an important question, but not an easy one. The longer I've followed the Lord the more I have learned this lesson; God chooses whom God chooses. The important part is not so much WHO God chooses, but WHY God chooses. I don't always understand everything God does. (This is an exceptionally large category of items.) But ALL that God does ALWAYS aligns with what I DO know of Him, from the Bible, and ALL His works accomplish His Will for His glory and my good. SO—WHATEVER God does, I can trust Him. **God chooses people to accomplish His sovereign**



[Will upon the earth](#). This is critically important for us to understand as two central doctrines are introduced in this passage, the doctrine of election and of covenant, both of which provide the principle framework to understand God's work in salvation through Jesus Christ.

Genesis 12 introduces God's call to Abram. The chapter begins with God's command to Abram, "Go". But the command is not offered alone. God's promise accompanies His command. He tells Abram that He will make of him a great nation by blessing Him and making him a blessing. Accompanying God's blessing is also His protection. [God's command seems so inconceivably big, until one understands the full measure of His unimaginably great promise.](#)

God's blessing and promise to Abram was not simply for all people of his day, but all people. "Through Abraham's life, God revealed a program of "election" and "covenant" which culminated in the work of the Messiah Jesus Christ. God said to Abraham, "in you all the families of earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:3; another rendering of the last two words of this quote is "bless themselves"). Centuries later, the apostle Paul explained that the full import of God's promise was seen in the preaching of the gospel to all nations and the response of faith in Christ, which signifies believers from all families of the earth as sons of Abraham (Gal 3:6–9)."¹ [Abram was the vessel through whom God chose to bring His Messiah, Jesus Christ, and through whom the good news of His Messiah would be preached to the whole earth.](#)

Abram's response is immediate.(.4) He didn't ask, negotiate, argue, or even speak; he "*went, as the Lord told him*". At seventy-five years old he took his wife, his nephew and all his possessions and set out for Canaan. [When God commanded Abram, he obeyed.](#)

When Abram reached Shechem the Lord appeared to him. God shows Abram more of his promise. Shechem would become a place of great decision for the Israelites. Here is where Moses will remind them of God's blessing and curses for obedience.(Deut 11) Here is where Joshua will charge them to choose whom they will serve, either the gods of this world or the One, true God.(Joshua 24)² Shechem is here marked as a critical place of encounter between God and His people. God gives Abram a vision of His call and renewal of His promise. Abram builds an altar and worships the Lord.

Abram moves on to his next stopping point, between Bethel and Ai. There he built another altar and worshiped the Lord. [Here we begin to see a pattern; Abram made worship of the Lord a central practice of his life.](#)

TRANS I want to stop here for a moment and reflect on what we have read.

Three aspects of Abram's life stand out as a model for us to walk by faith.

First, Abram demonstrates a **receptiveness to hear** from the Lord.(.1-3) This is far too often overlooked and undervalued. I do not discount God's ability to speak so as to be heard, but Abram is not simply a man giving in to the unavoidable voice of God. He lived in a time and place that was littered with gods of every flavor. We're not even completely sure HOW Abram knew all that He did about the Lord. [Abram demonstrates for us a life fully surrendered by his receptiveness to hear the Lord.](#)

Second, Abram demonstrates a **readiness to obey** the Lord.(.4) If his receptiveness to hear is not fully convincing of his surrendered-ness, then his response definitely confirms it. [Abram's surrender before the Lord is not just one of talk but of action, not vain knowledge but of readiness to obey.](#)

Third, Abram demonstrates the **priority to worship** for life.(.8) Worship becomes a central theme of Abram's life because he regularly worshiped every place he went. Worship is not one of the stops you make along the way. It is what you do all

¹ Ronald B. Allen, "[Abraham](#)," Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 11.

² Derek Kidner, [Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 125–126. Kidner records, "Shechem (Av Sichem), in the pass between mounts Ebal and Gerizim, at the crossroads of central Palestine, was marked out as a place of decision."



along the way. The call to follow is, first and foremost, a call to worship the Lord. **The priority to worship the Lord at all times is both the fuel and the reward to hear God and obey.**

Be CAREFUL, Christian, that you do not trust your passions alone, for they are tainted by sin's allurements, that you do not trust your thinking only, for it is perverted by sin's deception; that you do not trust the pattern of only what you have seen someone else do, for God's call is unique for you and not identical to anyone else's. **Make sure that your life is fully surrendered by faith in the Lord to hear from Him, obey and worship Him.**

TRANS A life of full surrender is essential because dangers that threaten await us, just as they did Abram.

READ Genesis 12:10-19

10Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. 11When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, 12and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." 14When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

17But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." 20And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

TRANS One, great threat always sidetracks God's purpose in your life, unbelief that leads you to make another plan. Sin is a mole in you, working constantly and continually to thwart God's will for your life by sidetracking you from His work in your life. Consider how this plan of unbelief develops in this story.

A famine sent Abram to Egypt. As they were about to enter Egypt, Abram is stricken by a moment of fear. He knows they will notice Sarai's beauty and kill him so they can keep her. He devises a plan that they will tell them that she is his sister and spare his life. Apparently, everybody was talking about how beautiful Sarai looked at sixty-five. And we've all thought looking good at fifty was an accomplishment. Abram's plan seemed to work exceptionally well as Pharaoh takes Sarai into his house, and greatly rewards Abram. But though it satisfied Abram's fear in the moment, God was dis-pleased because of its deception. **Abram subverted God's plan with his own because he allowed his fears to overwhelm him.**

God afflicts Pharaoh with great plagues and he knows it is because Sarai is Abram's wife. He confronts Abram, then sends him away. I am sure Abram never intended his plan to be an affliction to anyone. After all, it was only a half lie. **But sin never compels us to look ahead or consider the best interest of another, only to justify our action in the moment.**

Abram, the man of great faith, is sent away. He listened to his fears and allowed them to overwhelm his faith. He substituted his plan for God's, but God didn't need another plan. Abram's plan was built on half-truths enough to salve his conscience. But God doesn't need a substitute plan. His plan is anchored in Truth. **Following God's call by faith means we place our whole life in His plan and power through the One who is truth, Jesus Christ.**

GSPL Throughout this section of our study in Genesis we will see person after person that God chooses to use for His glory. They are chosen by God's sovereign plan, not their righteous nature, for His redemptive purpose. God calls people to follow Him for His redemptive purpose. Jesus is our Redeemer who brings God's redemptive purpose to our lives. And His redemption brings purpose to all of life for us. **Jesus Christ, who is truth, is our life. When we trust in Him, He gives purpose from God for all of life.**

OBJ **Three Exhortations to trust in Jesus to pursue life's purpose.**



1. God's Word is more true than your fear, anxiety, or pain.

Unbelief remains a constant threat to subvert God's promise with your plan. The temptation of unbelief is always rooted in our fear, anxiety, pleasure or pain, something beyond us that is different from our current situation. The dirty little secret that unbelief never admits is that it's always based on a half-truth or a whole lie that deceives. The more real and present your fear, anxiety, pleasure or pain is to you, the more powerful the temptation of unbelief will become in you. [Whatever causes you to doubt or question God's Word will write the narrative to justify thwarting God's will for your life.](#)

The Word of God is truth, every promise and every command. It does not matter what stands in front of you, what comes against you or what threatens you. **What matters is the One who calls you.** Truth enables us to identify the source of our fears to confront our false hopes that they threaten, the source of our anxiety to counter the false belief that shakes us, the false promise of a sinful pleasure or the root cause of our pain to understand God's greater glory and your true good. Faith to obey God's Word is the only way to know and walk in His will and know true purpose for your life. [Jesus, the living Word of God, will always prove more true for you as you LISTEN to God's Word and trust in Him.](#)

2. God's promise in Jesus Christ is most sufficient to hold you by hope.

We have so much more knowledge of God than Abram had access to in His day. Yet our obedience is often delayed or avoided altogether. Stop allowing the 'questions of life's unknown' to blame or define God, allowing you to make your own way. [Let the truth of what is revealed and known about God in His Word be the anchor that hold you.](#)

ILLUS I recently posted a question on FaceBook on how to find purpose in life. It was an experiment of my curiosity. I received a very wide variety of answers, and some really good thoughts. Yes, there are many "purposes" that can be identified in life, but all are secondary to obedience to God's Word. When any of them are made primary, they cease to serve and begin to destroy your life. Stop looking for purpose and start listening to God's promise for you in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only One in whom when all of life centers in him, everything makes sense because of Him, AND works for your good through Him. (Rom 8:28-30)

God told Abraham "Go". Listen to Paul's description of Abraham's obedience in Romans 4.

"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed...Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact...Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." **Romans 4:20-21**

Jesus calls to us today, "Come, follow me." Whatever threatens you from obeying or promises if you will avoid God today is FAR LESS than His power to accomplish what He promises through His command. IF ALL you have is hope in Jesus, THAT ALONE is sufficient to hold you no matter what reality or threat is before you. [God's promise in Jesus Christ is most sufficient to hold you by hope, so you can TRUST Him.](#)

3. God's Command is more sure than your heart or your plan.

Wherever you are, whatever you are facing, your right next step forward is to focus on obeying God. Regular worship at all times, filling heart and mind with Jesus, will be the only way that you ever conquer your fear and anxiety. I do not mean to say that it will go away and no longer be present within you. What I mean to say is that it will serve to remind you how frequently and how fervently you must trust to lean on Jesus in order to conquer it over you.

Never forget: the practices you keep form the habits that keep you; the practices you form become the habits that form you. Get radically and ruthlessly honest with yourself about yourself before God. Start by asking, "what is God commanding you to do that you have yet to obey?" No matter how simple or fearful it may seem, obedience is your right next step to follow Jesus. [God's command is more sure than your heart or your plan, so OBEY Jesus and God will bring you good.](#)

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CLOSE God is calling people to follow Him today by faith in Jesus Christ.

- Some – to repent, leaving behind your sin and “firstness” of self, confess “Jesus is Lord” and obey Him with your whole life.
- Others – take that step of obedience by faith in Jesus.
 - to take that first step and make your personal confession in Jesus public by being baptized.
 - to leave that habit / practice of sin that has so entangled such that it rules you. He wants to break its hold on you by breaking its allure within you.
 - to pursue reconciliation in that relationship that you left broken.
 - to walk in the way of righteousness where He is leading you.

