

A Legacy of Faith  
Genesis 12:1-3  
January 28, 2018

Read Genesis 12:1-3

This passage marks the introduction of one of the great characters of the Bible, a man named Abram, later to be known as Abraham. The three major religions in the world today, Christianity, Judaism and Islam find the roots of their family tree, in this man Abraham. How do we know this?

We know this because the Bible connects the dots for us. Remember those times that you attempted to read the Bible straight through from cover to cover. Then you come to those lists of genealogy where so and so begat so and so. Methuselah lived 782 years and had a son named Lamech and it goes on and on for pages and most of the names you can't pronounce. So you just fast forward your devotional reading program, skip it and move on to the "good stuff".

Now wait a minute, II Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching." OK God, help me here, your losing me, I can't pronounce half these names, I'm dozing off!

Here's why God says it's important. It emphasizes the power of the connection between generations and of God's plan to advance His kingdom through the generations. God knew this is important to us. People crave connections.

You are not alone in this world. You were never meant to be alone. Faith is supposed to come to us through a long line of men and women who know God and love him. Sadly, few of us have a heritage like that. Some of you here today are first-generation Christians. Your parents gave you no positive spiritual legacy. Some of you have parents who were the first in their family to come to Christ and you were raised in a Christian environment and you are here today because of their influence. Some of you may come from a long generational connection of Christ followers.

Abraham was on a journey of faith-a multigenerational journey. This journey of faith was not simply for him, just as your faith is not simply for you. Faith is not just "a personal thing" as so many people like to claim.

God didn't design it that way. God designed faith to be contagious, to spread, primarily and most powerfully, through the family tree, from parent to child, to grandchild, to great-grandchild and beyond.

When you think of Abraham and God's plan for his life, do you think it was big or small? God said, "Abram, I will make you a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you, and all people on earth, will be blessed through you."

God's plan was to use Abraham and his descendants to bless the entire world and to bring the Good News of God to everyone. God chose Abraham to start a worldwide movement of faith and blessing. So how was Abraham, just an ordinary individual, supposed to do this? Something this big?

Genesis 18:18-19 tells us. “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he was promised him.”

In verse 18 we find the big picture of what God wanted Abraham to do. God wanted all nations on earth to be blessed through him. In verse 19 we find what God wanted Abraham to do to carry out the plan.

Abraham’s task was to “direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.” He is to pastor his family. He is to teach them about the Lord and nurture faith in their hearts. If Abraham would make this his life’s priority, the entire world would be blessed.

Did you know that the phrase “the God of Abraham”, “the God of Isaac”, “the God of Jacob” is found a total of thirty-two times in the Bible? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be a father, son and grandson. Then we also have the phrase “the God of our fathers” listed twenty-two times in scripture. Over and over again we see this generational faith connection, this legacy of faith being passed down through the generations of Abraham’s family throughout the pages of scripture.

We can imagine Isaac sitting down with his son Jacob and saying “Let me tell you about the God of your grandfather Abraham.” Then going on to teach him about who God is and what God has done.

How many of us talk that way to our kids? For those of you with Christian parents when was the last time you said to your child, “Let me tell you about the God of your grandmother or the God of your grandfather.” We generally do not talk that way. But for the men and women of the Bible, it was normal to talk about their faith in a multigenerational way. Why, because they knew that was God’s plan for their lives to pass their faith on to the next generation and the next.

I am thankful that my grandfather accepted the invitation some 75 years ago, to attend the church on the backstreet of Pemberton. Had he not done that I probably wouldn’t be here today.

As we said earlier, you may be the first person from your family tree that has come to Christ. Recognize your calling. You have been chosen by God to be the spiritual matriarch or patriarch of an awesome, God-honoring, Good News advancing family tree. Imagine 100 years from now a young Christian man or woman sharing stories of how they came to Christ. My journey began with my great-grandmother or great-grandfather. That’s why I’m here today.

When God called you to follow Him, He wasn’t just thinking of you. He was thinking of the generations who would follow you. Before we pray, I would like all of the grandparents to stand.