

“Treasure and Trust” // Abraham // Genesis 12:1–4; 22:1–18 // All- In #2

All-In / For our Family

Give you a minute to take that in. What a great story.

- When we say we want to go all-in “**for our family**” we mean all the ministries we house here in-house to **make disciples** of people like Tim and Jody—**not just bringing them in** but sending them out, both to our community and to the world.
- You can find those described on **p. 47** of your book: “**for our family**” refers to such things as **student** ministry and **small group** ministry and **kids’** ministry: Did you know that we had over 1000 kids on the weekend here recently? 1000. That’s not even counting all you pregnant women. That would add another 1000.
- “For our family” funds **college** ministry; our **counseling** center; our **church planting training** center; our **facility** mortgages and maintenance. It even goes to pay for things like **video projection** at our campuses. I don’t look this good naturally. Considering that about half of the adults here on the weekend see me on the screen, we think that is a worthy investment.
- We want to devote **\$16.8 million** over the next 2 years **making disciples** of our family **in and through** our church;
- Again, you’ll find information on that on pg. **47**.

But, for now, if you’ll open that book to the very back—there is a place for you to take **sermon notes**.

Also, if you didn’t get an **all-in** faith commitment card, you can get one before you leave. I want you to use this, over the next few

weeks... this is for **everybody in our church**... of course, if you’re **new here**, I’m not talking to you.

Yes, it is financial, but that represents part of a much larger whole...

The point is are you “all-in” with your life. And of course, money must be a part.

Jesus said money is the currency of our lives...

- But like I told you last week: if it really **rubs you the wrong way** when the church talks about money, then I’d encourage you to **apply** this series **by giving** somewhere else. I’d rather that happen than for your inability to trust us get in the way of you becoming a generous person.
- I hope one day **can trust us**, and I think that when you’re part of a church, **you ought to trust it**, and like we saw last week, it **ought to be the focal** point of your giving and ministry, but if you’re not there yet, then please don’t let the idea that we want your money be an obstacle to you becoming a generous person

Introduction:

You say, “The book, the commitment card—this seems pretty forward and ‘in your face.’” Sometimes you have to go to extreme measures to get people’s attention.

I heard about a man here who’s son was misbehaving both at home and at school, the man tried everything he knew to guide the boy toward better behavior but it didn’t get any better. Well, he was an airplane pilot he decided to take his son for a ride on his airplane—**give him a different perspective and talk to him about his need to grow up** and his need to make better decisions. He discovered that these **high altitude conversations put his son in a different frame of mind**, and after they returned from one of their flights the son was much more cooperative and respectful. **So when the boy’s behavior** began to deteriorate again, the boy’s father would take him on another airplane ride, **look him in the eye**, tell him what he expected of him, and it would always result in a change of attitude.

Well, one of this man’s friends was amazed at this technique so he asked if he could come with him on one of these father son airplane rides. “**I would like to observe what you do and say and maybe I can learn something**

as a parent.” Well the dad agreed and during the flight, the second man took this photograph—which explains it all.¹ **PICTURE OF BOY ON JET**

So, sometimes you go to extreme measures to get someone’s attention. Well, I think God is trying to get some of our attention.

Some of us have been “halfway-in” or only “part-way in” on the mission of God, and God is telling us it’s time to go *all-in*. Not just in a few areas of our lives, but in the big parts.

So this week we’re going to look at the story of Abraham, because there are some important things in his story that teach us what it means to go *all-in*. His story is in **Genesis 12**.

Genesis 12:1–4

[12:1] “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. [2] And 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. [3] I 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.”

This story actually begins in a way very similar to Noah’s. Remember how in Noah’s day the whole world had become wicked and so God chose 1 man and his family and started over? Well, Genesis 10–11 records the story of Noah’s descendants and tells you that in a short amount of time, the **world became wicked** again.

- There’s **one family line** that belongs to God, the descendants of Shem, but it ends in **chapter 11 with them living** in a place of idolatry, with the assumption that they have become idolaters, too.
- The final guy in this line, Terah, has **one son, Abraham**, and Abraham is childless.

- **Terah’s** name literally means “**moon**,” which is a Hebrew metaphor for “the end.” (like us saying “**caboose**”). It’s over.

The godly line has succumbed to idolatry and Abraham is childless. So it looks like it is about time for God to destroy the world again. **Project humanity** has been an utter failure.

But instead of destroying the earth, God does something different. He calls out Abraham and gives him this promise: that he will bless him; and more than that—he will make their name great by making them a blessing to the whole earth.

Like Noah, Abraham, found grace in the eyes of God, and through him, we’d all find grace.

The promise of blessing was an **explicit promise** of the coming Messiah. Through Abraham’s descendants God would send a Messiah that would bless all the families of the earth.

- **Like Noah’s ark**, this Messiah would shield his people from the wrath of God and commence a new creation—a new race—one that no longer loved evil and violence but loved God as they had been intended to.
- The **blessing** God is talking about here is the blessing of salvation. It would **start in Abraham’s house**, but it would extend to the whole world.

What was required of Abraham to receive this promise and become this blessing? He had to **leave all that he knew** to obtain it. He had to **take his hands off of everything** he owned and loved in order to become God’s child and God’s vessel.

And he had to **believe God for the impossible**. Abraham and Sarah are childless, which is a challenge for any couple, but vs. 4 tells us “Abraham was 75” and his wife was in her 60’s. By that point you’ve pretty well concluded it’s *not gonna happen* (can I get an Amen?).

¹ From *Elevate* Transcript on generous giving, “Clarity,” supplied by Julie from Generis.

He was told to forsake all that he was clinging to and venture out into the unknown, trusting nothing but the promise of God.

4 crucial things

Let me pause here to give you **4 crucial things** you need to understand about following God and experiencing his plan for your life:

1. Following God means venturing into the unknown

- Abraham had to trust God with a completely unknown future.
 - God said to Abraham, “Go.” And Abraham said, “Where?” and God said, “I’ll show you.”
 - “God says to Abraham, ‘I’ll give you a son.’ And Abraham says, ‘How?’” God answers, ‘I’ll take care of that. Just follow me.’”
 - Later in his life, “God will say to Abraham, ‘Go to the top of the mountain and sacrifice your son.’ And Abraham says, ‘Why?’ God answers, ‘I’ll show you later. Just climb.’”
- At every step, Abraham had to follow God into the unknown.
- **I love how John Calvin** summarized God’s interaction with Abraham: **“Just close your eyes and take my hand.”** I love that. *Just close your eyes and take my hand.*
- I see so many people I talk to unwilling to do this. They want to know, “Well, God, if I surrender all of this to you... what about...”
 - Where you going to **make me go**? Do I have to become a **missionary**?
 - Will I have to break up with my **boyfriend**? Do I have to be **poor**?
 - And God, I don’t **understand this** or know how to answer **this question** or that question...
 - And am I am going to become one of those **annoying people**?
- And God says, “For now, **close your eyes and take my hand.**”
 - I’m not telling you to turn off your mind. You have to take time to figure out if it’s really God. But once you do, you have to be willing to trust him.

- If not, you’ll never know God or experience what he has for you.

2. God’s calling to salvation and his commissioning into mission are one and the same.

- Notice that God’s first call to Abraham is also his commissioning of him into mission.
- There is a misconception among Christians that you get called to be God’s child at one point and then later to be his disciple and puts you on mission.
- **In the Bible, the two calls are *always* one and the same.**
 - When God called **Moses** in the desert to himself he also calls him into the mission (He appears to Moses at the burning bush and says, “You belong to me, Moses. I’ve got a message for you to give to Pharaoh).)
 - When Jesus called **Peter** to be his disciple he does by telling him to cast his net on the other side of the boat, having it fill up with fish, and telling him that he would catch men like that.
 - When God appeared to **Paul** on the Road of Damascus, he said (**Acts 26:16**)
- God’s call on your life is a call to use you in his mission. **He blesses you to be a blessing.**
- God is like a **spiritual tornado**. He never pulls you in without also hurling you out.
- Jesus said **John 15:7-8, 16**, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you, that you would go and bring forth fruit... and by this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.*” God chose you to make you a blessing, an eternal blessing, to someone. That’s good news... some of you feel like you don’t have much to offer. Like Jesus could just barely save you.

3. You are blessed to be a blessing.

- Is that how you see the blessings of your life? Are you more of a reservoir or channel?
 - **Illustration:** Heard about a guy who was a multi-millionaire. So he started a ministry where he would give

away all his money to help other ministries get started. A friend of mine asked him what his ultimate goal in life was and he said, "My goal is to bounce my last check." He's a millionaire trying to go broke. He just keeps writing checks because everything belongs to God.

- If you are a channel, then
 - Because you believe you've been loved by God, you'll show that loving people
 - And if you've been given money, you'll share your money
 - And if you've been given wisdom, you'll share your wisdom
 - And if you've been given talent or skill or ability, share your insight, share your ability
- 4. **To receive "the blessing" and become the blessing we have to take our hands off of everything and make God our trust and his kingdom our delight.**
 - God wasn't calling Abraham to make God a part of his life or add a **few tweaks** to his morality. **God called Abraham to a whole new basis of life.** No longer would he **find his security** in how much he possessed or how able he was to provide for himself; he had to trust God. No longer would he **spend his life building** his own little kingdom; he left that to seek the building of God's.
 - Following God, you see, is not just adding a little God to our lives... it means **making God your trust** for the future and **his kingdom** your delight.
 - All of us have a set of things that we **depend on for security** and we **look to for meaning/significance**.
 - They are usually good things:
 - Succeeding in your career
 - Having enough money to make sure you're ok and you can get whatever you need or want
 - Some of you men live for your hobbies, that's why you spend so much time and money on them
 - Students depend on getting into the schools and getting the grades that will procure you the job

- For some of you it's getting married and having a great family and a comfortable life
- **Following God means letting go of all of that as your primary treasure and security and making God the source of both of those things**
 - I've heard it described as a **Copernican Revolution** of the soul.
- 5. **To become the blessing, we have to believe the impossible.**
 - Abraham had to believe what he couldn't understand and what seemed impossible and then act on it.
 - He had to believe God would keep his word. He had to **close his eyes** and take God's hand, **and somewhere along the way he had to splash some cologne onto his 100-year-old body, put on some Marvin Gaye, and start a family.**
 - For you to follow God you have to believe that he can **save you** he will **use your life for blessing**, there are **answers to your questions**.

Now, before I apply this to us, I want to take you to one other place where Abraham was tested on this, and then we'll draw some conclusions for us.

Genesis 22:1–18

By this time Abraham has had his miracle baby. He and Sarah had one son—Isaac—who was born to them when Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100. [22:1] After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." [2] He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

I realize this raises some questions, as to how God could ask something like this... but you have to consider how momentous this for Abraham. In those days, **having sons was everything**. Sons **provided** for you in your old age; they **continued on** your family name. Plus, for Abraham, this was **the child of promise**;

this was their only son, and the only way God would fulfill the promise he'd made to them. This is what they'd left everything for! All their hopes and dreams and affections center upon him. And God says lay him here on my altar.

SUMMARIZE STORY

So let me first ask you some questions about your life:

A. Is God your primary treasure and trust?

- You know how you can tell? Does he have full authority to tell you what to do with everything in your life.
- Have you come to a point where you have told God he can have it all; where you lay it all at his feet to do with it as he wills.
- Where your life is a blank check to God. No holds barred?
- Let me be clear about this: if you are not in this position, **you are not yet a disciple of Jesus.**

B. Are you pursuing an earthly kingdom or a heavenly one?

- What are your resources and your talents being used to build?
- Please understand: I'm not saying everyone needs to go into fulltime ministry. God gave you talents and skills in business for a reason. But is your primary pursuit in those things glorifying God and leveraging what you have for his purposes? Are you leveraging the money God has given you primarily for his kingdom, or for yours?
- This week one of our pastors talked about a **couple who retired...** they had saved for a beach house. Moved there. 2 weeks later: what are we doing? **All that really matters for eternity: our church, and our family**—are several hours away and we're trying to spend our last few years—arguably our best few years, when we have the most to offer the kingdom in terms of wisdom and time—we're trying to spend that 20 years on vacation for 20 before we see Jesus?
- That's not what I want to be found doing before I see him.

- **Retirement** is not a biblical concept. Ceasing a certain kind of work is... But saving up your money and spending your most valuable years on vacation is not.
- **Retirement** is when you are freed up to serve God more fully, and during that time you have the most time and the most wisdom and skill to offer the kingdom of God.

Now, to us as a church:

I think we're at a moment similar to Abraham. Like I told you last week, we've chosen for blessing. God has given us a great name in our community. Don't think "great name" like "famous," but great name like "instrumental in blessing."

KAIROS moment.²

And I believe we are at a tipping point in all of our ministries.

- Last week I told about stuff going on in our ministry to our city...
 - 19 schools
 - You saw a story of 17 households moving into... God is multiplying our ministries.
 - Small groups being involved in prisons... Edward
- God has multiplied our sending capacity.
 - 160 (1 in 20)
 - Last year we sent out 500 on short-term trips. 100 in pipeline.
 - 2000 people. Our Baltimore interest meeting we had 96 My feelings were a little hurt b/c I didn't know people were so excited to leave?
 - Exciting development in all of this: Apprenticeship.

² Various called the *right* time, the *opportune* time, the *crucial moment*. Kairos is even translated as "opportunity" sometimes in the NT (Gal 6:10, Heb 11:15). *Kairos* (Mark 1:15): "The idea is not simply that an allotted time has elapsed (that would have been better expressed by χρόνος, as in Acts 7:23), but that the decisive moment (καιρός) has now arrived." France, R. T. (2002). *The Gospel of Mark: A commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (91). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

- To our family:
 - I told you about our kids...
 - Student ministry: Baptized 120 teenagers. They have a vision to reach 600 in the next 2 years.
 - We have **311** small groups, meeting everywhere from college campuses to homes in Wakefield. That's more small groups than we used to have people!
 - These are places where intense ministry happens. In addition to being **places where you grow deep** in God's word, I hear of ways that God uses small groups to **save marriages** that are on the brink of collapse, or to **restore others** that have been collapsed. **I heard of one recently** where a couple was splitting up; the husband was leaving; and the guys in this group manned up and told this guy that this was the biggest mistake of his life and persuaded him to trust God and give it another chance and now their marriage has been healed and it is better than ever. I asked one of the guys in this group, "How'd y'all do that?" **"We used a lot of Bible... and duct tape. We taped him down until he agreed to do things God's way."**
 - People come to Jesus all the time in our small groups, sometimes before they even come to church here. I heard a story recently about someone involved in one of our small groups who was on her way to commit suicide when another member called her to check in and God used that intervention not only to save her life, but to lead her to Jesus.
- **Our growth charts**
 - Past 10 years
 - At 34.5%
 - At 20%
 - The two anomalies

We're at a kairos moment, a tipping point.

Folks, just so we're on the same page and we all understand each other, as I understand it, God's vision for the church has never been small.

- God told Abraham he'd be a blessing to all the nations. He'd have sons and daughters of faith like the sand on the seashore and stars in the sky.
- Jesus—when he preached a sermon, he had **thousands** come.
- The Holy Spirit planted the first church in Acts 2 in the middle of the biggest city in Israel on a day when thousands were present and **3000** people got saved and baptized on that day! Acts 3 **5000** were added a few months later. **Acts 4** tells you that they were so big they could only come together every once in a while so in the meantime they met house to house. They were the original multi-site megachurch.
- **Paul**, the Apostle, wanted to get the gospel **into Rome**, the capital of the world, to see the influence of the gospel spread from there all over the world.
- **I am not one of those who believe that God's plan is for small, inward-focused-but-faithful conclaves.** Jesus' promise was for the salvation of our families, neighbors and nations.
- **Sometimes it feels impossible**, but no more impossible than a barren woman getting pregnant when she's 90 or Jesus' dead body coming out of the grave. My God is not honored through small dreams and dwarfed plans.
- Here are **3 questions** I ask myself all the time, I want you to ask yourself:
 - ***Is what you're living for worth him dying for?***
 - ***Is what you are doing with your life worthy of the magnitude of his sacrifice?***
 - ***Does the scale of your dreams match the scale of his sufferings?***

That's why I get so excited because I sense the possibilities for us. You guys realize that if YOU WENT ALL-IN during this season, WE COULD

- **plant** twice as many churches;

- plant twice as many **campuses**;
- we could put **500 MISSIONARIES** on the field.
- We could take care of all the foster kids and rehabilitate every prisoner.
- We have **high school** and **college students** to reach and we need staff who can train and empower our students to reach them
- We could **finish our facilities** here. Our CFO told me that if in the next 2 years 31 million came in we could finish here. That wouldn't mean we were done with God's mission, just that we'd be finished here and could set our sights on new ministries and new places.

We are in a *kairos* moment, because we're at a **tipping point** for blessing our families, neighbors and nations.

Kairos moments require **special seasons** of sacrifice.

- God didn't tell Abraham to actually give up everything daily. But during those seasons, he had to step up.
- Well, we're a *kairos* moment as a church. How will you respond? Will you respond with the sacrifice and faith that allows us to become this blessing God has declared over us?

Summit: I'm praying this would be a profound moment of discipleship for you:

- You see, these *kairos* moments have a way of making you decide where your kingdom is.
- **C.S. Lewis:** wealth has a way of knitting a man's heart to this world. That's a spiritually dangerous condition.
- So God gives you the *kairos* moments where you can transfer your kingdom from this world to that one.
 - **Matt 6:21.** A strategy. You want to force your heart off of the world, *give!*
 - How you are broken from **covetousness**: "I could have bought that beach house with what I've given away, but I have CHOSEN to live for another kingdom." Helps you not covet what others have.

- *"The primary purpose of giving is not that God would get the money out of our pockets, but that he would get the idols out of our hearts."*³

Can you recognize how money is not working for you?

- You're never satisfied with what you have.
- For some of you men, every 2 years you need a new high dollar hobby. You're bored.
- You need a whole new basis of life; a new love; a new kingdom; and giving away the money you spend on useless toys could help you do that.

Well, let me land this plane. We can't end our study without reflecting on the fact that...

The real meaning of all this story, as with all OT stories is that:

- *Jesus was the real Abraham. He answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar to go out into the void, not knowing where he went to create a new people of God.*
- *Isaac was a picture of Jesus, who would be sacrificed on top of that mountain for our sins. Yet, when the Father raised the knife over him, no angel would stand in the way. God would plunge it deep into his heart. He would wear a crown of thorns and be sacrificed in our place so we could go free, and and we can say, 'Now I know, God that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, from us.'*⁴

What emotions should be in your heart right now?

- **Fear.** You're being asked to go out into the unknown.
 - John Calvin: Close your eyes and take my hand. That's scary.
 - We have to live in the gap between the promise and its fulfillment.

³ Not original with me but unsure of the source. Mark Driscoll, maybe?

⁴ Adapted from Tim Keller.

- But you meet that fear with the promise that he who called you is faithful, and he will also do it.
- I read recently... Walt Disney never lived to see the completion of Disney World. At the opening of the park someone said to his wife, "I really wish Walt could have seen this." His wife responded, "He did." That's vision. That's faith.
- So fear, yes. Dread. I don't think Abraham was like, *"Seriously, God, I have to leave it all? Why me?"* That would have meant he really didn't understand what God was offering him or believe it!
 - He probably said, "I can't believe I WAS CHOSEN to bless the world! Wow... me? I'm going to have children like the stars of the sky? The father of faith for many nations? What a privilege!"
 - Yes, it cost him... he had to leave his home... *but he got to be a blessing to the nations!*
- Many of us have dread. When we started this series last week you were like, *"Seriously, God, again? What do I have to be a part of a church always calling me to sacrifice and faith?"* Doesn't that show your disconnect from the gospel?
- If we really understood all this, we should be filled with:
 - *First, **humility**. A deep, awe-inspiring humility: why me?*
 - *And that should be followed up by an overwhelming sense of **gratefulness**: I get to go "all-in" for the God went all-in for me!*
 - *Lastly—**excitement**: I get to be used! I get to be a blessing to the nations!*
- Excitement, humility, gratefulness—that's a cheerful giver.
- **2 Cor 8:9** says God loves a cheerful giver. Cheerful people are those who get the gospel. When you get the gospel you give with excitement, humility and gratefulness, and God loves it when people get the gospel.

Invitation:

Last week I asked you to pray through a card. A different exercise this time.