

## The journey God calls us to.

### Genesis 12:1-4a & John 3:1-17

There can be something a little unsettling about the word *go*.

Especially if it not "consider going." Especially if it is not "think about going when you're ready." Just — *go*. Leave. Move. Trust me.

That is how God starts his relationship with Abram. No introduction, no lengthy explanation, no map! The Lord says, "*Go from your country, your kin and your father's house to the land I will show you.*"

Not *the land I will tell you about first*

Not *the land you can read about first*.

BUT the land I will **show** you — as you go. The destination is revealed on the journey, not before it.

And here is what's amazing – Abram simply goes! Seventy-five years old. Established. Comfortable. Rooted. And he went.

I find I'm a bit dumbfounded by it to be honest. I don't know if I'd be so brave.

**But every genuine encounter with God involves a leaving of some sort.**

This is not just Abram's story though, it's a pattern that is woven through all of Scripture. And it finds an intimate expression of it in a late-night conversation across a courtyard in Jerusalem, between a curious Pharisee and a wandering rabbi.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, and we should acknowledge that detail, let that ruminate a little. He comes in the dark. Maybe he's afraid of what the other

Pharisees would think. Maybe he's afraid of what he might discover. He is, in every outward appearance, a man who has arrived. A ruler of the Jews. A teacher of Israel. A man with the answers. But something pulls him out into the night to ask questions himself.

"Rabbi," he says, "we know you are a teacher come from God."

And Jesus, as usual, doesn't answer the question Nicodemus asks. He answers the question Nicodemus *needed*. *"No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*

Nicodemus hears this as biology. *"How can someone be born when they are old?"* But Jesus is not talking about biology. He is talking about the same thing God was talking about when he said *go* to Abram. He is talking about a new beginning that costs you your old life. A second birth that carries you somewhere you could not have gotten to by yourself.

Both men are standing at the same threshold.

Abram, at seventy-five, with the familiar comforts of Haran behind him and an unnamed land ahead.

Nicodemus, a man of learning and status, with a lifetime of religious certainty behind him and an inexplicable, irresistible pull toward this man Jesus.

Both are being invited into a journey they can't control, they don't fully understand it, and they can't do it by themselves.

This is the scandal of grace, the shocking nature of God's love and forgiveness. It doesn't reward those who have figured it all out. It calls those who are willing to *go*.

**God makes a promise that will sustain the journey.**

God doesn't send Abram into the unknown empty-handed. He makes him an amazing promise *"I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great. And you will be a blessing."*

**You will be a blessing.** The journey isn't just for Abram's sake. It is so that through him, *all peoples on earth will be blessed.*

And that promise finds its fullness in John 3:16 — one of the most quoted verses in history, and rightly so. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

The "world" here is the Greek *cosmos* — every nation, every people, every language. What God whispered to a wandering nomad in Mesopotamia — *through you all families of the earth will be blessed* — God shouts from a cross on a Jerusalem hillside thousands of years later. The journey Abram began, Jesus completes.

**And now we stand where they stood.**

You and I are not so different from Abram in Haran, or Nicodemus in the dark. We have our own established places. Our own sense of who we are, what we've built, what we know. And into that settled life, God keeps saying: *go*. Not necessarily to a different country — though sometimes, yes. But always to a different *self*. Always moving forward, always growing into a future that is held in his hands rather than ours.

The journey God has planned for us is not a journey to a place. It is a journey into life — life that Jesus calls *eternal*, but that he also describes as being *born again*, right now, by the Spirit who, like the wind, blows where it wishes.

You cannot see the wind. You cannot plan it. You can only open the door.

Abram opened the door. He went.

Nicodemus — and John's gospel leaves this beautifully open — seems to have gone too. We find him later, in chapter 7, defending Jesus quietly to his colleagues. And then in chapter 19, he comes in the open light of day to help bury the Lord he had once visited only in secret, in the dark. The night-time questioner had become a public disciple. The man who asked *how can these things be?* had himself become a new creation.

### **So, what door is God asking you to open?**

What is the Haran you are being called to leave — the security, the certainty, the carefully managed life? Or what is the question you've been coming to Jesus with only at night, when no one is watching?

The good news — the astonishingly good news — is that the God who called Abram into the unknown was already waiting for him at the other end. The God who met Nicodemus in the dark is the Light of the World. He doesn't ask us to step into nothing. He asks us to step into *him*.

So Abram went.

Will you?