

March 12, 2006



## When You've Got The Urge

by Rev. Jerry L. McGlone

### Genesis 12:1-5

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. 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. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sar'ai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan...

She called me on the telephone out of the blue. I didn't know who she was. Sometimes it's a mystery to me how some people get my name and phone number. I never know why people pick me to call.

Why me? I don't know, but she called me. "Are you the pastor," she asked. "Yes I am," I answered. "Good," she said, "because I've got an important question to ask you."

When that happens, I usually think, "Oh, no." When that happens, people usually want money.

You might be surprised how often this happens to me. People calling up out of the blue, almost always wanting money.

She said she had a question for me. Her question wasn't what I expected! "Do you think God is telling me," she asked, "to leave my

husband, and my babies, and my home - and go off to some foreign land and be a missionary?”

That was not the question I expected, but that’s the question she asked. I already had an answer prepared, but my prepared answer wouldn’t work! That question of hers really stumped me.

Did I think she should leave everything behind - her husband and children, her home and her life - and head out to some jungle destination to do God’s work? I needed more information.

This is the information I got from her. She had no missionary job waiting, no experience, no training, no plan. She didn’t even have any church affiliation. She wasn’t connected with any denomination, or any group, or any one who was going to send her off to India or Pakistan. She didn’t even have a home church to support her and guide her.

All she had was an urge to go. An urge, she said, that came directly from God.

I found out that her husband was not abusive to her. He didn’t beat her or mistreat her. He was a good father to their children. He wasn’t an alcoholic, a druggie, or a womanizer. He had a good job and made a good income. I found out her children were still toddlers, in good health and well-adjusted. I found out she wasn’t on any medication. From what I could tell, there was no compelling reason for her to leave her family and home.

It was just an urge she had; an urge that came from God, she thought.

Now, if you were on my side of that phone conversation, what would you tell that young wife and mother? What do you think? Did God give her an urge to move on out? Did God want her to leave everyone and everything behind and go out to work for Him?

What would you tell that young wife and mother?

It’s been years since I heard from her. I don’t know if she went to Africa. But I do know she’s not alone when it comes to feeling an urge to do something.

He had an urge to go west. It took him eight years of supplication at the queens’ court, eight years of begging and cajoling, eight years of nagging and pleading; until Isabella finally said, “Let him sail.” So it was in 1492 that Christopher Columbus sailed off. He had an urge to find a

shorter, easier, more direct route to India. He said he could get to India by sailing west when all the world knew the only way to India was east.

We all know Columbus didn't make it. When it came to getting to India, he was a complete and total failure. The closest he got to his destination was six thousand miles away. But, he did stumble across a New World on the way.

A few years later, another seaman had an urge to prove the world was round. He was sure he could do it. So in 1519, Ferdinand Magellan set out on his expedition to circumnavigate the world. He didn't do it. He never made it back. He ended up becoming lunch for some hostile natives on a Pacific Island. But his crew and his boat returned to Europe a couple of years later with the news that the world is indeed round.

Two hundred years later, President Jefferson had an urge to make this nation stretch from sea to shining sea. He sent off Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Their mission back in 1804 was to blaze a trail from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean. And when they came back two years later, our nation stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Two generations later, Horace Greeley, writing from his desk at the New York Tribune had an urge to build a greater nation. "Go West, young man, go West," he urged. Greeley never went west, but at his urging thousands of young men packed up and headed out. They didn't know where they were going. They didn't know what they would do when they got there, but West was where they went.

And a century later, President Kennedy proposed a "New Frontier" for this yearning nation in 1960, a New Frontier, he urged that would take man as far as the moon and back.

From that woman who called me on the phone with a question, from Columbus to Magellan, from Jefferson and Greeley to Kennedy - what do they all have in common?

They all had an urge to do something that hadn't been done before.

And, we remember them all. History looks back and counts the glories of those who blazed the trails, of those who sailed off in uncharted waters, of those whose dreams became reality.

When you look back at their accomplishments, you may think it was all glory for them. But it wasn't. The fact is, every man I mentioned had to face the same hurdle.

Before they could even begin whatever journey they chose, they had to listen to all those other voices out there -

- all the people who said they were wrong,
- all the people who said they couldn't do it,
- all the people who predicted failure.

For every person who gets that urge to do something new, there are always armies of detractors, nay Sayers, and complainers.

I imagine you know what that's like. If you've ever felt the urge to move in some new direction, I imagine somebody told you:

“Can't be done,  
 “never will be done,  
 “shouldn't be done.”

For every new idea, there are always plenty of people saying “no”:

“no” to a new idea,  
 “no” to a new plan,  
 “no” to somebody else's dream.

But history has forgotten almost all the people who said “no.” History remembers and records the ones who followed their urges. All those people who played it safe, all those men who held the line, all those who resisted new ideas and new attitudes and new ways, the world forgets all about them.

Today's scripture lesson is about a man whom the world remembers. He was a man who had an urge -

- an irresistible urge to be better,
- a compelling urge to be greater,  
 - an overpowering urge to do what God wanted.

He did what that woman who called me up on the telephone wanted to do. He packed up - he packed up his wife and his family, his belongings and his cattle - and moved on out. Like that young woman on the telephone, he had no idea where he was headed.

When this story began, Abram had everything going his way. Settled there in a place called Haran, Abram had accumulated great wealth. He exercised considerable influence. He held an important position in his community. He had a loving, contented family.

He had every reason to stay right where he was,  
 - every reason to keep things just the way they were,

- every reason to be cautious and conservative.

Until, he heard God calling.

Until he felt an irresistible urge to follow God's call.

When God told him to pull up roots and go, Abram got up and went. His friends thought he was crazy. They said he was being self-destructive and stupid. They couldn't figure out why he would want to risk so much.

He didn't listen to what they said. At the time, he was a pretty old man, but at age seventy-five Abram gathered together his wife and his family, his herds and his wealth; and he set out for a land unknown. When he started out, he had no idea where he was going. He trusted God to lead him.

He went out beyond the horizon,

- out to chase his dream,

- out to blaze a new trail,

- out to found a new dynasty.

At the age of seventy-five, when almost everybody else was sitting down, he stood up and stepped away from his comfortable and secure life and went out into the wild unknown.

His friends thought he was crazy, and just as every person who dreams big dreams is called irresponsible, unwise, careless, reckless, and foolhardy, Abrams' friends predicted that he was making a huge mistake.

You've got to remember: Abram could have stayed right where he was. He could have settled for what he had. He could have been happy not changing a thing. He could have dreamed smaller dreams.

But when the urge came, Abram moved on out.

The story of Abram is the story of our church.

We didn't have to dream any dreams.

We didn't have to change a thing.

We didn't have to set out on a journey toward unknowns.

We didn't have to sell our building.

We didn't have to do any of it.

But we felt an urge to improve, an urge to build new, an urge to trade in the old and comfortable for the possibility of a better witness tomorrow.

I think that urge came from God. I think we're doing what God wants! What do you think?

It's all about your dreams:

- the size of your dreams,
- the nature of your dreams,
- the context of your dreams;
  - o and what you're going to do about your dreams.

What do you dream about? What kind of person do you want to be? Where do you want to end up when you're all through with living? What do you dream about achieving, making, giving?

There was a time when God took a piece of clay, molded it around, shaped it - and ended up making you. What do you suppose God had in mind when he made you? What kind of man or woman did he want you to become? What was his intention for your life?

Does God want you to play it safe?

Does he want you always to be cautious and careful?

Does he want you to hesitate and resist?

Does he want you to be rigid and unbending?

Does he want you to be sour and unhappy?

If you read God's word, if you study the holy scriptures, if you look back at history; you will come to see that the people who pleased God were the ones who felt an urge to do something different, something they had never done before, something the rest of the world told them was foolish, or dangerous, or impossible – and then, they moved on out and did it.

The people who pleased God were the ones who changed the world, the ones who started something new, the ones who took enormous risks.

And I think that's the story of our church right about now. We are in the middle of an enormous risk. And I'm here to ask you to take another risk.

The Christian life is a life of change, a life of stepping out, a life of taking risks. It is never a life of playing it safe.

You know it's true. It's a risk to trust. It's a risk to believe. It's a risk to love. It's a risk to forgive.

Just as God spoke to Abram so many thousands of years ago, I believe God speaks to every one of you. You just may not recognize God when he speaks to you.

That's God speaking to you, when you feel the urge to do something nice for somebody else.

That's God speaking to you, when you feel the urge to take a step above your usual moral and ethical character and be better than you have been.

That's God speaking to you, when you have trouble sleeping at night because you feel an overpowering need to change your ways.

That's God speaking to you, when that emptiness inside your soul brings out a longing to be a better person.

That's God speaking to you, when you dream of what your tomorrows might yet become.

You may not even realize it, but God is still speaking today; and he's speaking to you.

I don't for one second think that God is telling any of you today to pack up your bags and head out West. I don't suppose God is telling you to leave your family and home and head off to the dark jungles of Africa. I don't even think that God is telling you to fly to the moon.

But I am fully convinced that God wants you to be a little more daring in your actions for good,

- a little more willing to be nice and understanding,
- a little more active in helping your fellow man.

And, I do think God wants you to be daring enough to reach for your dream, whatever that dream may be.

Abram risked everything he had to follow his dream. He put everything on the line to respond to God's call. He embraced the struggle ahead in order to become the highest and the best he knew he could be.

It's still the same today. It is out of the struggle, out of the striving, out of the wrestling with all the hard problems and difficult decisions that God shapes you into his child, bringing out the finest in you.

Helen Keller had something to say about that. She said:

“Most people measure their happiness in terms of physical pleasure and possession, but if happiness is so measured, then I, who cannot hear or see, have every reason to sit in a corner with folded hands and weep.

“But as sinners sometimes stand up in a meeting to testify of the goodness of God, so one who is called afflicted may also rise up in gladness to testify to His goodness.

“The struggle of life is one of our greatest blessings. It makes us patient, sensitive, God-like. It teaches us that although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.”

You and I were not made by God to be like some fat caterpillar, sitting on a leaf all day long, munching away, living a life of ease. We were created to risk the conflict and to wrestle with the hard decisions; and it is in the struggle that we make something worthwhile out of our lives.

Winston Churchill knew this. In the midst of the Second World War, when everybody was afraid and uncertain about the future, while Britain was still being pounded and bombed; Churchill said, “When I look back on the perils which have been already overcome, upon the great mountain waves through which the ship is driven; when I remember all that has gone right, I am encouraged to feel that we need not be afraid, that the tempest will be overcome. Let it roar, let it rage, we shall come through.”

My friends it is in the overcoming of your troubles, the conquering of your problems, the facing of your fears, the understanding of your uncertainties - that you become the person God created you to be. The risks you take in life are the rocks on which you climb to a higher level of living.

Abram’s life was not easy out there in the wilderness, but he understood that there was a purpose in his difficulties and in his conflicts; so he kept moving forward, growing as he successfully faced every challenge.

I think Abram’s story is teaching us a lesson today.

You’ve got to remember that the purpose of your faith is not to keep you happy, not to make you wealthy, not to soothe your hurt feelings, not to keep you comfortable.

The purpose of your faith in God through Jesus Christ your savior is to keep you steady in the storm, to give you strength to keep on struggling, to help you face every challenge. Faith, at it’s best, is the urge you feel to take a risk, the urge you feel to change your ways, the urge you feel to grow in favor and stature before God.

What is God urging you to do today?

I hope you're feeling the urge to set aside just a few minutes every day this week to study the devotional booklet that was sent to you.

I hope you're feeling the urge to think about what role you can play in the building of our new church.

I hope you're feeling the urge to pray about it, and to step out in faith, knowing that you can do something you never thought you could do before.

I hope you're feeling the urge to make a pledge to our Firm Foundation for The Church Capital Campaign.

And, I hope you're feeling the urge to be here next Sunday.