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Multipliers Move by Faith

October 26, 2025
Series: Multipliers
Genesis 12

BIG IDEA – WE WANT TO BE MEN AND WOMEN OF FAITH

We want to be a place and a people full of stories, stories of God using us in the lives of other people. Could you think of any better life than everybody you know and everybody you meet having stories about how God used you in their life? If you're new, we are a part of a Multiply Initiative, and we've been in this initiative for 14 months, since September of 2024. The whole idea is that we want to multiply.

One of the main ways we multiply is we take personal risks to bring Christ to every relationship. I don't know how else the gospel goes forward. Whether we're in the Congo or the carpool line, whether we're going to the nations or trying to reach someone in your neighborhood, whether it's your friend or your family member, the only way the gospel goes forward is you take that one relationship and ask, "God, what is the risk you're asking me to take?"

We have been in this Multiply Initiative for 14 months. Today, we're going to start our final series, the *Multipliers* series. In the center of the *Multipliers* series, we're having a Multiply Night. It's a Night of Prayer and Worship. Now, here's what we know. Maybe you can help me figure this out. We know that every time we have a Night of Prayer and Worship, no matter when we put it on the calendar, no matter how much I talk about it beforehand, one third of you show up.

Now, one third of two campuses plus three services is a pretty full room, but I'm still... I'm just having a conversation as a family here. I'm not upset. I'm not here to beat you up; I'm here to build you up. But I just don't know what's happening in our church to where we say, "We're going to have an incredible Night of Prayer and Worship," and two thirds of the church goes, "Nah, not for me."

Here's what I know: if you come to a prayer and worship night just one time, I'll never have to invite you or recruit you again because you're going to be there every time, because it really can't be explained; it has to be experienced. I want to invite you, because here's what we're doing. At this prayer night on November 10, two weeks from tomorrow, we're going to be praying through all we're planning for in 2026.

Some of you want to know if you are getting another journal. You need to come to the prayer and worship night to figure it out. You want to know, "Kyle, what series are we going through? What's the emphasis? What are we doing with campuses? What's the future?" We're going to answer all of those questions and many more at the Multiply Night while we also worship deeply and pray expectantly together.

By the way, as we talk about all that God is going to do in 2026, let me just take a moment and celebrate our West Campus interest meeting. By the way, we called it *West Campus* because we had a direction. Now we have a destination, so we're now calling it the *Davie Campus*. We had an incredible turnout.

Here's what we're trying to do, guys. We are trying to build a launch team, and I just want to invite you one more time. If you live closer to Davie County than this building, I want to invite you to be a part of our launch team. There are not many times in your life where you get the opportunity to start something.

I'm just telling you, if it weren't for the 30 people who were on our launch team back in 2016 who moved here, all that we've gotten to see and experience wouldn't have happened. So, I want to take a moment and pray for those who are considering being a part of the launch team. Also, if that *is* you, text the word *LAUNCH* to 39808, and we can get you all the information you need. Let's pray.

Lord, we are about to enter the final series in a year-plus-long initiative. We're going to look at the life of Abraham, who's held up in the Scriptures as a model of faithfulness, a model of faith, even with all his failures, faults, and flaws. I pray you would take the next five weeks in this incredible Scripture on the life of Abraham and use it to encourage us, to give us hope, and to challenge us. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Find Genesis, chapter 12. If you have one of those real Bibles, it's not going to be hard for you to find. It's the first book of the Bible. Go to chapter 12. I'm going to tell you two things. First, why we are calling this series *Multipliers*, and second, what has happened in Genesis so far.

We're calling this series *Multipliers* because the first command and the first blessing of Scripture is for us to multiply. Genesis 1:28 has been our theme verse. "***And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...'***" God is the

only one, ultimately, who can cause us to multiply, but we, you and me, are the vehicles and the vessels through whom God multiplies.

So, we're in this final series, because after this we'll do a Christmas series and end the year together. We're asking God uniquely, "God, would you put an exclamation point at the end of this initiative, and would you help us to multiply?" Now, what has happened so far in the book of Genesis? We're going to pick up in chapter 12.

I need to tell you in general, if you don't know what the Bible is about... Here's what people think. If you've never read the Bible, you're like, "I know what the Bible is. It's a bunch of stories about good religious people and all of the good things they did." That could not be farther from the truth.

In fact, if you've ever read the Bible, like, really read it... Like, you said, "Okay. I'm going to read through the Bible in a year." Maybe you only made it to Leviticus, like most people. That's okay. But if you made it to the Prophets and the Minor Prophets and the Proverbs and the Psalms...

If you make it all the way to the end of Malachi, here's what you're going to say: "There are so many horrible things that happen in this book. This is a sad book." Because here's what the Bible is. What is the message of the Bible in one sentence? It would be *man's failure, God's faithfulness*.

Think about Genesis 1-11. Let me just take you through before we get to Genesis 12. Here's where we've been. Genesis 1 starts out great. God creates the world, perfect people in a perfect place, Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3, they rebel, and they drag us all into sin. That's Genesis 3.

Genesis 4: the first brothers. Cain kills Abel. Genesis 6: there's so much evil, God needs to flood the world. The very guy God uses to do that gets off the boat and gets drunk. After the flood, they try to build a tower to make a great name for themselves. They use technology to try to be god. (That's a modern story.)

All of that happens in the first 11 chapters. In fact, here's an interesting thing. The first 11 chapters are about events. I mean, there are people, but it's the prologue to the rest of the Bible. Picking up in Genesis 12, we move from events to people. The rest of Genesis, chapters 12-50, is about four people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and their families.

We're going to cover all of chapter 12, but we're going to focus the vast majority of our time on verses 1-3. Let's look at those together. It says, "**Now the LORD said to Abram...**"

So, we're going to talk about Abram. He later becomes *Abraham*, because God has such a massive impact on our lives, it changes the most basic things about us, even our name.

Abram means father; *Abraham* means father of many nations. I will probably call him *Abraham* instead of *Abram*, because that's what his name is ultimately going to be. I may even occasionally call him *Abe*. We'll see. We're just going to follow along. **"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house...'"**
"Leave everything you've known."

"...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." That's what Pastor Spencer talked about last week. You're blessed to be a blessing. "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."

I am so excited to talk about Abraham for five weeks, because Abraham is one of the most important people you've probably never learned much about. In fact, he's so important that three of the major world religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, all trace their lineage back to him as father of their faith.

He's so important that in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, we're told to look to him as a model of faith. Abraham is a perfect example of an imperfect person who has faith in God. Then, in Romans 4, he's also held up as an example. So, I want to talk about who Abraham is and what we're going to be looking at.

So, three words to describe Abraham. The first would be he's just an ordinary, normal guy. In fact, he's actually 75 years old. Now, he's going to live to be over 150 years old, because they weren't eating as much processed food as we are. Think about it this way. Seriously. Here's what I want you to realize. He's halfway through his life, and he has not done much. That's what a midlife crisis is for some people. He's trying to figure out, "What am I going to do?"

This is interesting. It seems like he has a good marriage, because in a moment, she's going to follow him in all of these promises and trust him. So, he seems to have a good marriage and... You're going to meet him a little bit today just by mentioning, but you're going to meet him next week. He has this crazy nephew named Lot. If you see Lot, just remember he's a lot of trouble. Okay? That's what I want you to remember about Lot. We'll get into him next week.

This is actually really interesting, because he's also a man who's suffering. He's living an ordinary life, but he's suffering. Now, this is, I think, a deep word for some of you. We're going to find out that Abram and Sarai, who will become Sarah, can't have kids. If you

know any couples like that... We have couples like that in our church today. That's really, really painful. Back then, it was as painful as it is today. Plus, also, kids were your business strategy and your retirement plan, so it was a really big deal.

Now, here's what I want you to notice, though. While Abraham was not able to be a father, he was a very good uncle. Here's something that's very pastorally helpful. Abraham accepts God's substitutes while he holds on to God's promises. Like, what do you do when you're single longer than you want to be single? You lean into all of the relationships God has given you. What do you do when you have a horrible job that you don't like? You're faithful in that job as you're trusting God for another job.

Here's what I want you to see. He's an ordinary guy, he's suffering, and he's religious but doesn't know God. He knows God now that God spoke to him, but here's what we know. Joshua, chapter 24, tells us that Abraham's dad and the generations before Abraham worshiped idols, and from what we can tell, at that time in that place, Abraham's family would have worshiped the moon. So, he's religiously lost. He's worshipping the wrong thing, and God appears to him.

Go back in your Bible to chapter 11, verse 32. I picked up in chapter 12, verse 1, but the chapter distinctions were added in the 1300s, and the verse numbers were added in the 1500s. This is just one long story. Let's go back to chapter 11, verse 32. I want you to see this. ***"The days of Terah [Abraham's dad] were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran."***

Abraham is going to get an incredible call on his life after his dad dies. I think, by extension, by implication and application, here's how this works. Often, something in your life needs to die before you can hear God more clearly. I mean, this is a great series, because this is the time of year where, if you're thinking ahead, you're like, "It's about to be 2026 soon. I want to have all of these plans. I want to be a different type of person."

Here's what I want you to know: if you're going to hear God's voice more clearly, something in your life might need to die. ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*** Is there a sinful habit in your life that you know needs to die if you're going to hear God's voice more clearly? Is there a relationship in your life that needs to end? Does some boyfriend need to be an ex-boyfriend for you to hear God more clearly?

Here's what we know. This is so true. It is through the painful circumstances in Abraham's life that he's finally able to hear God. C.S. Lewis famously said something like, "God whispers in our pleasures, speaks to us every day, but uses a megaphone in our pain."

Now, why are we looking at Abraham? Here's the big idea for the rest of the series. Abraham was a man of faith. What we want to be, as a church, is men and women of

faith. In fact...you know this...all of the people you admire in life have some type of faith. We're going to talk uniquely about Christian faith.

I'm just saying they dreamed dreams. They believed in something bigger and greater than themselves. They thought more about the future than the present. I want to talk to you about faith for a minute, because *faith* is a Christian word, but it is not a uniquely Christian word.

A lot of people would say, "I have faith." Here's what people mean by *faith*, usually: "I'm optimistic. Faith is kind of what I do when things don't make sense. Faith is wishful thinking." Or here's what a lot of people might think. Faith is "Well, I believe in God."

Whether you're in Lexington or here or somewhere else, I bet if you go to your classmates, your coworkers, your friends, your family... Of course, you'll meet some agnostics and some atheists, but I bet you're going to meet a lot of people who have a general belief in God.

Here's what faith is. Faith is not believing *in* God; faith is believing God. I'm going to give you a definition even more detailed than that. I'm going to give you a definition of faith for this whole series. Here's what it is: *taking God at his word and taking your next step*. I double dog dare you to take God at his word in some area of your life and take your next step.

This is all that happens. Abraham is lost. He's living an ordinary life. He's suffering. God comes to him and gives him a word. We'll see this in verse 4. He actually believes it and responds to it in obedience. What would it look like...? Just pick an area of your life, like finances. "Okay. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to take God at his word, and I'm going to take my next step."

Marriage. "Okay. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm not going to worry about what *she's* doing or what *he's* doing. I'm going to read the Bible. What does the Bible say I am to do in marriage? I'm going to do that. I'm going to take God at his word, and I'm just going to take my next step, and I'm going to trust God for what's going to happen."

I'm just telling you that's the most biblical way to live, but it's also the most exciting way to live. So, with our time left, here's what I'm going to do. We're going to look at Abraham's faith today. We're going to be looking at it for the next five weeks, but I want us to see four foundational principles of faith from Abraham's life in Genesis 12.

First, *God does more than save you; he calls you*. Let's look back to the call. I want you to see this. **"Now the LORD said to Abram..."** Out of nowhere. Why? He just comes to Abram. Everything in your life needs to start with the word of God.

"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 dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

God saves Abraham, but he also calls him. Here's the thing. I don't know when this happened. I took four church history classes when I was in seminary, and I'm not exactly sure when this happened, but at some point in American evangelicalism, Christianity just became about being saved.

And I'm as excited as anyone when people go, "Clayton King is coming. Get them here. Clayton King is going to be at the Heights Conference. Invite all of your lost friends and neighbors, and we're just going to pray that God saves." I love it. And I loved, afterward, celebrating that 150 people or more gave their lives to Christ and publicly declared faith in Jesus and God saved them. But salvation is just the beginning of the Christian life.

Here's what I've seen happen. You have to remember I didn't grow up in the church. I grew up as a nominal Roman Catholic. I'm the last person I ever thought would be a pastor. So, I've had to get used to church culture, which I didn't understand; private Christian schools; homeschooling...I mean, all of the things that go with evangelicalism and Bible-believing Christians.

Here's what I've realized. Sometimes, unintentionally, we're raising our kids to think Christianity is about what we don't do. It's like, "All right. We don't smoke, drink, or chew or hang with girls that do." I mean, it's so easy, especially when they become teenagers... You're like, "All right. Here are the movies you're not allowed to watch. Here are all of the events you're not allowed to go to. Here are all of the words you're not allowed to say, but you can say *these* words that kind of sound like them."

Yeah, there *are* certainly things we should not do, and there are areas we shouldn't go, and all that, but what if we gave our children more of a taste for mission, more of a taste for adventure? What Abraham is called to is an adventure. See, let me explain this. This is what's so great. It's easy to read Genesis 12 and go, "Okay, Kyle. I'm not Abraham, and neither are you." Like, "Okay. God didn't appear in a dream or a vision and give me a direct calling on my life."

Well, through the Bible, every Christian has three callings. The first calling (Abraham has this with him too) is the calling to *sanctification*. If you go, "What is God calling me to? What is the will of God for my life?" the answer is *sanctification*, which means to be the godliest version of yourself, to become more and more like Jesus Christ.

What would Jesus Christ do if he were you? What would it look like for you to be the holiest and happiest version of yourself? It's a lifelong calling of cultivating righteousness and putting sin to death in our lives. This last week (we don't normally do this kind of stuff), we took our entire staff team to Charlotte, North Carolina, to the Billy Graham Library. It is so awesome.

You know, you see Billy's life, and all this, but at the end... I had forgotten this, because I hadn't been there since 2010. Ruth Graham and Billy Graham are buried there. So, they tell you, "Hey, after you see all the stuff, go down and go to the prayer area and go see their tombstones, their gravestones."

So, we go down there, and I look, and on Billy's tombstone it says, "Billy Graham, a preacher of the gospel." Okay. That's great. That's kind of what I expected it would say on there. Do you know what Ruth's says? If you've not been there, you don't know this. Ruth's says, "End of construction. Thank you for your patience."

Ruth had told her family, "Guys, that's what I want on my tombstone." She told them a long time ago. She said, "Because I'm trying to become more like Jesus, but it's a lifelong process that's not going to be over until I die." So she said, "I want it to say, 'End of construction. Thank you for your patience.'"

The second calling is the calling to *service*. You know, some are moms, and some are dads, and some have *this* job, and some have *that* family, but every Christian is called to service. This is good works and good words. This is good deeds and good news. Part of the process of figuring out...

Actually, they work together. As you become the godliest version of yourself, you're sharing Christ more, and as you're sharing Christ more, it's exposing all of the idols, insecurities, and fears in your heart, and you're praying to God and turning more like Christ.

The third calling is one that's also very clear in Scripture but underneath those and connected to those. It's the calling to *suffering* and *sacrifice*. I mean, Abraham is going to learn this today. There are no... Some people are like, "Is there a hack? Is there a shortcut to serving? Is there a shortcut in sanctification?" There is no shortcut. It's suffering. It's sacrifice.

Abraham is called to adventure. By the way, notice the key word. Let me read verse 1 one more time. **"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go...'"** Literally, in the Greek, it's a word that means get out or leave. So, here's the whole thing. He's called to an adventure.

Are some of you...? You know, men especially. Once they've made enough money that they're not worried about paying all of the bills, they're so bored. That's why they get into so much trouble. It's like, "What do I do now? I've made enough money. I'm so bored." Yet at the same time, we love the idea of an adventure.

You know, your kids will be young, and they'll want to read Harry Potter. These books are massive. They'll want to read all seven and then watch all eight movies. What's *that* about? Well, it's about an adventure. What's *The Lord of the Rings* about? An adventure. What's Narnia about? An adventure. What are James Bond and *Mission: Impossible* and *The Bourne Identity* and all of these epic movies about? It's all about an adventure.

Here's the thing. If you start taking God at his word and taking your next step, your life will be so unbelievably exciting and exhilarating you won't be able to handle it. If you're bored, if you're like, "I'm just bored in my faith," go to the nearest park or come to downtown Lexington or downtown Winston and start talking to somebody about Jesus. Your faith will get so exciting, and it will be so real so quickly.

See, what's interesting about this call to Abraham is it's all about the future. Do you notice that? He basically goes, "I need you to go. I need you to leave your family, your past, your land, the value systems of your culture, and all that you knew in the past, and I just need you to go." Then he basically says, "And when you get there, I'll tell you more."

So, here's the other thing about faith: faith is future-oriented. Unhealthy people live in the past. Right? You know this. They're stuck. In fact, I heard a respectable clinical psychologist say, "If something that happened more than 18 months ago still makes you cry, it's because you're still there." There's part of you that's stuck back there that doesn't understand... You haven't confessed it. You haven't processed it. You haven't been reconciled, so it still makes you cry 18 months later.

In the most unhealthy marriages, both spouses, or at least one of the spouses, is a relational archaeologist. You know, "Well, in 2002, at my brother's wedding..." It's like, "What?" Now, it doesn't mean we can't talk... We *have* to talk about the past so we can get over the past. In fact, you know that you're actually healthy when you can talk about the past and not get emotionally riled up about it. But we can't *live* in the past even though we need to *learn* from the past.

Unhealthy people are also obsessed with the present. A person with an addiction is a person obsessed with the present. They can't see the future. They keep choosing what they want now over what they want most. They want immediate, cheap, instant pleasure. He says we have to look to the future.

Now, here's what's interesting. If you go to Hebrews 11, which summarizes... Hebrews 11 is the "hall of faith" chapter, and it goes through all of these people. In Hebrews 11, it summarizes in one sentence (you can go read it later) what Abraham did. It says Abraham, by faith, going without knowing, headed into the Promised Land. Part of faith is I have God's promises, but I don't have a lot of answers.

Think about this. Remember, he says, "Go to a land that I will show you." Abraham doesn't have a timeline. He doesn't know why. He doesn't know how. He doesn't really know where. He has never been to the Promised Land. He doesn't even know when. See, here's the thing. A mature Christian goes, "I'm okay to live without having all of the answers because I believe God's promises."

I'll tell you a story. The late, great Tim Keller, who I guess I have to quote once a month up here... I heard a story recently from someone talking about Tim Keller. They said they were with Tim Keller in New York City, and Tim Keller was talking to some renowned atheist.

The guy was telling the story. He goes, "I'm sitting with Tim, and Tim is giving the best explanation I've ever heard for the problem of suffering and evil." He's like, "He's bringing *this* Scripture and *this* cultural insight, and he's explaining *this*." He said, "I'm sitting there listening to him, going, 'Give it to him, Tim. This is the best I've ever heard.'"

He said, "But what I was surprised at is how Tim ended it." After he gave this epic explanation of a biblical understanding of suffering and evil, he looked at the atheist and went, "And that gets me about 80 percent there. I trust Jesus with the other 20 percent. I don't have all of the answers, but I do ultimately have the promises of God."

If you're going to live a life of faith, you have to realize God has done more than save you; he has called you. Secondly, you have to realize *God has given you more than commands; he has given you promises*. Some of you grew up in a Christianity that was only commands. Commands, commands, commands, commands. Like I said before, it was all of the things. Basically, every week was like, "You're a horrible person. Try harder. See you next week."

I want you to see that in the Bible it's command and promise. Sometimes it's command *before* promise, but there are always more promises than commands. Let me show you this. Here's what it says. I'm back in verse 1. "**Now the LORD said to Abram...**" We get one command with three implications. "**Go...**" That's the command. "**...from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.**"

Now the rest are promises. "**And I will...**" This is what God is saying. He says, "I want you to do one thing, and here are all of the things *I'll* do." "**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 dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

I want you to understand something. I'm going to oversimplify something, but it gets the main idea. You could summarize the entire Bible in two things: command and promise. Or if you want to get more theological... Like, if you went to seminary, they would say, "You could take the whole Bible and divide it into law and gospel." In fact, someone famously said, "The law points the finger, but the gospel extends the hand."

Here's what I mean. If you want your Bible reading to be more exciting than it currently is... Maybe you say, "Kyle, this morning I woke up and read 10 verses of Philippians 1, and I felt nothing." Here's what you can do. This is such a helpful little tool. Literally, read the same passage. Try to get your heart in the right posture and go, "God, is there a command for me to obey or is there a promise for me to believe in here?"

See, the way it works is we're given a bunch of commands, but we're given even more promises. I'm guessing some of you, in your marriage, are just focusing on commands. "These are all of the things God told me I have to do." You can't live that way. You have to go, "These are all of the things God told me to do, and these are all of the things he has promised will happen."

If you just have commands, you'll become legalistic and moralistic. If you just have promises, you'll become lazy and licentious, because you'll be like, "Ah, God is going to make it all work and forgive me, and I'll go to heaven, and everything will be fine, because God is sovereign and God is in control." I want you to see... We'll look very quickly at the commands, but a little bit more on the promises.

Here's the command. The command is "Go." Literally, "Leave." He basically tells him to leave three things. His *father's house*. That's everything you knew and all the authority you had. When you become a Christian, you need to get a new authority. No longer is culture your authority. No longer is your three-pound brain your authority. No longer is what is popular your authority. You're like, "Okay. I have a whole new authority. It's God."

He says, "You need to leave your *land*." That would be the culture and the value system of your day. Then he says, "You need to leave your *kindred*." By the way, when a person becomes a Christian... In the Bible, becoming a Christian and being engrafted into the local church happen at the same time.

Baptism is the picture of that happening. That's why it'll talk about "Repent and be baptized." When you are engrafted into a local church, all of a sudden you have a new

authority (God's Word), you have a new community (the church), and you have a new value system (what the Bible teaches).

I want to focus on the promises. He gets something like, depending on how you count it out, five or six promises. I want to focus on two of them. He says, **"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."** Here's how this works: going without knowing but going and God saying he'll be showing. Here's what I mean: you will not fully understand until you obey.

Can we just admit...? We all know this by experience. There are certain things you can't explain to somebody until they've experienced it. You know, how do you explain to somebody who has never been a parent how much they are going to love their kid? There's no other relationship like it. There's no other relationship that can take its place, and you can't explain it until you've done it.

How do you explain to somebody who's bitter, angry, resentful, and revengeful that actually, if they would forgive, they would be set free? How do you explain to modern people that there's more to life than taking all of your money and saving it for you and then spending it on you? Generosity is something that has to be experienced. I take God at his word, I take my next step, and then it's in the rearview mirror of my life that I understand what God is actually doing.

Then he says, **"And I will make of you a great nation..."** That's the idea of influence. **"...and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."** Look at verse 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."**

When he says, "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you..." Here's the other main promise God is saying with saying that: "I will be with you." I didn't know this. Well, I knew the first part of this. This is the part I knew. I knew the number one command in the Bible is "Do not fear." Just so you know, if you're into Bible trivia, the command "Do not fear" shows up 366 times. So, for every day of the year, even in a leap year, you have a "Do not fear."

I knew that. I'd heard that. I've heard that preached. That's a great little stat about Scripture. What I did not know was what the number one promise in the Bible is. It makes sense to me now, because wouldn't the number one promise be connected to the number one command, if we need both commands and promises?

Guess what the number one promise in the Bible is. "I will be with you." It's what the Great Commission, the "going" in the New Testament, is communicated with. "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." It's sometimes written *this* way if you're

reading the Old Testament. It sometimes sounds like, "I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you."

So, what do we do? If we're going to live a life of faith, we need to realize that God didn't just save us; he called us to do things, and we need to realize that as we move forward to know Christ and make him known, we want to grab as many commands and as many promises, and we want to live in the tension of all God has commanded us and all God has promised us.

But there's a third thing. If we're living a life of faith, we have the option... We can either *make excuses or make progress*. Let me show you this. Turn with me to verse 4. "**So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...**" By the way, when we get to verse 9 or verse 10, we're going to end looking at some of the mistakes he made, but I just want to take a moment and celebrate that Abraham went.

I don't know. Maybe God would have raised up somebody else, but if Abraham didn't obey, we wouldn't be here today. We are sitting in the seats of other people's sacrifice and the faith they had. I want to talk for a few minutes about some of you and the excuses you have, because I think they're very similar to the excuses Abraham could have had. By the way, if you want to know what the very beginning of repentance is, you have to stop making excuses.

Okay. Here's an excuse some of you are making that Abraham could have made: "I'm too young of a believer." People do this for a while. People will be three or four years a believer, and they'll think, "I can't lead a Community Group." Abraham has been a believer for 10 minutes. In other words, sometimes we use, "Okay, I'm too spiritually young." No. God wants to get us in the game, use us early, and use us often.

How about this? This is another one: "I'm not the right age." Abraham is 75 years old. Here's what most people think. Most people spend half their life thinking they're too young and the other half of their life thinking they're too old, which means there was one day. You missed it. There was one day God could have used you. Right? I mean, I had to do this. In college ministry, I started to feel too old. I'd be like, "One day you guys will be married." They were like, "Ah!" I was older than them.

Then I got *here*, and people were older than my parents. I'm telling you, for the first three years I was a pastor, I was like, "I'm just way too young to do this thing. There are people my parents' age. There are people who are older than my parents here, and people have grandkids. I can't be their pastor. They're older than me." We think we're too young.

Here's another one: "My life is just too hard. I'm suffering too much. God can't use me." If there was anyone who was suffering... It's like, "All right. We're old, and God doesn't need to use a bunch of people who have their own problems already. My wife can't get pregnant. I have this crazy nephew I have to take care of. I'm not the person to use."

I'll tell you what people do all the time. All the time, people use their stage of life and their kids as excuses to why God can't use them or they can't be more invested and involved in the kingdom of God or in a local church. Literally, people will use their kids. It took me about 10 years to realize this.

People do it in every stage of life. "Oh, no, we can't be in a Community Group." "Why?" "Well, because Timmy and Tommy need to nap six times a day." They tricked me at first. I was like, "Okay. I get that. I get that." Then they'd be like, "Well, sorry. No. He's in kindergarten, and he's very tired. It's an all-day kindergarten, so we can't be involved." "Okay."

Then, "No, no. He's actually playing sports now. He's in travel sports because we're in middle school now, so it's very... He's looking at colleges. He's got a girlfriend. We need to go visit. We have grandkids. I'm sorry." I mean, literally, the moment...I can remember when this happened...the moment I was like, "Wait. This is a choice. People are making excuses."

We had a group of residents. Not residents in our church. If you don't know the medical community (not that I know much), you know, you go to medical school, and then you have your residency, and maybe your fellowship, and then you're an attending doctor. I didn't know all this when we had all of these residents come to our church early on. We're a high-commitment culture, so we were like, "You need to get in a Community Group and get on a serving team."

These young people came up to a couple of us and were like, "Hey, listen. We're residents. We can't do any of that." They were like, "We're really busy. We're working all the time, and it's crazy hours." They tricked me. I remember talking... I was like, "Guys, I guess Community Groups just don't work for residents. This is terrible, because there are a lot of young people in our church I'd love to invest in, but it doesn't work for them."

But then this other group would come up, and they would say, "No, no. We really want to be involved. We're residents. We really want to be in a Community Group." Then a couple of *those* residents asked if they could be leaders of Community Groups. I was like, "Oh, this is not a thing about a life stage you can't do; this is about priorities." So, we need to stop making excuses and start making priorities. I'll show you. Here's what Abram does. Verse 4:

"So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And 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, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram..." So, he takes God at his word. He takes his next step. God gives him more. It's like, what's the last thing...? Is God going to tell you something new to obey if you haven't obeyed the last thing God told you?

"Then 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. From 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. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb."

This is amazing. You read this, and you go, "What a life of faith." In fact, it's a picture of being a pilgrim. He has this tent. The problem with us in America is we just think this place is our home. He's giving this idea of a tent, because he's passing through. And an altar. Basically, he's turning the places he goes to into places of worship.

We want you to go to church to worship. That's what you're doing right now. Then we want you to turn every place you are in or going to *into* a place of worship. You could turn your car into a place of worship. You could turn your kitchen into a place of worship. You could turn your cubicle into a place of worship. You could just go on a walk and worship the Lord. Do what I do. Put your AirPods in. Pray to the Lord. Everyone will think you're on a phone call. You could turn any environment into a place of worship.

Now, here's what I want to say. Until verse 10, Abraham is stellar, I mean, A+++ , until we get to verse 10. This is the final thing. When your faith gets tested, you can either *turn to God's Word or your worries*. Let me show you this. This is the negative one, but I want you to see it. ***"Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land."***

I have compassion on Abraham. If God showed up to you and gave you a massive vision of how he was going to use you and gave you all of these promises, would you expect that things would be so hard so early? I mean, he gets a famine, so he ends up going down to Egypt, which is, you'll see in a moment, a negative thing, just like Jonah went down. He went down into the boat. You'll see what happens in Egypt. Egypt is the opposite of the Promised Land. It doesn't have the value systems.

Okay. Here's what I'm going to ask you: What do you do when you experience famines in your life...a spiritual famine, a relational famine? Here's the thing. Some of you... And I love you. Some of you are so easily discouraged. I know pastors who are discouraged. I was reading an article about pastors one time. Did you know this? This may surprise you. The average pastor quits his job and leaves his church because of seven people. Are you kidding me?

Usually, most of the church loves him and thinks, "Man, he's doing a great job," but there are seven people... Part of what we want to build here by faith... I want you to be brave, and I want you to be resilient by the grace of God. Some of you, it's one negative email, and you fold like a \$2 suitcase. It's one comment on your Facebook feed. You were trying to share something, and you put a picture of your baptism up, and someone made fun of it. You're like, "I'm never doing that again."

I want to encourage you to keep showing up, to keep standing up. The Bible says a righteous man or woman falls seven times, but they get back up. One of the godliest, greatest guys in our church... He has a great family. I try to learn from him. He said, "You know, Kyle..." He has adult children now.

He said, "I taught my kids to keep showing up from a young age." He was like, "You're never quitting a sports team if you get on it. Never. Not *that* season. You're not quitting. You're going to just show up." If you keep showing up day after day after day, you'll look around and go, "I'm the only one here. Everyone else gave up and gave in, and I keep showing up." Let me show you what happens if you don't. Let me show you what happens in Egypt really quickly. Turn with me to verse 11.

"When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, 'I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife." Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake.' When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house."

You read this, and you go, "Really? Is this the type of person God uses, the type of person who lies?" By the way, when you're not living by faith, you lie, because you're like, "I don't trust God. I have to take care of things myself. I have to manipulate this situation. I have to think about it as if God is not going to intervene and does not exist, and I have to take care of it."

So he lies. When you read this, you go, "Gosh! What a terrible husband. Who would give their wife to another man? This is the worst thing you could do." Then, if you actually think about it in the context of the promises of God, you're like, "This is going to ruin everything. This is going to ruin all of God's promises, because it's through Abraham and Sarah that God is going to bless the whole nation. So, what are you doing?"

By the way, when you don't live by faith, you endanger your whole family. Because Abraham wasn't trusting God and was not living by faith, he ended up endangering his whole family. Now look at what happens here. Look at verse 16. It looks like it's working if you just read verse 16. ***"And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels."***

Listen. This is hard to see. You'll see this later. You go, "What's so wrong with this? Abraham lies, and he gets a bunch of stuff." Listen. Everything Abraham gets that I just read to you will haunt him the rest of his life. Where does he pick up Hagar? Right here in Egypt. Next week, we'll come back, and we'll see that he loves Lot, but Lot and all of the people are fighting, and they have to go separate ways. That turns into a mess for several chapters. Where did they get all that stuff? Egypt.

In fact, look here. Let me show you one other thing. Verse 17: ***"But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife."*** Now, if you're reading this, you go, "Wait a second." God came to Abraham and said, "I want to bless you to be a blessing to the whole nation." And what is the first thing Abraham does when he meets someone? He is a curse to them.

In fact, it's so bad that now, instead of Abraham talking to Pharaoh about God, Pharaoh needs to talk to Abraham about God. Look. ***"So Pharaoh called Abram and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife?'"***

Look at this. God will say the same thing to Abraham through Pharaoh. Maybe God has been speaking to *you* through somebody. It says, ***"Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go.' And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had."***

Okay, look. Even when we mess up, God steps in. I told you the whole story of the Bible is the failure of man and the absolute faithfulness of God. We want to talk here a lot about the truth of God's Word, but we also want to talk a lot about the grace of God. Let me just tell you what the grace of God is. Here's one way to think about the grace of God: God knows every stupid and sinful thing you have ever done and ever will, and God is going to get involved and still accomplish his mission.

Here's the thing. How can God be so gracious to a man who would do such a sinful and stupid thing like Abraham did? It's because the story of Abraham is not about Abraham; it's about the greater Abraham. What's the story of Abraham about? How about a guy...? God says, "I'm going to save and bless the entire world through one man." Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who left their Father's house and their land to go find a people? It was Jesus Christ. Who, when the going got tough, did not give over his bride but died for his bride? Who passed every test and every temptation? Jesus Christ. So, in response, we look back with faith to the cross of Christ, and we look forward in faith to all that God is going to do. I want us to be such a faith-filled people. Listen. The size of your God determines the size of your dreams.

A couple years ago, I was with a pastor, and he was nearing retirement. He's in his early 60s. I asked, "What's your vision as you retire?" This is what he said to me: "Our church is going to plant a church next to every US military base in the world." I thought, "Why is his vision clearer than my vision? Why do I now know more about *your* church than I know about *my* church?"

I said, "Really?" I said, "How many military bases are there?" He told me. I can't remember the number. This is what I'll never forget. He goes, "Kyle, the vision is so big I'm going to die before it's over. The plan is I'll be watching my sons complete the vision from heaven."

I thought, "That's the story of Abraham." We'll get there. Like, what does he have? At the end, he has Isaac, and his wife is dead. He has just seen the Promised Land. There's still a lot more to come, because God doesn't just want to do something *in* us; he wants to do something *through* us. He wants to do something *beyond* us.

Hudson Taylor, the great missionary who started one of the greatest missionary movements to China... When he left, he wrote his wife a letter as they were leaving. Do you know what the letter said? "Honey, we have 25 cents and all of the promises of God." Let's pray.

Lord, I just want people, wherever they are, to go, "This is what I have and all of the promises of God. I don't have great health, but I have all of the promises of God. I don't have a lot of money, but I have all of the promises of God. We have a prodigal son, but we have all of the promises of God. We have a 4 out of 10 marriage but all of the promises of God."

Lord, would you help us to be men and women of faith? The Bible says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." The Bible says, "The just shall live by faith." The Bible says,

"Whatever is not done of faith is sin." Jesus Christ said, "Let it be done according to your faith." Lord, we ask in this series that you would give us more faith. Some of us probably just pray the prayer, "I believe; help my unbelief." Lord, would each of us take you at your word and take our next step? We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.