

Text: Gen 12.1-8
St Stephen's

Dec 3/4, 2005
Sat PM/Sun AM

A Special Family

These weeks leading up to Christmas, we are sweeping through scripture to see the big picture. The 'big picture' is of a God who created us to be 'with him'. I call it the **'Immanuel Principle'**. Immanuel is the Hebrew name for God, and it means **"God is with us"**. It is the title given to Jesus because he is "God with us", and he makes life with-God possible - so you can join him and **live your entire life "With-God"**.

Last week we went back to the **Garden of Eden** and looked at Adam and Eve. We saw that they **used to walk with God in the cool of the evenings** in the garden. We discovered that **God made you to walk with him in the cool of the day and talk over what you are doing together in this world.**

C Austin Miles wrote the great devotional hymn, *In the Garden*
And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;

Then **Adam and Eve fell**. They jumped the fence. They ate from the forbidden tree and the world hasn't been the same since. The shock waves reverberated throughout the entire creation, crippling the cosmos, twisting every creature.

God saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil—evil, evil, evil from morning to night.

Gen 6:5 (The Message)

The earth becomes hostile territory. It gets wild and defiant and remarkably evil. God has a **full fledged rebellion** in his hands.

God moves to limit the damage. He places a series of restrictions on human life designed to restrict the growth of evil.

- Life is shortened
- The earth is flooded
- Language is confused

The restraint of evil, by the way, is a good thing. Boundaries and fences and rules and laws are important. Remember that next time someone tells you 'laws don't solve problems'. They may not change hearts, but they do restrain evil.

And that is a good thing to do. But the problem goes deeper. So God goes deeper.

God begins his master plan. He opens a beachhead for his invasion. He chooses a special man and a special family.

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Gen 12:1-2 (NIV)

God calls **Abraham and his family**, he blesses them, and builds them up. Through a family comes a **nation**. Through a nation comes a **savior**. Through the savior comes **salvation** to the whole world.

Here’s the promise God gave to Abraham:

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Gen 12:3 (NIV)

Here’s what I want you to think about today. When God started his work of salvation, **he started with a family**. Since that day, the family is a special means that God uses to bless the world. In the family, children meet God and get to know God and are blessed by God. Through your family, many of your neighbors will hear of God and meet God and be blessed by God. The family is special to God; **it is a great power in his Kingdom**.

Your family is a ‘go between’ between God and your children. If the blessing of God is going to come to your children, God means it to come through your home, first of all.

You may say, “If you knew my home you wouldn’t say that.” But I want to tell you, Abraham’s home was no special place. It was **distressingly normal**. Abraham had to deal with doubt and impatience in his own heart. He repeatedly tried to force God’s hand. He had to deal with deceit and manipulation, and betrayal among his children and grandchildren. Abraham didn’t come from any super holy special home. But here’s what happened: he had been **called by God**

and he answered that call. Abraham became famous as a man of faith in God. Here's what that looked like:

Abraham Listened To God

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go..." Gen 12:1 (NIV)

God spoke and Abraham listened. And the kids noticed this. They saw that when God spoke, **Dad paid attention.** Their Dad was a **Bible-reading, "ears open" servant of God.** That made his home a special home, a "God-blessed home". Your home could be like that. All it takes to get started is a Mom or a Dad who listen when God speaks. And God does speak!

Abraham Followed God

So Abram left, as the Lord had told him.... Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. Gen 12:4 (NIV)

God told him to leave, and he packed up his family and left. I can just hear the kids... "Where we going, Dad?" "Don't know yet." "Why are we going?" "God said to go." And **that settled it.** The kids would never forget those lessons. **God said "Do it" and that settled it.** And that made this home a special home, a "God-blessed home." All it takes to get started is a Mom or a Dad who obey when God commands, follow when God leads. And God does lead!

Abraham Worshipped God

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent...

There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Gen 12:7-8 (NIV)

Abraham was **always stopping for prayer.** His kids noticed that, too. God whispered a promise to Abraham, and he stopped for prayer. God provided for his family, and he stopped for prayer. **Years later** when his kids were grown up, they would travel by those sites and see those altars, and remember... "that is

where Dad stopped to thank God and bless God and worship God. Let's stop." And that made this home a special home, a "God-blessed home." All it takes to get started is a Mom or a Dad who pray and worship and thank God for his blessings. And there is a lot to thank God for!

When God started his work of salvation, **he started with a distressingly normal family**, maybe one just like yours! But it turned into a **God-blessed family**, a 'live life with God' family - because they had a Mom and a Dad who answered the call of God. They **listened** to God and **followed** God and **worshipped** God. And God established a beachhead in a hostile world through this family, and walked through life with this family, and made them a blessed family and then blessed the whole world through this family.

God can do all of that with your family. Moms and Dads, Grandmas and Grampas – if you will be men and women of faith in God – listening to Him, following Him, thanking Him – he will do every bit of that for your children and your children's children. Don't you want in on that?

Prayer

Immanuel Blessing

May God be with every one of you when your kids are small and as they grow through their years. May God be with you.

May God be with you when your children are home and safe and through every season of fears and tears. May God be with you.

May the God who gave you your children be with you and bless you as you raise them for Him

May the God who gave you his Son be with you as you and bless you as you live for Him.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you this Christmas season and every day of your life.

May the Immanuel Savior be with you. Amen.