

† **READING FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES:** Genesis 12:1-4a

**MEDITATION**

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They were an old couple . . . Abraham and Sara . . . childless through all their years of marriage. It appeared that they would spend the rest of their lives in a small crossroad community name Haran in what is today Turkey. Many trade routes passed through Haran . . . all heading in different directions. But one of those roads was God's road. This aged couple would be asked to travel it. Listen for the word of the Lord speaking to your heart from the Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis 12:1-4.

It was a crossroad town. Abraham and his family had traveled there with his father many years before . . . and it now appears that this will be where old Abraham will spend the remaining years of his life with his wife, Sara. It seems that their life journey will end here. But remember . . . Haran is a crossroad town . . . there are roads that can take you back to where you came from . . . and roads that can lead you to where you've never been before. You see, God likes crossroads . . . . God likes to put people in the middle of a crossroad when it's time to change something . . . when it's time to do something new . . . when it's time to head off and participate in God's plans for this world.

But why would Abraham choose to listen to God and head off in a new direction? Doesn't really make a whole lot of sense. First of all . . . he and Sara are old . . . why would anyone want to come out of retirement and head off on an adventure with God? God should have asked them years ago when they were young and full of energy. Secondly . . . this business about making a great nation is a bit farfetched. Sara is barren . . . she is unable to conceive a child. As a matter of fact, a little later in the book of Genesis, Sara gets a good laugh out of any suggestion that she will be the mother of a great kingdom that will eventually be numbered like the stars in heaven. And then . . . Abraham is supposed to leave everything behind . . . his land and his home . . . most of his family . . . and for what? For some nebulous pie in the sky?

But most importantly . . . how does someone who lives in the midst of a culture dominated by so many pagan gods . . . come to trust the one true God . . . to trust God enough to follow what must seem like the wildest and most unbelievable request he has ever heard of in his long life?

I don't know . . . but then I wonder what is it that causes any of us . . . when we are standing in the crossroads . . . and God taps us on the shoulder . . . to follow what sometimes seems like the wildest and most unbelievable request we've ever heard.

Standing in the crossroads. Have you ever been there? Maybe you're standing there right now. You see, there are all kinds of crossroads . . . some are exciting like when a new baby is born . . .

or quite difficult such as when a loved one dies . . . you're at the crossroad when you leave home for the first time . . . or when someone leaves you . . . or when you start that first job . . . or when the pink slip comes in the mail . . . you will find yourself at the crossroad when life seems to have lost all of its meaning . . . or when you sense a stirring so strong in your heart that you're ready to run down a new road with joy . . . You're at the crossroad when you know that your life is falling apart and you could lose everything if something about you doesn't change . . . you're at a crossroad when God taps you on the shoulder.

But making a change at the crossroads can be quite hard . . . I'm pretty sure it really was for Abraham . . . mainly because most of us hate change . . . We especially hate it when WE need to change. Somewhere along the line I've heard that most people begin therapy hoping to receive permission to stay exactly the way they are. But the truth about God (and therapy too) is that they're both ALL ABOUT personal change. It's called transformation, and it's the process God's places us in at any given moment.

Standing at the crossroads is ultimately about our willingness to change – to go forward in the way God's calling us to move . . . or to dig in our heels and refuse to open ourselves to transformation. The reason Abraham is ABRAHAM is that he opened himself to change and moved out in faith . . . against all his self-protective interests. Standing in the crossroads gives you the opportunity to take a spiritual checkup . . . to look deeply into your soul and be willing to reveal the truth of your heart to the Lord . . . no matter what is going on in your life. Crossroads are times of opportunity . . . times when we are called to make those needed changes that will lead us to where God is calling us. Crossroads offer us a new beginning. But like I said . . . they are never easy.

They are, however . . . very important . . . Because they are places where changes are made . . . new directions are found . . . hope is found . . . grace is shared . . .

Even our church is at a crossroad . . . a place where we are listening and answering God's call to head off in new and exciting directions. We've been blessed with new members . . . new missions . . . new opportunities to serve our neighbors . . . we are learning to trust God and to follow just as Abraham did.

Just a few years ago, I was told that Columbia was dying . . . the ground was no longer fertile . . . we were barren. But from what once didn't seem to be very fertile soil . . . God is now leading us on a new journey . . . to a new place . . . and new life is returning . . . new hope is filling our hearts . . . and we are being blessed. And the reason Columbia thriving now is because of you . . . the congregation . . . you came to a crossroad years ago and agreed to CHANGE. If you want to know why some churches are dying . . . well, because it's actually very common for people and churches to just dig in their heels and refuse transformation, because of fear, pride, distrust, whatever. But you wonderful people of Columbia have been able to overcome your fears, just as

Abraham had to,  
and you were willing to open yourself to transformation. It worked out well for Abraham, and  
the world was blessed. It's working out well for this church, and the world IS blessed.

So as you stand there in the middle of a crossroad . . . may you feel the urgings of the Holy Spirit  
within you . . . calling you . . . don't ignore the Spirit's call . . . pay close attention to it. . . and  
may the blessings that you experience in this church . . . the grace of our Lord that you will find  
at this table . . . and the love you will encounter here . . . sustain you through these transformative  
days of Lent . . . through your days of discernment as you encounter the Living God who is  
tapping you on the shoulder right now . . . at the crossroads of your life.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.