

## Plotting Goodness

This week, I want to highlight two pieces of scripture:

From Galatians – “Abraham ‘believed’ God.”

From Genesis, God speaking to Abraham – “I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing ... in you ALL families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Today we’re going to talk about “believing” and “blessing.”

The first thing I want to point out is something that I think many, many Christians misunderstand. The text from Galatians reads, “Abraham BELIEVED God.” God told him he would be blessed and be a blessing to all the world, so he needs to pack up and head west - and so Abraham left the comforts of Ur and his wealthy family and headed west into the unknown. He believed the message he received from God and obeyed.

Many of us have read and understood this verse to mean “Abraham believed IN God.” And then later in the Galatians passage we have been misled to understand this verse to say, ‘If we believe IN God, the way Abraham believed IN God, then we would be saved.’ That is not at all what these verses say.

There was no *believing in God or not believing in God*. For Abraham, God was as much a reality as me standing before you right now. Whether or not God existed was never even a possible thought because the question of God’s existence did not exist. Therefore, believing God means something entirely different than whether or not God exists. Believing God is about trusting God. Abraham trusted God 100%. That’s the definition of faith. That is why Abraham is the patriarch to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Now, a quick reflection on being blessed and being a blessing. Over the summer we pondered the Beatitudes and what it means to be a blessing. And we learned that we are never blessed by things. A blessing is being connected to the divine. Anything that connects us to God is a blessing. That can be holding a newborn. It can be hiking to the summit of a mountain. It can be witnessing the love of two people who commit themselves to one another for life. It can be in the act of prayer. It can be connecting to someone who is in need and easing their pain. There are so many ways we can be connected to God and when we are, we are blessed.

That being said, once we feel we are connected to God, it is our responsibility to help others feel that connection as well. It is the responsibility of the blessed to help others along the faith journey. We are all connected. Our spiritual walk isn’t a solo exercise, it is an exercise that is connected to the rest of humanity.

I’d like to show you a short video clip that Stacey reminded me of. It illustrates for us what we’re talking about today.

## VIDEO

Here Indy came to a place where he couldn't see what was before him. The bridge was painted to look like the walls of the canyon. The bridge was never invisible. It was there, but Indy couldn't see it from his perspective. Did you notice what happened before he took that first step of faith? To take that first step he -

- first consulted a book, a very important book,
- then he heard the call from someone encouraging him to hurry up,
- then he remembered his mentor telling him that he had to believe.
- And finally, after all of that, he closed his eyes and made a decision.

These are the steps we take when we choose whether or not to believe God.

But what we always must remember is that from that decision to believe, we must obey. We must take action. Faith without action is useless. Indy could have stayed on the edge of that canyon and believed all day long that there was a bridge, but without his first step and the second and third and so on, believing is useless without obedience.

The verses from Genesis tell us that Abraham is blessed SO THAT he will be a blessing. His faith, his trust in God, allow him to move forward and that movement empowers others to move forward as well. We see that illustrated in Indy's actions once he crossed the bridge.

When he got to the other side, he knew that his friends were following him, and he knew that they would be faced with the same dilemma when they got to the edge of the cavern. So, Indy blesses them. He makes the crossing a whole lot easier so that his friends can fulfill their call to follow as well. He tosses the dirt and pebbles onto the bridge, so his friends could see it and see their own way forward.

Let's watch the clip again with these insights in mind.

## VIDEO

Isn't that just the most perfect illustration of what we're talking about here? Like Abraham and like Indy, we must first BELIEVE God, and then we must OBEY God and do what God calls us to do. If we believe AND follow through, we will be blessed. Then and only then, from the knowledge of our own experience and connection to God's love, from there, WE CAN PASS IT ON. We can help others to follow along on the journey. We can turn to another and share our

experience, strength and hope. Our journey can make another's journey that much easier. When we can do that, we become that blessing that we've been created to be.

Brothers and sisters, here's where we're at. If we consider ourselves children of Abraham, then we must live each day with these three very simple steps: First, BELIEVE. Second, OBEY. Third, PASS IT ON.