

# Happy Camper

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please take out your Bibles and turn, if you would, to Hebrews chapter 11. And you can also stick a finger in Genesis chapter 12.

Hebrews chapter 11 and also Genesis chapter 12. Emily, would you come and serve us this morning by reading?

Emily is going to read Hebrews chapter 11, verses 8 through 10. When I worked at I-Bailey, we used the term risk adverse to describe clients who were very deliberate in their decision making and not inclined to take chances.

That's me. I am risk adverse. It's a nice way of saying I'm a scaredy cat. In early 2002, I left a secure job at a well-established business for what was then a dream position with a startup company.

But that dream quickly turned into a nightmare one afternoon when an FBI agent called me investigating the owner of the startup for tax fraud.

[ 2 : 00 ] I am risk adverse. I do not like ambiguity in relationships. I like to know where I stand with people.

And so I am very, you all know this about me, I am very sensitive not only to the words that are said, but to body language and the tone of voice. This is because I am risk adverse.

And I don't like ambiguity in relationships. I like to know where I stand with people. I am inclined to being very nervous about tasks getting done.

And as a result of this, I don't delegate very well. And snowblowing at about 40 below is the most extreme sport that I am interested in.

But despite my aversion to risk, my life like yours is full, isn't it, of uncertainty.

[ 3 : 08 ] Will my kids continue to love Jesus? Will I be able to retire someday? Will the Vikings win this afternoon?

Will my marriage last? Am I doing a good job at work? What effects will the war in the Middle East have on me and my family and our future?

Does he trust me? Will she turn against me? Who will I marry? Have I made a wise career choice? How will this unexpected life change affect me and my family going forward?

All of this uncertainty in our lives. Life is unpredictable. It is full of ambiguity.

It is full of uncertainty. And that means you and I have a choice. You can eliminate some discomfort in your life by seizing control of circumstances and manipulating people to get what you want and then making decisions in your own understanding.

[ 4 : 21 ] That's a choice that you can make. Or, by God's grace and the Spirit's power, you can trust God even when the future seems uncomfortable, uncertain, unpredictable, insecure.

We need God's counsel and we need Jesus' wisdom and we need the Holy Spirit's power in order to make this choice.

So let's turn our attention to God's word. Father, we are grateful to have your word and we ask that you would guide us and help us as we consider the life of Abraham.

Help us to believe the things that we see here in your word and help us to obey the truths that you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bring to our attention today.

We ask this for your glory and our good. In Jesus' name, amen. Abraham is our next example of faith.

[ 5 : 36 ] And Abraham also faced this choice. This choice that I mentioned about controlling circumstances and manipulating people and making power, making decisions by your own understanding, or choosing to trust God for the unknown, uncertain, unpredictable future.

This is Hebrews chapter 11 in verse number 8. By faith, Abraham obeyed. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called.

Now, perhaps compared to Noah, who labored for a hundred years, when we read this about Abraham's obedience, it doesn't seem like all that big of a deal.

Of course, when God calls, you would obey, right? Of course. Would you? I suspect we bring some presuppositions to this story of Abraham, and that just means that we import into this story some, maybe some ways that we've thought about it in the past and haven't properly gone back to scripture.

Some thinking, perhaps, that allows us to sort of wrongly interpret the story of Abraham. It's natural to assume that Abraham is the next godly person in the line after Noah.

[ 7 : 07 ] And there is a sense in which that's true, but there is also a significant gap between Noah and Abraham, a gap of many generations, and a gap that also includes the Tower of Babel and God confusing the languages of all of the people on earth and people being dispersed across the known world.

Surprisingly, I think, Abraham and his family were not followers of God like Abel and like Enoch and like Noah.

In fact, according to Genesis, or sorry, according to Genesis, I did it again. According to Joshua 24 verse 2, Abraham and his family were idolaters.

Kids, do you know what that means to be an idolater? Elam, do you know? Oh, I thought you were whispering the answer.

Evan? Yeah, you worship idols. That's what the book of Joshua tells us about Abraham and his family. They were idolaters.

[ 8 : 25 ] Abraham's family lived in a place called Ur of the Chaldeans. This is a city on the Euphrates River. If you were to go look for it now, it's in southern Iraq.

And the community that they are part of is polytheistic. Do you know what that means, Elam? That's a hard one. Polytheistic. It means that they worshipped many gods, lots of gods.

That's why they were idolaters. Because they were worshipping many false gods, many idols. What do I need today?

Okay, I need rain. So I'm going to go and present some kind of an offering to the rain god today.

What do I need today? I need my wife to like me.

So I'm going to go and offer an offering to the god of love or whatever. Right? They are polytheistic idolaters. So it should catch our attention when the Lord speaks to Abram.

[ 9 : 35 ] Because he is not the next god follower in the line after Noah. He's an idolater. But look what happens in Genesis chapter 12.

Genesis chapter 12. 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. So Abram went as the Lord had told him.

Now, if Abraham is a god follower at this time, this makes perfect sense to us. But he's not. He's an idolater. But God speaks to him and calls him to go.

[ 10 : 41 ] And Abraham obeys God's call. Obedience is evidence of faith.

Think about that for a minute. Obedience is evidence of faith. Think about sin. Sin is rooted in unbelief.

When we doubt God, when we doubt his goodness, when we doubt his provision, when we doubt his care for us, when we doubt that he knows what's best for us, then what do we do?

We take matters into our own hands and we sin. Think about Adam and Eve in the garden. Led by the serpent.

They begin to doubt God's goodness. They begin to question whether God is telling them the whole truth. Does God really have my best interests in mind?

[ 11 : 48 ] What do they do? They seize control of the situation for themselves. And as a result of their disbelief, they take what God has forbidden.

They disobey. Sin is proof of unbelief. But obedience is evidence of faith because faith, according to our working definition of faith, catalyzes obedience.

It motivates, it compels obedience. Don't imagine for one moment that you have faith in God if you are not obedient to God.

By faith, Hebrews 11 says, Abraham obeyed when he was called. God calls Abraham to leave behind everything.

His country, his family, his heritage, his culture, his way of life, his religious, his religious appeals, his idols, all of it, leave all of it behind.

[13:03] Would you obey that kind of a call? Would you leave behind everything that we look to for security, everything we look to for significance, everything we look to to give us some kind of a stable, certain future?

Would you give up those things in response to a God that you don't know yet, but he has graciously spoken to you and called you to leave it?

Would you obey? Would you obey when God doesn't tell you where you're going?

He just says, go to the land that I will show you. Future tense. Go to that land.

What land? The land that I will show you. Leave it all behind, everything that you know for certain, and go to a land that I will show you. How would you like that?

[14:10] Kids, how do you like it when mom says, I want you to get in the car and you say, where are we going? Just get in the car. Well, where are we going? Get in the car. What do I need to bring with me?

I just want you to obey and get in the car. Everything inside of you is like, I'm not doing it because I don't know where we're going. I don't know what I'm supposed to bring. I don't know what I need to prepare for. Any of that.

And then your mom just says, I want you to trust me. Just get in the car. This is God's call to Abraham.

He went out, Hebrews 11 says, not knowing where he was going. Verse 8, Hebrews 11.

By faith, he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

[15:24] God calls Abraham. Abraham, Abraham obeys. But, like Abel, don't miss this, like Abel, Abraham dies without receiving the fullness of God's promise.

And his son didn't receive it either. And his grandson didn't receive it either. In fact, in the book of Acts, chapter 7, when Stephen is preaching, Stephen says, Abraham never possessed one square foot of the land that God promised to him.

Imagine that you have a wealthy aunt. Some of you have wealthy aunts, perhaps. And your wealthy aunt says, I have a piece of land down in Kentucky.

It is a beautiful piece of land. And I want you to come down here and live down here and you can have this land. So you pack it all up here and you load up your minivan or your expedition or whatever and you haul yourself down to Kentucky and then you pull out of the back of your vehicle a tent.

tent and you set up a tent. Now, that would make sense for a day, right? Or a weekend or a week. But then what if you never actually clear the land?

[17:03] When you never actually build a house and you just live your entire life but never actually possessing the land that your aunt has given you?

Now, I know that I may be strange when I say this but I don't really like the idea of living in a tent even for a weekend.

And I know that probably rubs some of you the wrong way. I promise we can still be friends but let me ask you this question. What would motivate Abraham to leave the security the significance and a future that mattered in Ur of the Chaldeans and go and follow a God who called him and camp out in a land that God promised to give him but that he was never able to fully take possession of?

What would ever motivate him to do that? Well, the answer is in verse 10. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God.

What motivates Abraham Abraham to go and to live in this land that God had promised him but never take possession of it?

[18:44] What motivates him to leave his family, his heritage, his culture, his idolatry? What motivates him to leave all of that behind and go and follow this God who has graciously called him?

It's faith. faith. By faith, Abraham reaches into the future and grabs hold of God's promise of a city, a city that has foundations, a city that was designed and built by God.

Abraham grabs hold of that promise of a future city and pulls it into his present and says, I can live like a nomad, like an exile, like a pilgrim for the rest of my life because I have confidence, I have faith in God's promise of a city with foundations that God himself has designed and built.

Abraham camps out in a tent, a sojourner, an exile. Why? Because he believes God's promise. He believes that God's promise about a city is as good as true. And so he reaches into the future, grabs hold of that promise, and then lives as though God's promise has already come true.

[ 20 : 20 ] And that, that is faith. Abraham understands I am not home yet.

Even this land that God has promised me is not my final home. But there's something very compelling about Abraham's faith that Jesus reveals to us that I also want to share with you today, and this is in John chapter 8.

John chapter 8. Jesus is having an extended, you could call it a discourse, a debate, a discussion, you could call it an argument as long as you don't put any sin into our Savior Jesus.

It is a very intense disagreement between himself and the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus. John chapter 8 and verse 39, the Jewish religious leaders speak first.

They answered him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did.

[ 21 : 42 ] but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. You are not responding like your father Abraham.

Verse 48, the Jews answered him, are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?

Verse 51, Jesus speaks, truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. The Jews said to him, now we know you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.

Are you greater than our father Abraham who died and the prophets died? Are you greater than father Abraham? Narrator voice, he is greater than father Abraham.

[ 22 : 54 ] Who do you make yourself out to be? Verse 56, Jesus, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day.

Are you getting this? He rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad. God. Friend, God's promise of land was not the only promise that Abraham grabbed hold of.

Abraham also grabbed hold of God's promise to send a Messiah, the Redeemer, the serpent head crusher.

Abraham grabbed hold by faith of that promise and pulled it into his present and lived as though that promise was true.

And that's why you can say he was a happy camper. He saw the day of the Lord Jesus and he rejoiced. Do you remember the story of Naomi in the book of Ruth?

[ 24 : 27 ] Naomi and her husband and her two sons leave the promised land and they go to Moab.

And while they are in this foreign land, her sons marry local women. And then her husband dies and both of her sons die, both of her sons die, and left behind is this sad, sorrowful trio of widows. Naomi determines to return to Bethlehem and she urges her daughters-in-law to stay behind. One of the daughters-in-law is convinced that her best hope, her best hope for security and significance and a future that mattered, is to stay with her family, to find herself a new husband, to stay with her culture and her heritage and her religious beliefs.

This is a reasonable risk-reducing response. But it is not the response of faith.

Ruth refuses to remain in Moab and she commits herself to Naomi. And I want to remind you of these verses because they are so beautiful and compelling.

[ 26 : 12 ] Verse 15 of Ruth 1, she said, Naomi speaking, see, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law.

But Ruth said, Ruth said, do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you for where you go, I will go and where you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.

Ruth's words sound something like the vows that couples make at their wedding, don't they? For better or worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, come whatever may, I'm sticking with you.

Only death would ever separate me from you. Ruth, like her father Abraham, leaves behind all of the security and the significance and a future that seems certain in Moab and trusts herself wholly to the mercy of the God of Israel.

[ 27 : 41 ] she also has faith and she is willing to leave behind everything that she knows and is certain in order to go and be with God's people in the promised land under the shadow of the wing of God almighty.

brothers and sisters like Ruth and like Abraham we are strangers and exiles here.

This world is not our home. We are not home yet but by faith we grab hold of God's promise of an ultimate land a land that is designed and built by God a real land that we will inhabit a real place that we will inhabit a land that is fit for resurrected glorified bodies that Jesus promises to give us. Don't think about heaven someday as being some place floating on clouds in some sort of spiritual realm. no a real tangible place a city designed and built by God with foundations that we in our resurrected bodies will be able to inhabit to dwell in together.

And so we like Abraham pull God's promise for this future into the present and then we live right now like happy campers like exiles like sojourners like pilgrims when life feels most uncertain is it then that you are committed to trusting God God or do you try to live by your wits you know manage your life in your own strength control circumstances manipulate people make decisions in your own understanding to get things to turn out the way that you think you want how's that working out for you by the way don't you find that there are just way too many what ifs too many unknowns for your heart to handle way too much insecurity don't you find that there is far too much risk to manage if the

[ 30 : 37 ] God of the Bible is active right now in this world and we believe he is then trusting your security and your significance and your future to him that's the most reasonable thing that you can do that's careful thoughtfulness about God and his promises that's faith and since obedience is evidence of faith we should obey Jesus' commands to those who are not home yet we find some of these commands in 1st Peter chapter 2 verse 11 this is what we read there beloved

I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation our faithful obedience is evangelistic it is intended to draw the attention of those who do not yet believe so that they also will join us in worshiping God one day chapter 3 and verse 8 finally all of you have unity of mind sympathy brotherly love a tender heart and a humble mind do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling but on the contrary bless for to this you were called like

Abraham that you may obtain a blessing every uncertainty is an opportunity for God to advance his good purpose for your life do you believe that do you believe that every uncertainty in your life is an opportunity for God to advance his good purpose in your life when your security is not in your strength but in God's sufficient grace then you don't need to hide your weakness isn't that good you don't need to hide your weakness not if your security is in God's sufficient grace when you believe that God is perfectly in control then you don't need to manipulate people and you don't need to grip circumstances with white knuckles not when you believe that

God is perfectly in control when your peace when your peace is found in the presence of God then you don't need to make perfect sense of your past and you don't need to worry yourself sick about the future God is strong enough to care for you when the future seems uncomfortable unpredictable and uncertain and God delights to care for you child of God he demonstrates this he proves his strength and his desire his goodness to care for you in what God accomplished on the cross through our Savior Jesus it is through the life and the death and the resurrection of our Savior Jesus that God paid the ultimate price for sin eternally securing our futures with him instead of crushing every sinner because it's what our sin deserves

God in mercy adopts sinners into his family and he promises to provide for every one of their needs he promises to protect us in every circumstance and it is in Jesus that we have security and significance and a certain future in Jesus he promises does God to bring us home to a city with foundations a city that he has designed and built for all those who trust in Jesus is Jesus your savior children is Jesus your savior have you been born again my brothers and sisters as we read in Hebrews chapter 10 we are not shrink backers so don't grow weary we are not home yet but don't grow too content to stay either we are not home yet

[ 36 : 23 ] I wonder if you would join me in leaning into this hope that God nourishes through faith in Jesus let's pray together good father we are so grateful for all of your promises to us and we acknowledge what your word says is true even though we confess we struggle at times to believe it your word tells us that every promise that you have made to us is true in Christ all of them in Christ yes and amen we believe what your word tells us in 2 Peter chapter 1 that you have now given us everything we need for life and godliness everything we need to be faithful to you you have given it to us you have given us your word you have given us your spirit you have given us a community of faith brothers and sisters you continue to give us sufficient grace we are so grateful for all of your good gifts please help us to use these good gifts to steward these good gifts to grow in

Christ likeness to love and serve our neighbors help help us not to be shrink backers please give us the courage and the resolve that is needed to live like this world is not our home help us to be faithful to the call of being in the world but not of the world father as we prepare to receive the lord's supper would you please do work in our hearts call us to repentance and renewed faith blessed holy spirit please come and work in us as we take a few moments to prepare our hearts for communion father we claim the promise of your word that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in

Christ Jesus cause us to remember again and again that the security and the significance and the certain future that we long for is ours in our savior Jesus Christ we ask this for your glory and our good and the spread of this gospel throughout this world in Jesus name amen