

## On the Move: Legacies of Faith, “Chasing God’s Vision” Genesis 12:1-4

Whether you’ve been part of Brandywine for years or you are one of the 200 or so who are new since we rolled out that vision in November of 2024. Over the next three weeks, we’re going to get aligned around what we believe God is calling us to and where He is leading us as a church. When you came in you should have received a vision guide, just set that aside I’ll come back to that in a few minutes from now.

Recently, the most comprehensive study on human longevity was released. The findings were shocking. It turns out... 100% of participants died. That’s right. All of us are terminal. Probably not the most encouraging way to start a sermon...and technically, I may have made that study up. But we don’t need research to know it’s true. And yet most people live as if it isn’t.

We avoid the thought. We push it aside. We plan vacations. We build careers. We chase comfort. But we rarely plan our lives with the end in mind. The Bible doesn’t avoid it. Moses prayed in Psalm 90, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Not so we become morbid. But so we become wise. Because when you realize your days are numbered, you start asking better questions. One of those critical questions is this: **What is the legacy I am leaving behind?**

Because the question isn’t whether you’re leaving a legacy. The question is...what kind? Now let’s make sure we are all on the same page about what a legacy is, it includes at least three things.

**#1 What you leave behind.**

**#2 The difference you make.**

**#3 What you write daily.** Your legacy isn’t written the day you die. It’s written every day you live. And when you die, God simply hits “save.” What does that mean? It means like it’s an open document. Whether you are 25 or 75, you’re writing your legacy right now. Every conversation. Every investment. Every dollar you give. Every act of obedience or neglect. Every day that alarm goes off and your feet hit the floor is a day you are writing your legacy.

Now I don’t know about you, but I want my life to matter. To have made an impact now and after I’m gone. Let me show you how powerful legacy can be. I want to tell you a true tale of two families from the 1700s.

The first is the Edwards family. Now, Jonathan Edwards was a preacher, one of the most famous preachers in New England during the Great Awakening that came to America. He preached sermons that people still talk about today. In 1727, he married his wife, Sarah, and between the two of them, they had 11 children. Biographers tell us they were intentional, often spending extended time each evening in spiritual development, conversation and prayer together and with their children.

150 years later, in 1900 a study was done researching the 1400 or so descendents of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards. In other words, those 11 kids, and their kids, and their kids' kids. And this is what they've discovered about their legacy. Okay, are you ready for this? In just 150 years, his legacy included one U.S. vice president, one dean of a law school, one dean of a medical school, three U.S. senators, three governors, three mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 60 doctors, 65 professors, 75 military officers, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers, 100 clergymen. And 285 college graduates.

The same researcher traced another family line in New York, the line of Max Jukes. This is what they discovered. Are you ready? In 150 years- Seven murderers, 60 thieves, 190 prostitutes, 150 other convicts, 310 paupers (homeless), and 440 who were physically wrecked by addiction to alcohol. Of the 1,200 descendents that were studied, 300 of them died prematurely.

Now, historians today debate how much of this was heredity, environment, or opportunity. That's a fair debate. But one thing is clear: Jonathan and Sarah saw their home as a place of intentional spiritual formation. And over time, that kind of legacy multiplies.<sup>1</sup>

Here's what grips me about Edwards. At age 20, Jonathan Edwards wrote 70 resolutions that became kind of the guiding compass for the rest of his life. Here's one of them. "I frequently hear persons in old age say how they would live if they were to live their lives over again.

Resolved, therefore, I shall live as I wish I had done supposing I live a long life to old age." In other words... That's a 20-year-old thinking about 80-year-old regret and doing something about it. That's a man who thought a lot about the future, about the kind of legacy he wants to live and what he wants to leave behind.

Like Edwards, I don't think you should wait till the end of your life to figure out how it went.

The Bible is full of legacies of faith. Men and women Esther, Job, David, Ruth, Mary, Peter, Paul... and ultimately the legacy of Jesus. Since this is true, God must want us to think deeply like Edwards did about the legacy of our lives. So over these three weeks I want to show you just three legacies of faith- Abraham, Nehemiah, and Joshua, and then we want to consider how their legacies make a difference in us individually and the future of our church.<sup>2</sup>

So let's start with the man Scripture calls the father of faith: Abraham. Open your Bibles to Genesis 12. Abraham is one of the most influential, most important people that have ever lived on the planet. In fact, three major world religions trace their roots back to him: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup> ChatGPT consulted for this research.

<sup>2</sup> Grateful to Cal Jernigan and Jon Bennett for helping me craft some thoughts about legacy.

But here's what is so fascinating. You would expect someone with that kind of legacy to have an impressive résumé. A theological prodigy. Ivy League education. Spiritual superstar from birth. That's the pedigree with someone with a legacy like this right? Nope. Not in the case of Abraham.

The Bible tells us that Abraham's spiritual legacy really doesn't even begin until he was 75 years old. And he wasn't a pastor...Joshua 24 tells us his family worshiped other gods... and to top it all off he was still living in his father's tent at 75! And you thought your kid was "failure to launch." What an awesome picture that it's not about how you start. It's about how you finish. It's not about where you've come from, it's about where God is taking you. That's grace. God's call, his blessing comes to undeserving people like Abraham and like us.

Now this incredible legacy began with a risky step of faith. Let's read Genesis 12:1-3.

**12** *The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."*

**2** *"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."*

**3** *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

God comes to Abraham with a promise of a 4-fold legacy: A land. A nation. A great name. And a global spiritual impact — "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

But there's one condition- "Abraham you've gotta move." I'm not giving you this from the comfort of your father's tent. I'm not giving you this from the safety of what you know. If you want the promise...you have to walk by faith.

If you've ever taught a child to jump in the pool you know the moment. They're standing at the edge of the pool. You're in the water saying, "Jump. I've got you." And you are doing everything you can think of. It's OK I will catch you, I won't let you drown, look at these muscles, I will buy you ice cream. But in that moment, everything comes down to this: Do they trust you enough to let go?

All trust involves risk. Abraham has to weigh if trust in God is worth the risk. And this is the question that comes to each of us. Do we trust God enough to take the risk of obeying him? To get honest about that bad habit and do something. To set boundaries with your job so that you can have more presence and investment in your family or your spiritual life. To start making a budget and decisions to give generously.

So God says, "To experience my blessing, the legacy I am giving you, you've gotta move in obedience to my command." So what will Abraham do? **4** *So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.*

Three words. So. Abram. Went. Did that mean he was fearless? No. It meant his faith was bigger than his fear. Was it comfortable? Not at all. As you read through the next few chapters, Abraham and Sarah will experience famine. Detours. Delays. Tests. But his trust in God's promises was greater than his obstacles. Hundreds of years later, the apostle Paul looks back and asks: What was happening inside Abraham when he walked away from everything?

**18** *Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations.*

**20** *Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God.*

**21** *He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.*

That's the legacy of faith that Abraham has left for us today. Because he trusted God's promise, he became part of the line through which the ultimate Promise would come: Jesus. If you know Jesus and have trusted him for salvation the Bible says we are now adopted as both children and heirs of the promises. And what that means is we are heirs to the legacy of Abraham and more importantly, the legacy of Jesus.

What did Jesus leave behind for us? He left salvation for you, and forgiveness for you, and grace for you, and peace for you. The power to live a new life for you. Ephesians 1 tells us that we now have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places that are now ours.

But you know something else he left for you? Jesus Christ started one thing on this planet. He founded something. You know what it was? If you've been with us so far in our study in Acts you should know what it is: The church! Jesus started the church. The church was Jesus's idea and it's through the church that he entrusted his mission to bless the world through the gospel. The church is how Jesus continues His legacy on earth. And now that legacy has come to us here at Brandywine Valley Church.

I love this place. I love the ministry. I love what God's doing in your lives through this church. What this church has done in blessing my family in a thousand ways. And many of you can say the same thing. This church is here today because fifty-six years ago, a small group of men and women were called to leave behind what was comfortable. They gathered with a vision and very little else. No guarantee. No certainty. Just faith. They believed God could use a church in this community to reach people for Jesus. And because they moved, we're sitting here today. That's a legacy.

And now the baton is in our hands. And God is speaking to us just like he did with Abraham and saying- "I have the promise of a legacy for you- but you've gotta move!" Beyond comfort, security, avoidance of change or risk- to challenge, to risky faith!

That's what we are stepping into as a church. We are being called to leave a living legacy by making a **spiritual investment** in your own life and others as we build resilient disciples of Jesus here. To leave a legacy by making a **mission investment** to reach our community for Jesus. And to leave a legacy by making a **financial investment** in the future of our church. We are renovating a large portion of our building. We are renovating for mission. To maximize ministry effectiveness. To create space for discipleship for all generations, especially the next generations. To reach more lost people in our community. I want to show you a flythrough video so you can see just some of what this renovation will look like.

## FLYTHROUGH VIDEO

This moment is a living legacy that we have the privilege to participate in. Now many of you already have made a commitment and are leaving a financial legacy through your investment in this building project. So far our church family has committed 6.3M toward this renovation and about half of that has been received. Praise God, that's incredible generosity. But we're inviting everyone into this legacy. **Our primary goal is 100% participation:** not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice. We want every person to say, "I helped build that legacy."

**Our secondary goal is to raise \$500,000** to account for rising costs and build wise contingencies.

Vision guide. Here's the ask- Make a commitment to make a commitment. Prayerfully determine your step of faith. Talk with your spouse, family, and most importantly to God. What does it look like for you to move? Because the legacy we leave will be spiritual, missional... and yes, financial.

And one day, someone will walk in this building, maybe sit in this room because we moved. Maybe it will be your son. Or your daughter. Or your grandchild who hasn't even been born yet. Maybe it will be the neighbor you've been praying for. The coworker who smiles on the outside but is falling apart on the inside. Maybe it will be a young couple on the brink of divorce, walking in here as a last resort. A family with a child with special needs that wonders if there is a place for them? Maybe it will be someone battling addiction, desperate for freedom. Maybe it will be a teenager drowning in anxiety, searching for hope. Maybe it will be someone who doesn't even believe in God yet, but they'll walk into this space and hear about a Savior who loves them, forgives them, and changes them. They will hear the gospel because we moved. They will find a community because we moved. They will meet Jesus because we moved.

And long after our names are forgotten, their lives will be different because we trusted God enough to take a step of faith. That's legacy. That's what Abraham did. That's what those families did 56 years ago. And now it's our turn.

