

**Conversations on  
 Genesis 12:1–4a**

*Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.*

*Idea!* In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Indy has to cross a deep gorge with an invisible bridge to reach the Holy Grail. Watch the scene on YouTube ([bit.ly/IJLeapOfFaith](https://bit.ly/IJLeapOfFaith)). How is this a “great leap of faith”?

**WHAT is important to know?**

(vv. 2–3). If the command underscores what Abram puts at risk, the blessing reassures him that God will provide abundantly. The key term in this section is “bless/blessing” (five occurrences). In Hebrew, blessing signifies flourishing. It includes physical vigor, fertility, security, and success in one’s undertakings (e.g., Ps. 128). Although this is the key term, it is significant that the opening words are not “I will bless you” but, rather, “I will make of you a great nation.” The emphasis is not on Abram the individual but on the future Israel. The term “nation” (Heb. *goy*) is not a kinship term but a word that designates a political entity. The nation will be the result of God’s blessing Abram, and the nation is the means by which Abram’s name will be “made great.” (Carol A. Newsom)

- ✧ What are ways we see God’s loving grace in this call of Abram and Sarai?
- ✧ In what ways do the promises to Abram appear to be a reversal of the curses of Eden (Genesis 3:16–19)?

**WHERE is God in these words?**

All views of blessing hang on a single theological premise: God chooses to remain intimately connected to the creation and particularly to the flesh and blood that became human when God mixed dust with God’s own breath. God may grieve and even rant over the incessant evil that humankind dreams up in every generation, but given the nature of God’s commitment, God will not or perhaps cannot give up the creatures that share the divine breath. Inevitably, such faithfulness on God’s part means that God will suffer all the pain and sorrow that this troubled relationship generates. From the vantage point of Golgotha, the question was never whether, but only when, that faithfulness would finally cost God life itself. (Frederick Neidner)

- ✧ What are biblical examples of God not giving up on creatures that share the divine breath?
- ✧ In what ways is “faith” an appropriate term for the experiences of Abram and Sarai?

*Your blessing, God, is as important to us as it was to Abram and Sarai. Be with us as we live into your blessing. Amen.*

- ✧ Why is it significant that God will make Abram’s name great so he will be a blessing to others?

**SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?**

Our own experience and the witness of Scripture concur that the one who calls is the one who equips. The one who equips always leads the called to more complete expression of the persons they were created to be. Consequently, if the call is of God, the answer to all the above questions is yes. A faithful response is the embrace of what God has already called into being—a newness of being—and the release from what is known for what is promised. A faithful response is neither forced nor coerced, but a step freely taken toward our true selves. (Donald P. Olsen)

- ✧ How do we receive a call from God today?
- ✧ Why is it important to realize that the God who calls us is also the one who equips?

**NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?**

The other facet of Abram’s mirror is the side that reflects God to all the nations. From this half of the visual image comes the church’s mandate to mission and evangelism. The church must be more than analyst and commentator, more even than encourager or discourager. Beyond its social and personal purposes is the church’s divine calling. Abram is a blessing, not because of his own skill, but because he will be used to purely reflect God’s light. The church is called to be a blessing to the nations, not because it is faultless, but because it reflects the One who is. (James Mctyre)

- ✧ Into what directions does receiving a call from God lead you?
- ✧ In what ways does the church seek to be a blessing to others?
- ✧ What are ways the church can bless “all families of the earth”?