

Welcome to the dare of God, because God would have us take up the dare to follow him. It means that we need to make a plan to be his disciple in every sense of the Word--but to constantly re-submit the plan to the Lord for his fine-tuning. But we need to hear the call and make the plan, then let God interrupt the plan, or else the plan of God will go for naught.

A review:

- 1) We discovered that the Magi, (magicians) made a plan to bless the Christ Child--and God changed their plan!
- 2) We learned: ***Stewardship is making use of God-given resources, to manage God given resources, to accomplish God-given results.***
- 3) We learned the lesson of the Rich Young Ruler--who was owned by his things, rather than owning the things he had for God's use.
- 4) We met people who took up the dare of God--Dan and Melody went to Africa because God called them to go. Like the Wise Men, they made a plan and got a lot of twists and turns, but are accomplishing godly objectives.

So what are we to do? We need to recognize the dare of God and decide accordingly.

Christianity is a public dare, because God commands us to go public, and to make disciples of all nations. *Sometimes, it takes a challenge to move us into the future. It takes something larger than we are to call forth something bigger inside of us. God spoke that way to Abram. And what else can we call this but a challenge--a dare to step out where someone had never gone before. Surely the message of Hebrews 12 is to gaze through the trial--to gaze ahead to move ahead, to abandon yesterday for tomorrow.*

The strongest vision wins. Whatever catches the eye of our imagination will be the thing that directs our steps. In Gen 12 Abram hears the voice of God. God speaks about a future, one that God had planned for him. Abram hears the call and makes a plan--a plan to take up the dare of God, to leave it all behind to move forward with the things that God has prepared for his good.

LEAVE SECURITY:

Gen 12 is amazing. Somehow God "speaks" to Abram. Specific words are recorded: 1) leave it all behind, 2) I will bless you. 3) Those who bless or curse you will obtain the same, and 4) "I intend blessing and not a curse."

So Abram believed God. That means he obeyed. He leaves everything.

God says, "Give it up--and that is security".

To which most of us would reply, "That's ridiculous!"

Faith is spelled R.I.S.K. God told Abram to leave the safe place behind so that he could receive the blessing that God had stored up for him. Faith is always like that. Faith in Jesus takes us to the cutting edge of existence, out of our comfort zones into new areas of growth. To believe in Jesus is to be in a race toward new accomplishments, new goals, new power in areas of living that we have never had before. It is to discover that the image of God is being reshaped, recreated in us over and over again. It is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, who sat down at the right hand of God.

We won't get to our future by living in our past. Yet there is a price to pay: In God's kingdom desolation precedes consolation. Jesus said:

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone..."

"Take up your cross and follow me."

The question we ask ourselves cannot be "Is God calling me to risk?" The question has to be "What is God calling me to risk?" Is there is no risk, there is no faith. If there is no faith, there is no future, because faith focuses on the future.

Faith is trusting God when there is no external evidence that God is going to come through.

RUN THE RACE:

Pain and struggle are part of a life of Christian discipline. A runner trains for a race. It takes discipline. Hebrews tells us that **"it is for discipline that we endure"**.

The battle for the believer is a battle for the mind. It is a battle to maintain concentration on Jesus, who ran the race so that we could run at all. It is to throw off everything that gets in the way of living out the calling he has placed on us, and not to be distracted from the things that make for crossing the finish line with distinction.

THE PLAN OF GOD:

So what is your plan? It needs to be specific, measurable and attainable. It needs to be a plan that will stretch the muscles of your faith and make you grow. This is what it means to be a disciple.

A disciple is one who is disciplined--who has a plan. This is someone who prays daily, who fellowships with Jesus, who has a hunger to read and make real the truths of Scripture. This is one who makes a plan to carry them when the enthusiasm is gone, **so that when there isn't a lot of energy, the plan keeps them moving**. A disciple is one who seeks the mind of God in every major decision, and who not rest content until she knows that God is pleased with her. Disciples submit themselves to discipline, so they may share God's holiness. A disciple says, "These are my resources--where must I deploy them for God's kingdom to move forward? Use them as you will..."