

Do You Trust Me?
Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 4:13-25

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If I asked you to do something new, something way outside your comfort zone, something you had never, ever done before, what would you do? Let's say you're a farmer and I say to you, "I know you've farmed your entire life, but I think you should be a baker. Instead of spending all your time in the great outdoors, I think you should spend all your time in a cramped room with a hot stove cranking out cakes and bread." If I asked you to do that, what would you do? Would you look at me and go, "Hunh?"

Or maybe you're a manufacturer. You've spent your entire career in manufacturing and I say to you, "I really think you should be a librarian. Instead of working on a factory floor making things, I think you should spend all your time standing at a desk helping people find books and DVDs." Would you look at me, frown and cross your arms? Or would you smile and spread your arms wide?

Or maybe, maybe you're a teacher. You've spent a career shaping young minds to take up important roles in the future. What if I said to you, "I think you should be a computer programmer. You should spend your days writing code for Grand Theft Auto or World of Warcraft." Would you smile, spread your arms wide and say, "Ken, that's a great idea. I trust you!" Would you?

If I asked you to do something completely different, completely out of your comfort zone, nothing you had ever done before, would you jump up and say, "Ken – I trust you." Would you?

Abraham is 75 years old, Sarah is not far behind, when God calls them to do a new thing, to make a move. Not just across town, not even across the state. God tells them to move to another country entirely, leaving behind their national identity. God calls them to leave their extended family, the network of emotional relationships that sustains them. God instructs them to leave their nuclear family, the people who know you and support you and love you no matter what. God calls on Abraham and Sarah to leave

everything that has ever given them meaning, identity or purpose and go to a new place. Do a new thing.

What did Abraham do? Did he say, “Huh?” Did he frown and cross his arms? Did he smile and open his arms wide? Did he say, “God – that’s way outside my comfort zone but I trust you, so I’ll do it.” We don’t know. The text doesn’t say.

What we do know is Abraham and Sarah packed up their things, folded their tents and went. They trusted God. They trusted God. They trusted God.

And because they trusted God, they were deemed to be righteous. They were acceptable to God. They were living godly lives because they trusted God and did this new thing.

Fast forward about 2000 years. Paul is writing to the church in Rome. At this time many people, not everyone but certainly many, thought being righteous, being acceptable to God, living a godly life, was all about the law. If you want to be right with God, follow the law.

Paul is not saying the law is bad. OK? Let’s be clear. The 10 Commandments are good. I recommend them. But by themselves they do not make us godly. Following the law alone does not make us righteous or acceptable to God.

Christianity is not reductionist. It can’t be boiled down to just one or two activities. Being righteous, being godly, being the kind of person God wants us to be, is not just about the law. It’s not just about worship. It’s not just about devotions or prayer or Bible study. These are all important, yes. We need to do them. I can’t imagine being Christian without doing them.

But Paul’s point, and Paul’s question for the Christians in Rome and for you and me today, is do you have faith in God? Do you trust God? All those other things are great, but when God calls us to do that new thing, do we trust God enough to do it?

“Ken, there’s Jeff. He’s really hurting right now and needs someone to talk to.” “God, I can’t do that. Jeff’s lies and gossip cost me my job. He almost destroyed my marriage. I can’t comfort him.” I can hear God saying, “Ken, do you trust me?”

“Mary, you’ve been offered a seat on the church council. I want you to take that seat and help guide your church in a new direction.” What do you say? “God, I can’t do that. I’ve never been

in leadership. Besides, my ideas are too strange, too out there, too crazy for this church.” “Mary, do you trust me?”

What if God said, “St Paul UCC, I want you to do a new thing.” I don’t know what that new thing would be, but you do. If God asked us to do a new thing, how would we respond? Would we trust God?

Paul makes the point Abraham and Sarah are old when they start this new thing. They never see the fruit of their obedience. They never see that great nation God keeps talking about. In fact, if you read on you’ll find their life is hard. A lot of difficulty. A lot of disappointment.

But they trusted God, and that was enough. They trusted God and that was enough. They trusted God, and were reckoned to be righteous. May we do the same. Amen.