

# **Rocking The Boat**

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## Gen. 12:1-3

Have you ever heard the expression, “Don’t rock the boat!”?

I am sure most of us have. If one passenger in a small boat unnecessarily causes the boat to “take on water”, the whole boat sinks. It is not just the person who did the rocking who finds himself in the water — it is every passenger in the boat. Instantly everyone moves from a situation of safety to a situation of danger. So, to keep the situation stable and smooth the saying, “Don’t rock the boat!” came about.

Religious people tend to cherish the stable, the secure, the certain. We don’t like for other religious people to “rock the boat”.

Therein lies a significant problem. Our God has worked in history by “rocking the boat”.

I want to ask you to consider a question seriously. I want you to think about this question for a much longer period than just the time you read this. The question is: “What would have happened if God told you to rock the boat?”

## Abraham rocked the boat

Most of us are familiar with God’s call to Abraham.

Gen. 12:1-3, *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

This is actually the second time God asked Abraham to follow his directions.

The call we just read came after his father, Terah, died.

I doubt most of us have ever considered what an enormous request God made of Abraham.

The fact that Abraham would even listen to God is incredible.

Joshua 24:2, *“And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.”*

Abraham grew up in a family that worshipped many gods — he grew up under the full influence of idolatry.

There were no Jewish people who knew and worshipped the living God — the Jewish people eventually descended from him.

There were no Christian people at that time who knew the living God who sent Jesus Christ — Abraham was the beginning of God’s efforts to send Jesus Christ.

God communicated directly with a man who was raised to believe in many gods, and now he listened to this new, strange living God who gave him strange instructions!

The instruction to leave his extended family was unheard of.

While it is commonplace right now for people to strike out on their own and leave their extended families, it was not even commonplace in this society a few generations ago.

It happened here to Abraham, but it was the exception rather than the rule.

In Abraham’s world it just did not happen — it meant leaving security for insecurity.

The instruction could be compared to the request that a person leave civilization and go to an unknown frontier.

Not even we like to leave the known for the unknown!

God’s requests to Abraham were real “rock the boat” requests!

At first, Abraham could not leave his father Terah, who was the head of the family.

Terah compromised. The family lived in Ur and he decided to move the whole family, which was not exactly what God wanted. He intended to go to the land of Canaan, but decided to stop at Haran instead. I go into this subject further in the lesson, “Halfway Is Not Far Enough”.

He took the family to Haran and “settled” there — for some reason he had no plans to go any further.

Evidently Terah was a strong, controlling head of the family.

God did not call Abraham again until Terah died.

Only when his father was dead did Abraham leave his extended family.

Thus began God’s journey to the blessing of all people through Jesus Christ.

What if it had been you instead of Abraham?

What if the living God whom you did not know made “rocking the boat” requests of you?

When events started happening that pointed that I should move to Texas, I didn't understand what was going on. Relatives & friends were against our moving. Looking back, I can see many events in my life that God controlled my destiny. We can never say, "I will do this or that", because we may not know what God has in store for us.

James 4:13-15, *"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, **If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.**"*

What if God instructed you to do the unthinkable, something not done by anyone?

Would you do it?

## **Let me call some things to your attention.**

Do you have any idea of how hard it is to stop thinking like a slave if all your family has been slaves for generations? That was the challenge the Israelites faced when they left Egypt.

Do you have any idea of how hard it is to live in a tent in a desert and trust God to provide your food and water every day? That was the challenge facing the Israelites in the wilderness.

Do you have any idea of how hard it is to settle in a country and totally reject the religions of that country? That is the challenge that faced Israel in Canaan.

Do you have any idea of the difficulty involved when God has a message for one to give to his own people, and no one wants to hear or believe the message? That often was the situation God's prophets faced.

## **Two Christian situations in the New Testament.**

### **The first situation is found in Acts 9.**

There was a man named Saul (whom we know later became the Apostle Paul) who hated Christianity and Christians.

He thought Christianity opposed the living God's will and that it was a grave threat to the nation of Israel.

His solution: destroy the Christian movement, (which at that time was a Jewish movement to Christianity), by killing any Jewish man or woman who believed Jesus was the Christ sent by God.

Years later after he had been a Christian for a long time, he declared these words as he defended himself in a trial:

Acts 26:9-11, *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”*

He was on his way to a Jewish synagogue in Damascus, Syria, to arrest Jewish men and women who believed Jesus was the Christ, bind them, and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial.

He was almost to Damascus when he personally saw the resurrected Jesus, knew he was the Christ, and then knew he was totally wrong.

Instantly, he realized that his error was responsible for the death of God’s people.

What I want to call your attention to is found in Acts 9:10-16.

Acts 9:10-16, *“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”*

Let me paraphrase the situation.

The Lord said, “Ananias, I want you to go to Judas’ house where you will find Saul and restore his sight.”

Ananias said to the Lord, “Wait a minute, Lord! I know something about this man you obviously do not know. I know what

he did to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. I know why he came here. I know who gave him authority to do these horrible things. If You knew what I know, you would not send me to him.”

The Lord knew what Ananias knew and he told Ananias to go on.

The Lord knew what He was doing.

If the Lord told you to do something similar, would you do it?

## **The second situation is found in Acts 10.**

Until this moment, all Christians were Jews or proselytes — no people who did not follow Jewish traditions had been converted to Christ.

God’s intent from the call of Abraham (Genesis 12:3) was to bring a blessing to everyone through Abraham’s descendants.

Gen. 12:3, *“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

At some point Christianity had to become a world movement to all people, not just a Jewish movement in the nation of Israel.

Acts 10 is the time and the point.

A non-Jew, though a God-fearing person, was instructed to send for the Jewish Christian Peter to receive the message of the gospel from him.

In the meantime, the Lord prepared Peter to receive this request from a man who is neither a Jew nor a proselyte.

Peter had a very confusing vision three times, and at the end of each time was told not to consider what God had cleansed as unholy.

The Holy Spirit instructed him to go with the Gentile men and not ask questions — for God had sent the men.

When Peter arrived, he said: Acts 10:28- 29, *“And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?”*

Peter was there, but he did not understand why he was there! He did not “get it.”

Cornelius explained why he sent for Peter.

Then Peter had one of those eureka moments in which he literally understood something no other Christian understood at that time.

Listen: Acts 10:34-35, *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”*

For the first time he understood that a person does not have to be a Jew or a proselyte to be a Christian.

God does not care who your father and mother are. God does not care what your nationality is.

If a person reverences God by understanding and accepting His work in Jesus Christ, God will welcome that person.

Acts 11:1-3 makes it quite clear that other Christians did not like Peter having even social contact with people who were not Jews — that was completely inappropriate. Peter was “rocking the boat”.

Acts 11:1-3, *“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.”*

Devout Jews just did not have Gentiles into their homes, and they did not go into Gentiles’ homes. Devout Jews did not eat food prepared by Gentiles. All of this had to do with their religious definition of purity.

Peter did what God wanted him to do, and it cost him dearly — people who were Jewish Christians were much opposed to what he did.

If God had told you to do something that was very unpopular among Christians, would you do it?

## Conclusion

This is not a hypothetical principle. If you follow God Who gave us Jesus Christ, there will be moments when you “rock the boat”. There always will be those who do not like it. You will never “rock the boat” to drown people. You will never allow your arrogance to “rock the boat”. You will only allow God’s plans and purposes to “rock the boat”.

Sometimes you will find that having faith in God means trusting God enough to “rock the boat”. May God’s purposes never be neglected or abandoned because we lacked the faith in God to “rock the boat”, and yet not destroy those within it.







