

**Trust and Fear**  
**[Genesis 12:1-4, John 3:1-17](#)**  
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In the 1984 movie “The Terminator”, Arnold Schwarzenegger plays an unstoppable, indestructible robot killing machine sent back in time to kill a young woman named Sarah Connor. The Terminator finds her in a crowded nightclub, and he’s just about to kill her when another man bursts in with a shotgun, shoots the Terminator several times, and then turns to Sarah and tells her “Come with me if you want to live.” “Come with me if you want to live.” That’s a pretty bold claim to make to a woman you just met, a woman who knows nothing about you, while you’re holding a shotgun, having just fired it several times at a very muscular time-travelling robot. In that moment, you wouldn’t seem like the most trustworthy person in the world, and Sarah Connor would be forgiven for wondering why in the world she should trust her life to this random shot-gun wielding dude. But she didn’t have a lot of options in the moment – the killer robot was recovering fast and was clearly not friendly, so she couldn’t exactly stay where she was. If she went with the stranger, she had no idea what kind of a crazy, dangerous life she’d be in for, but if she stayed, her life was over. So she says Yes – she goes with this stranger, she throws in her lot with him and trusts that he can fulfill that promise – come with me if you want to live.

Now, at first glance, the story we read this morning from the book of Genesis seems to be about as far away from that nightclub in the

Terminator as you could possibly get. There is no time-travelling murder robot played by an Austrian muscleman, no shotguns, no shoulder pads and feathered hair. But for just a moment, try and put yourself in Abram's shoes. He is seventy-five years old, and I think it's safe to say that his life has not been all that he had expected it to be. He is married to his beloved wife Sarai, but they have no children, and at seventy-five, their child-rearing days are behind them. He had followed his father Terah on a long journey, leaving their home city of Ur and travelling to Haran, but that journey was over now – his father had died in Haran, and now it was just Abram, his wife Sarai, and their nephew Lot. For all intents and purposes, it would've seemed to Abram that his life was pretty much done now. He would make the best of it for a few more years, and then pass everything on to his brother's son, and that would be that.

And then something completely unexpected happens. While Abram is sitting there, having just buried his father, contemplating his own mortality, suddenly a stranger bursts into his life. A God who he has never met before, never heard of before, a God who has no track record, no resume of past accomplishments, no followers, no worshippers, no temples, no nothing, out of nowhere this God just bursts into Abram's humdrum existence and holds out his hand and says, Come with me if you want to live. See, when we read this story, we already know what's going to happen, we already know who this God is, we know that this God is the creator of the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Alpha and Omega, the Great I AM, we know all that

because we have this, this book, this church, we have four thousand years of history of God and people working together that we can point to, but Abram doesn't have any of that. Abram doesn't know any of that. For most of this book, when God shows up unexpectedly and bursts into people's lives, God introduces himself as the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but God can't do that here, because it isn't true yet – Abraham isn't even named that Abraham yet, Isaac and Jacob aren't born yet, there's nothing to go off of, no name, no track record, no accomplishments, no nothing. This random God just shows up on Abram's doorstep, and tells him to leave everything behind, leave what little family and history and heritage he has, to abandon it all. And in return, God promises that Abram will become a great nation, he will be blessed and famous, he will be a blessing to the entire world, so that all the families of the earth, every human being who will ever live will be able to point back to Abram, point back to this moment, and say, that's where it happened, that's where it started, that's where Abram changed the world forever. God promises Abram life, abundant life, a life that matters, a life that means something, a life that will be remembered. God holds out his hand to Abram and tells him, Come with me if you want to live.

And Abram went. Against all odds, Abram went. He chose to go with the stranger, go with this unfamiliar, unknown God. Abram looks at his life, and he looks at the life that God is offering him, and Abram decides that he's going to trust that this God will keep his promises, this God will follow through on all these crazy schemes about blessing the whole universe

through him. Abram decides that trusting God is worth the risk, because what is he really risking anyway? A few more years of quiet, humdrum retirement, mowing his lawn in Haran? Abram isn't facing exactly the same choice that Sarah Connor faced – he isn't facing down death in the form of an Arnold Schwarzenegger-shaped killer robot – but he is facing death, he's facing his own mortality, and so he decides that trusting this stranger is worth risking what little life he has left in the hopes that there might be more in store, more hope, more adventure, more life. Abram decides to follow God, and it turns out to be the best decision anyone ever made. It's a decision that sets humanity on the road to Bethlehem and Calvary and the empty tomb and the Kingdom of Heaven coming on Earth, the whole story of redemption, the whole story of salvation, the whole story of Jesus Christ redeeming you and me, it all starts here, it all starts with Abram choosing to follow, choosing to trust that God would keep his promises. Abram follows God, and it leads him into life, new, abundant, everlasting life.

That's the same kind of life that Jesus is talking about in his conversation with Nicodemus from the gospel of John. Nicodemus knows God, he loves God, he's read all the stories of God's history with the people of Israel, all the way back to Abram and Sarai two thousand years earlier, but he still doesn't seem to understand exactly what that means, until he meets Jesus. Jesus tells Nicodemus that if he wants to see the Kingdom of God, he must be born again. The old life that he used to know has to come to an end in order for new life to begin – just as a baby in its mother's womb

has to leave behind everything it has ever known in order to enter the real world, so too anyone who wants to enter the Kingdom of God has to leave behind their old life, their old ways, their old world, leave it all behind and start something entirely new. That's what Abram did when God first called him, and that's what Jesus calls Nicodemus to do. God is bringing life into the world in an entirely new way, through the death and resurrection of his only son, and if Nicodemus wants to experience that new life, all he has to do is stop doubting, stop trying to figure everything out, stop trying to explain and prove and control everything, and instead just follow, trust that God knows what he's doing, go with God wherever he's going. Jesus reaches out to Nicodemus and tells him, come with me if you want to live.

And that story is our story as well. Here we are, another two thousand years later, and even though we know the story so well, even though we have all these reminders of who God is and what God has done for us, we still forget so easily. We still get so quickly bogged down in the illusion that this life, this world, that this is what really matters, all this stuff, our regrets about the past, our worries about the present, our fears about the future, we pour so much energy into just trying to survive, just trying to exist, and we forget that the God who created us, the God who loves us, the God who called Abram to follow, the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, that God is calling us. Here and now, God is calling you and me, calling us to trust him and follow him into a future that is better than our wildest imagining. Our God knows our fears, he knows our trouble, and he comes to us in the

midst of that trouble and promises us life, abundant life, never-ending life, and all we have to do to receive that promise, all we have to do to enjoy that life, is just trust him, and keep following. Let go of the old life, let go of our fear, and trust that Jesus Christ is strong enough to raise us up from the dead and into new life. Today, Jesus Christ invites us to his table and gives us his body and blood so we remember the life we've been given, so we remember to trust the blessings our God wants to give us. Today, Jesus holds out his hand to you and to me and says Come with me if you want to live. In the name of Jesus Christ – Amen.