

Blessed to be a Blessing

Rich Nathan

January 8-9, 2005

Blessed To Be A Blessing Series

Genesis 12:1-3

To start the New Year I want to share with you some very exciting plans that will significantly impact the future of this church, and the future of our city and world. For those of you who have been here for any length of time, you are certainly aware of the fact that God has significantly blessed Vineyard Columbus. I don't say this by way of boasting or celebrating our merit, but truly out of a heart of gratitude it is appropriate for us to recognize that there has been blessing on this church.

Since the late 1980's, we've grown from a church of approximately 300 to nearly 6500 people attending our weekend worship services. Vineyard Columbus has had the privilege of planting 18 new churches throughout our community, our state, and our nation. We've given away hundreds and hundreds of people. The growth that we've experienced and the new church plants are a sign of God's blessing.

This past year, over 700 people came to Christ at our main worship services. We've had nearly 400 people baptized. The thousands of folks who have experienced salvation and then have followed up by giving testimony of their faith in public baptism is a sign of God's blessing. Nearly 70% of our adult members participate in a small group, a women's group, a men's group, a group for teens

or young adults. This is where community happens and people form deep relationships, life sustaining relationships. Loving connection with other people is a sign of God's blessing.

I could go on and talk about the blessing that has been on the children and teens, on Joshua House, on our ministry to the homeless, on our medical clinic, or our food pantry, or on our ministry to those in our community with AIDS. In so many areas of this church's life, when you survey what God is doing, you have to come away with a sense that there has been great blessing on Vineyard Columbus. Those of you who have been here for any length of time, do you agree with that assessment?

All of these numbers, all these ministries, all these activities boil down to real people being helped, real families being mended, being loved, being blessed by God. The reason I share with you the blessing that has been on this church is because there is a biblical principle that when an individual or a community is blessed, the blessing must be given away. Blessings are not meant to be hoarded up for our private enjoyment. Rather, we need to give the blessing away.

Over the last couple of years, pastors and ministry leaders in this church have been praying about how we, as a church, can give blessing away to our

community and to our world. I want to share with you some of the plans that we, as a church, have to give blessing away.

One of the things we are planning to do in this next six months is to tear off that front of the building, that one-story shed-like structure that used to be our old offices, and in its place build a two-story community center. The community center will provide tangible expressions of love to our surrounding community in this northeast quadrant of our city. Do you know that in our quadrant of the city 40% of the homes are headed by single parents? We want to be able to offer affordable daycare, career counseling, sports programs, perhaps a free medical clinic, parenting classes, music and arts programs. We want to significantly expand our after-school program and our summer program for kids. In other words, we want to take the blessing that has been on this church and stretch out our hands a little farther and give the blessing away. We don't want a blessed church, we want a blessed city. We want to have an accessible place where Vineyard members can connect with the surrounding community in an environment of friendship and service so that the talents that God has put in each one of us can become a blessing for others.

But not only do we want to build a community center that will be a light for this whole quadrant of the city, we also want to radically expand this church's involvement in world missions. We've been a missions-minded church for a couple of decades. We had a long-standing partnership in a church planting

movement in India for about two decades. We have a couple of families on the field from this church in two Central Asian locations.

We have two couples from the church, planting churches on a tributary of the Amazon River in Brazil, serving the poor, bringing the hope of Christ to people on the margins of society. We have hundreds of Vineyard Church members who participate in short-term missions trips each year. Each summer dozens and dozens of our teens and adults go to Mexico to help with an orphanage. We've been doing missions trips to Brazil for the last 15 years. We have trips to Africa, Zambia, Tanzania, and Morocco. We have short-term trips going to China, Central Asia, and Indian Reservations in Canada. We have a single man from this church serving right now in the Sudan, in the Darfur Region. Our church has given away hundreds of thousands of dollars to meet the needs of people around the world.

The church has been involved in a great deal, but we want to radically expand that work. Over the next five years, our leaders have put together a plan to send out three full teams from Vineyard Columbus, each team made up of 8-10 adults and whatever children they may have, to unreached peoples in Asia and Africa.

So we have plans to do two huge things – to build a community center to reach our immediate community and then to stretch out a hand out even farther by sending three missionary teams out to the world.

Now, in order to build, we are going to engage in a giving campaign – only the third in our history as a church in 30 years. Let me share with you what I mean by a giving campaign. You are not going to hear the word “fundraising” around here. What we are about to involve ourselves in is not a fundraising campaign. Do you know what fundraising is? Fundraising is collecting money from other people. We go around door to door selling candy bars or magazine subscriptions or we offer to wash every car in the city of Columbus – that is fundraising. You collect money from other people in return for a product or a service. And do you know what you get at the end of fundraising? Funds. The only benefit of fundraising is that you get money.

We are not going to engage in a fundraising campaign. We are not going to sell candy door to door. We are not doing car washes or bake sales. We are not interested in taking other people’s money to build our community center or expand our involvement in world missions. We want to be a blessing to our city and our world. We want to give something away, not be takers.

We are going to be involved in a giving campaign. In a giving campaign we challenge ourselves to give out of our own resources for biblical and spiritual reasons. And the result of a giving campaign is not just that money is collected, the result is that disciples are developed. We will grow spiritually together. If all that happens and as a result of the next two months, all that we get is a pile of

cash, this will go down in heaven's book as a failure. What is eternal is what happens inside of us. Are we becoming more like Jesus in all that we do? Are we acting like Jesus toward this city and this world?

But before we look at today's text, I want to share with you five things that you can expect, in fact I will guarantee, in the next couple of months as we move forward in this giving campaign.

First of all, this giving campaign will be conducted with absolute integrity. There is not going to be any high pressure or manipulation. No thermometers, no goalposts. We are going to be above board and speak about this the way we speak about everything and handle everything in the church. I am going to talk straight and be as honest and authentic as I can possibly be. I commit to you that the way we handle ourselves is going to be done with complete integrity. That's the first thing I think you can expect – integrity.

The second thing you can expect is to see some miracles happen over the next two months. As people come before God, as we stretch ourselves in faith, as we risk, you can expect to see some miracles happen in this church.

The third thing that we can expect is to be hassled by Satan. Every time the Kingdom of God moves forward aggressively, every time there is a major expansion plan, you can expect that Satan is going to counter attack. There is a

principle in the scripture of attack and counter attack. You can expect that some folks are going to be hassled and we need to pray against that.

The fourth thing we can expect is that many, many of you are going to grow spiritually in the next couple of months. As you seriously come before God and you pray and participate in some of the things we have planned – our Prayer Vigil and 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting – as people connect with God, as they risk and make themselves vulnerable in giving, you can expect to grow spiritually.

The fifth thing is that overall I think our church is going to have a tone of joy and celebration where we have an opportunity to pause and reflect on all that God has done and where God is taking us. There is going to be a tone of joy and celebration with the culminating event down at the Convention Center on March 10th.

I am calling today's talk, "Blessed to be a Blessing." Let's pray.

Genesis 12:1-3

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Ge 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Ge 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

Ge 12:3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.

Let me set the context of this passage for you. The call of Abraham needs to be read against the backdrop of humanity under divine judgment. In the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, we see the spread of sin and evil. In the story of Cain and Abel, we have the first murder. Then we have the sons of God mating with the daughters of man in Genesis 6, perhaps some sort of demonic infiltration of the human race. That leads to the flood and judgment.

Then in Genesis 11, we have the story of the building of the Tower of Babel.
Genesis 11:1-7,

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Ge 11:1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.

Ge 11:2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

Ge 11:3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.

Ge 11:4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

Ge 11:5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.

Ge 11:6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

Ge 11:7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

The people come together and engage in this great building project. They are going to build a tower up to the heavens. And the Tower of Babel is a symbol of people's arrogant independence from God. In fact, Babylon in the Bible is

always used as a symbol of the gathering of political and economic and military power, organized entirely apart from God, apart from any moral standard. Babylon was the city without God. Babylon is a person living apart from God. The people decide that they are going to build a tower. So far from being able to achieve their object of building a tower to the heavens, the writer of scripture sarcastically notes that God had to come down to even see it. Genesis 11:5,

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Ge 11:5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.

It is as if God could not even see from the heavens this puny thing that was built apart from reference to God. The people want to make a name for themselves, v.4, so they invest their heart and sweat and money in building this tower. The end of the story of the building of the Tower of Babel is in vv. 8-9,

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Ge 11:8 So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

Ge 11:9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

The tower was supposed to provide the community with meaning, with significance, with a reason to live. The community's identity was wrapped up in this tower. They "wanted to make a name for themselves." But when the tower falls, they end up devastated, dispersed, experiencing divine disapproval.

You know, one way to define sin is the attempt to build your identity and draw meaning and significance from something other than God. We give our heart and soul and money and commitment to something or someone. And when that something or someone fails us or falls, we are destroyed.

We take something good – a building project like the Tower of Babel, our family, a boyfriend or girlfriend, our work, academic achievement, and make it the best thing, the ultimate thing in life and when we lose it, we're devastated. Take for example, a mom who says, "I'm just living for my kids. My entire identity is 'I'm a mom.' That's where I find all my significance and meaning in life. I'm living for my kids."

Is motherhood important? You bet it is. Should our kids be a major priority? You betcha! But one of two things is going to happen to any parent who is living for their kids. Either they will opt for hyper control, they will try to regulate every area of the child's life and their children will try to escape as soon as they can, or the child will fail in some significant way and mom will be shattered.

Mom, dad, the only way to really love your children is to love God more than your children!

Or take the situation of a break-up of a boyfriend and a girlfriend. If you break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend, and you are sad for a month or two months, that

is normal. Boyfriends and girlfriends are good things. It's painful to lose a relationship with someone we care about. So if you are sad, if you are depressed, that's totally normal. If you want to commit suicide, if you break up and you feel like your life is over and you want to kill yourself, then your boyfriend or girlfriend has become an idol to you. They were your Tower of Babel from which you were drawing your identity apart from God. The only way to love a boyfriend or girlfriend is to love God more than you love your boyfriend or girlfriend.

Some of you are living for your work. Whatever it takes, you are willing to give 60, 70, 80 hours a week. Sometime you are there 6 days or 7 days a week! You're giving your blood for your job. But what happens if your job is taken away and you don't succeed? What if your company or firm is bought out, or lays people off, or if you're not successful in generating new clients.

Again, if you lose your work, or you are not successful, and you feel really bad, that's normal. If you lose your work and you feel like someone just amputated both legs, if you are shattered, your work has become an idol. You know, when you fail at work, your work won't die for you. Instead, your failure will punish you with self-hatred. Only one person has died for your failure, his name is Jesus.

Friend, you have to build your life on something solid. Your need to grab hold of someone you can't ever lose. Jesus is the only Savior you can't lose. If you find him, he will fulfill you. If you fail him, he will forgive you.

Well, getting back to the Genesis story, again at the end of the story of the Tower of Babel, we have the human race judged in disarray, experiencing divine disapproval. And then in Genesis 12 we read about the call of God to Abraham and the commitment of God to bless. Five times in this passage, God mentions his intention to bless.

v. 2

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Ge 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;

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I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

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Ge 12:3 I will bless those who bless you,

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and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth

will be blessed through you.

One theologian wrote the God of the Bible is bent toward blessing. You know, when we read of blessing in the book of Genesis, those of us who are familiar with scripture are immediately reminded of God's original blessing on the human race. Before Adam and Eve sinned, before the fall, before the curse on humanity, way back in Genesis 1 in v. 27-28, we read:

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Ge 1:27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Ge 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

God creates and then he immediately blesses the people he creates. And now here again with Abraham God announces his commitment to bless people. What I think we are reading in Genesis 12 is the beginning of God's new creation. Through Abraham, God's bent towards blessing is being revealed and continued.

And friends, you know you could say "new creation" sums up what God is doing on the face of the earth today. If you were to ask what is the Holy Spirit doing on the face of the earth, the Holy Spirit is bringing about a new creation. He is restoring. He is mending. He is healing what has been broken down by sin. God is bringing about a new creation in marriages. God is bringing about a new creation in people's emotional life. He is healing folks and liberating folks from

drinking, drugs and sexual addictions. He is bringing about a new creation for people economically, vocationally, artistically.

See, God doesn't just have a wonderful plan for your life the way lots of preachers state it. God has a wonderful plan for this world.

Some conservative Christians think the story of the Bible can be summarized like this: Adam and Eve fell into sin; everyone and everything was tainted by their sin; Jesus came to save us from hell – if you receive him, you can go to heaven.

But that is not the story of the bible by any stretch. The story of the Bible is:

- God created the world with a plan to bless all of creation.
- Adam and Eve fell into sin.
- Everything and everyone is tainted by their sin.
- Jesus came not just to save individuals from hell, but to save all of creation from sin.
- One day Jesus will return and restore this world to God's original purposes.

See, the goal of Christianity is not for you and me to escape this world by going up to heaven. The goal of Christianity is to participate with God in restoring this world – restoring the city, restoring families, bringing beauty back into this world.

It's mending and healing in all dimensions – medically, physically, financially, educationally, culturally. Giving people a taste of what life was meant by God to be like. I'm talking about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God includes me and you. It is so much bigger than me and you.

The end of the story of the Bible is not as popularly believed – you and I going up to heaven, sort of like the cast in the old Star Trek series, used to say: “Beam me up Scotty.” That is not the way it is. The end of the story of the bible is heaven coming down to earth. Look at Revelation 21:2. We don't go up. Heaven, the Kingdom of God comes down.

God is not interested in scrapping this world. And one of the reasons I believe God's Spirit has led us to plan the building of a community center and to extend our reach in world missions is so that we could participate in this new creation call. God wants families in this quadrant of the city restored. He wants people given the dignity of work. He wants to see people set free from addictions. The Lord wants children educated. He wants immigrants welcomed. He wants those who are ill to get medical attention. He wants justice for people being beaten up by those too strong for them. He wants a new creation.

The context of Genesis 12 and the blessing on Abraham is the previous judgment on the world from Adam and Eve to the Tower of Babel. As the Bible scholar, Karl Barth used to say: Judgment is never God's final word.

Judgment's is God's next-to-last word. The last word is blessing. And if you have been living under judgment, surrender yourself entirely to Christ today so that you might hear God's last word, blessing. James 2:13 says,

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Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Romans 5:20-21 says,

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But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,
Ro 5:21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

One of my favorite verses in the whole of scripture is 2 Samuel 14:14,

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2Sa 14:14 Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.

God is always plotting; he's always strategizing; he's always trying to figure out a way to remove the curse from someone's life and bring blessing. He wants to do that in your life. He wants you to experience deep joy and rest as you trust in Christ. He wants you to put your full confidence in Christ.

So, how does the blessing come? The blessing comes through separation, through sacrifice. V. 1,

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Ge 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Whenever people are going to embrace God's purposes in a bigger way; whenever you see God's kingdom being extended; whenever someone experiences more of God, you see first there is a separation, a sending, a leaving, a sacrifice, and then there is the blessing. With the sending there is a leaving, without the sacrifice there is no blessing. This is the way of God. We read in John 3:16,

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Jn 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The Son of God had to leave heaven. The Son of God had to experience a separation between himself and the Father before salvation was achieved. In Genesis 12, Abraham is called to intimate leaving. Look at this with me in v. 1,

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Ge 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Leave the country of Haran, which his father was attached to; leave your people, which in the Old Testament would have been his clan, something between the tribe and the extended family; and leave your father's household. Leave your closest relatives. Give up all you hold dear. Abraham, I'm calling you to explore off the map. Before blessing there is separation and there is sacrifice.

This will be more obviously seen in this church as we increase our involvement in world missions as a result of this giving campaign. Breaking from our country, breaking from one's family, breaking from one's past is part of being a missionary. Often, for a missionary the first couple of years of service are the hardest years of their life. The person is separated from their family and friends, and sometimes a person is separated from a romantic relationship by thousands of miles. A person often experiences culture shock in a massive way. When an American moves to Asia or Africa they generally don't know the language of the new culture. Experts say that it takes four years, at least, to really feel comfortable speaking a foreign language in almost all social settings. We don't know the cultural cues. We don't know why something is funny or not funny. We don't know how much time the most basic task ought to take. We don't know how to show respect. We don't know why anything is happening the way it is.

Talk to missionaries. In fact, many missionaries learn personally the meaning of Jesus' statement, "You must become like little children in order to inherit the kingdom of God." Missionaries really feel like they must go back to toddlerhood and relearn everything. You've got to sacrifice being an expert if you want to be in missions. You've got to sacrifice being in control, having all the answers, having life go your way, having things ordered the way they've always been ordered. Many missionaries burn out after a year or two or they become cynical,

hardened and alienated from people around them because to do missions you have to give up control. And most of us are control freaks.

Abraham was called to venture into the unknown as a stranger, as an alien. He had to give up all of his security. He had to turn over his future. He had to turn over his identity to the Lord. People are sometimes called to give up their pensions, give up your retirement plans, give up what is familiar, and only then will you receive the blessing.

Have you ever wondered how much blessing has not come to our world because someone refuses to answer the call of God, or limits the call of God. I look out at the world and say, "God, why so little blessing? You are bent toward blessing. You are at work bringing about a new creation. But why is it so spotty? Why is the blessing so limited? Why don't I see more evidence of the kingdom?

And then this thought came to me as I read the Abraham account. "Rich, have you ever considered that I, the Lord, may be calling many people to leave, to sacrifice, to separation? That many people have refused my call? Have you ever considered that I want to show more mercy than is being exhibited?"

The blessing that will come through the community center will not occur without sacrifice by thousands of us. The blessing that will come by missionary teams

being sent out around the world will not come apart from the willingness of many to give sacrificially, to pray, and many to go.

You know, the requirement of separation, of leaving, of breaking off from the past is not just something that God imposed upon Abraham, or that God requires of missionaries. Separation, leaving, sacrifice, breaking off from the familiar is part of God's call on anyone who would be a disciple of Jesus. Anyone who would receive blessing must first separate. 2 Cor. 6:17-18,

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2Co 6:17 "Therefore come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.
Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."
2Co 6:18 "I will be a Father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

First separation, then God says, "Now you will experience my Fatherly care." We read in Mark 1:17,

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Mk 1:17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Jesus' words to his first disciples: First leave your nets and follow me...And then there is the promise: I will make you fishers of men. Abraham, leave, and then I

will bless. Separate yourself and then you will experience my Fatherhood and I will give you a purpose for living.

And God is speaking to many of you today and saying to you, “Before there will be a blessing, you have to make a decisive break in your life. There is a separation that you need to have.” It may be a separation between you and a boyfriend, or girlfriend. It may be a separation between you and the world at some places where the world is conforming you to its mold. You cannot experience God’s blessings while you have one foot in the kingdom and one foot in the world.

- Yes, I’m a Christian. But I really still have a problem with people of a different race.
- Yes, I’m part of Vineyard, but I still go clubbing.
- Yes, I still party.
- Yes, I still sleep with my boyfriend or girlfriend and I’m in a small group.
- Yes, I’m a Christian, but I still carry with me my non-Christian family’s point of view achievement, about success.
- I still carry with me my non-Christian friends, habits, the way they think and feel about money, about success.
- Yes, I’m a Christian, but I’m totally dominated by the dictates of my law firm, or the company I work for.

- Yes, I'm a Christian, but to be real honest, I'm not particularly different than anyone else on my team, or in my fraternity or sorority, or in my grad school program, except with respect to religion.

George Barna, who is probably the premier demographer of religion in America today said that according to his statistics, if you followed two people around for a year, one was a Christian and the other was not a Christian, you could not tell the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian except with respect to religious practices – Bible reading, prayer, church attendance. But in terms of spending habits, entertainment choices, basic morals, racial attitudes, divorce rates – no difference.

The call to leave, in part, is a call to distinctiveness, a call to be different than the world around us. God has always been interested, friends, from the time of Abraham on in forming a new people, a distinct people, a separated people. Again, I ask you, might the Holy Spirit be saying to any of you, "You must leave. You must break off this relationship. You need to separate from this surrounding culture. You look too much like everyone else around you."

If you look at your life and you say: Apart from the fact that I go to church and my friends and family don't; or apart from the fact that I read the Bible or go to a small group and they don't, there's not a lot of difference between me and everyone else, God would say to you, "You need a decisive break." God is not

interested in simply making you more religious, while the basic operating principles in your marriage, or the basic operating principles in your child raising, or the basic operating principles in your spending, your business, your sexuality, your racial attitudes are exactly like everyone else's. You need to break.

And distinctiveness does not mean weird. Distinctiveness does not mean that you become a judgmental, Pharisaical pain in the neck, who is certain of your moral superiority in every area of life. Distinctiveness does not mean you disdain others who don't live up to your standards. Distinctiveness means that you and I begin to live lives that look more and more like Jesus. Distinctiveness means you and I work with God to bring his new creation. That you and I become quicker to forgive, quicker to give people the benefit of the doubt, more gracious, more sacrificial, more sexually clean, more confident in God. Only through distinctiveness will blessing flow out from this church to others.

Like Abraham, we must entirely belong to God. And then our immediate neighborhood, as well as the nations far away will be affected. So many Christians are deceived by the thought: Well, if I'm too distinct, if I'm too much given over to God, then I won't have very much impact in this world. I will date this non-believer and perhaps have the chance to lead them to Christ. I'll marry this non-believer and then I will influence them toward Christ. I'll do what they do, act as they act, speak as they speak, and then they will think I'm cool, and that it is cool to be a Christian and then they will embrace Christ.

It doesn't work that way. The world around us says: Why should I bother being a follower of Christ? Why bother being a disciple, if it doesn't result in a different life? If your life doesn't get better by being a Christian, why be a Christian? If your life is not more full of hope, if this faith of ours doesn't get us through trials and difficulties, then why bother? People want to see a difference in you, if you are a Christian. Being like everyone else does not bring blessing to another person.

Joy in the midst of trials brings blessing. Forgiveness when judgment is called for brings blessing. Generosity, sacrifice that brings blessing. Taking care of an elderly relative when everyone says, "Put them in a nursing home," that brings blessing. Not complaining on the job when everyone else is grumbling and you are in an atmosphere of complaining, that brings blessing. Being kind to people that other people expect you to reject – gays, Muslims, and even people who reject you brings blessing. Having gratitude, being a thankful person by regularly thanking God, that brings blessing. Giving credit to other people when everyone else around you grabs credit for themselves brings blessing. Doing something different with your evenings than everyone else does – what did you do last night? The average answer is: I watched TV. What did you do? I went down to a homeless camp and handed out blankets. Or if you can say: I went to a women's prison and played in the band; I visited some folks in the nursing home.

What did you do on vacation?

I went to Africa and visited an AIDS clinic.

I paddled down the Amazon River and helped to build a church.

No blessing without separation. No blessing without distinctiveness. No blessing without first leaving, without a decisive break from the past. We have been blessed as a church and blessed as individuals. Now God is calling us to be a blessing. Let's pray.

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Rich Nathan

January 7-8, 2005

Blessed To Be A Blessing Series

Genesis 12:1-3

- I. The Church's Experience Of Blessing

- II. The Context Of Blessings
 - A. God's Judgment (Gen. 11:1-8)
 - B. God's New Creation (Gen. 1:27, 28)

- III. The Condition For Blessing (Gen. 12:1)
 - A. Separation
 - B. Distinctiveness