

I have a question for you – if you are a kid, do you have an idea of what you want to be when you grow up? And if you're an adult, when you were younger, did you have an idea of what you wanted to be when you grew up? Turn to your neighbor and share that with them.

When I was in high school, I knew exactly what I was going to be when I grew up. I was going to be....a high school basketball coach.

I became the equipment manager for my college team (because I wasn't good enough to play) so I could learn from college coaches....and, I hated it.

I decided I wasn't going to be a coach but I didn't know what I wanted to be.

Sometimes being in a place where we don't know the plan, or don't know what comes next can be a little scary. I like to know how things are going to work out.

There's three characters in the Bible that I think can relate to that who I want to tell you a little bit about today.

First, there is Abraham and Sarah. They lived a long, long time before Jesus. They were married and were pretty much settled in life. They had plenty of livestock, a good home, but then God comes and disrupts all of that. God says to them, "I want you to leave your home and go to a new land that will become the home for your ancestors."

That's pretty much all God tells them. God doesn't tell them why they need to leave or where they're going or how long it would take to get there or what challenges they'd face on the way. God didn't give them a GPS with directions.

Can you imagine how you would feel?

I'd be scared. I'd probably have a million questions, like:

"You want us to go to a new home. Ummm....why? What's wrong with where we live?"

"Where exactly is this new land? You didn't tell us."

God was asking them to take a step in faith without knowing the whole plan.

There's another character in the Bible named Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was a religious teacher and he had heard stories about Jesus. Now, the other religious leaders weren't too friendly towards Jesus – who was he after all to claim the authority that he did? But Nicodemus thought there was just something about Jesus that was important and so he decided to go see him.

But he was afraid. He didn't want anyone to know that he was meeting with Jesus so he went in the middle of the night. And he had a lot of questions for Jesus. And they talked back and forth for a while and finally Nicodemus left maybe with as many questions as he had when he came. He didn't reject Jesus but he also didn't all of a sudden become one of his followers. He wasn't sure.

I don't know about you, but I like being sure of things. I like knowing ahead of time that if I just do this, things will work out. But that's not always how life works and it's definitely not how faith works. There may be times when we make a plan and things work out just like we thought they would. Or there may be times when our plans seem to fall apart and we have to just take a leap of faith without knowing where the journey will take us. There may be times when what we believe about God and Jesus seems crystal clear. And there may be times when we wonder if God even exists at all.

I think the good news is that all of that is ok. It was ok for Abraham and Sarah to be scared and to have some doubts about what God was promising them. It was ok that Nicodemus only was brave enough to come see Jesus at night. It's ok when we don't have a plan or when we have more questions than certain beliefs.

We don't have to have everything all worked out in order to just take the next step, to do the next thing that makes sense or the next thing that seems right.

One of the best movies I've seen over the last few years is Frozen 2 – any fans here? My favorite part of the movie – and I apologize if I'm giving away any spoilers – is when Elsa is frozen in Atohallan and she sends her magical message to Anna that she must destroy the dam and free the river. But because Elsa is frozen, Olaf starts to flutter away without Elsa's magic to keep him whole and Anna is left all alone. She has to do the hardest thing she has ever done without Elsa or Olaf or Kristoff beside her. And it seems completely overwhelming. But what gets Anna through is a simple phrase, "Just do the next right thing."

You don't have to have everything figured out, just do the next right thing.

We're going to play a part of that song today and as we listen to it, I want you to consider what the next right thing might be for you:

Maybe it's about your faith
Or about something at school or your work
Maybe it's a situation with your family.

Whatever it is – if there's something that feels overwhelming or uncertain or scary, imagine for a moment what is the next right thing as we listen to this song together.

[song]

At the end of Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus, Jesus tells him something that has since become the most famous verse in all of Scripture, "For God so loved the world that God gave God's son to us."

Friends the promise of our faith is not that it answers all of our questions or that it makes the journey ahead crystal clear. Rather the promise of our faith is that God loves each and every one of us and God is with us every step of the way—even if the only thing we know to do is the next right thing.