



UNIT 3 | SESSION 1

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

GENESIS 12-20

KEY PASSAGE:

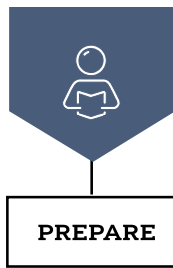
Psalm 135:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. Nothing is outside of God's good plan.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

God promised to bless all the world through Abraham. God sent Jesus from His home in heaven to be born on earth into Abraham's family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed because Jesus saves people from their sins.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



LEADER Bible Study

Think about all of the choices that we have each day. Just in the morning, we have dozens of different cereals to eat, perhaps that many varieties of milk to pour on top of the cereal, and nearly as many ways to make coffee to go with it. All of these are choices that we often take for granted.

Now think about all of the choices God had as He took a significant step in redemptive history and chose a couple to start a new people from whom the promised Rescuer would come. (Gen. 3:15) We see some of those choices at the tail end of Genesis 11, but we need to remember that God is not confined to choices like we are. He is all-powerful and sovereign; God had an infinite number of choices for this critical couple.

So whom did God choose? A man named Abram and his barren wife Sarai. Now that's a surprise, isn't it? This is the couple whom God would give descendants as numerous as the stars? (Gen. 15:5) From the world's perspective, this was a curious choice at best—and a laughable choice at worst.

But from God's perspective, Abram and Sarai were a brilliant choice. First, God made it clear from the inception of this new people that He was the One bringing everything to pass. This family was special because God clearly worked in them to bring forth

children. This is what Sarai understood when she said, "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a son for him in his old age" (Gen. 21:7). That the son of promise, Isaac, married a wife, Rebekah—who was also barren—is not a coincidence. (Gen. 25:21) Nor is it a coincidence that Jesus would be born to a virgin. (Luke 1:34) God is the God who makes possible that which is impossible, including rescuing people from sin.

Second, it took a while, but Abram's faith in God came to fruition because of his wife's barrenness. This was his barrier to faith in God. This is what he struggled with for so many years. In the end, Abram's greatest struggle became the greatest kindling of his faith. God didn't just begin a people through barrenness; He began a faithful people through it.

God's covenant with Abram was certainly amazing. But perhaps His choice of Abram in the first place is even more amazing.

TERMS TO KNOW

Covenant: Promise between two people or between a person and God. Sometimes keeping the promise depends on one person's meeting conditions set by the other person.



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “ Have you ever moved to a new city? What did you leave behind? What surprised you about the new place? If you haven’t moved, what would you miss most about leaving your current home? ”

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: MAKE A HANDSHAKE



Instruct kids to form pairs. Each set of partners should come up with their own handshake. Encourage kids to choose a series of movements for their handshake (give a high five, lock pinkies, give a thumbs-up, and so forth). Allow a few minutes for kids to develop and practice their handshakes. Then call on pairs to demonstrate the handshakes for the group.

For an added challenge, play additional rounds with new partners. Challenge kids to remember their unique handshake for each partner.

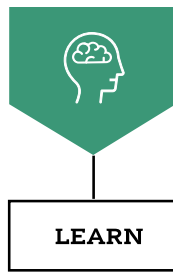
SAY “ People sometimes use handshakes as a greeting. Handshakes are also used to confirm an agreement. In today’s Bible story, you’ll hear an unusual way God showed He would keep an agreement (or covenant). ”

OPTION 2: STAR SEARCH

Before the session, cut stars of various sizes and colors from construction paper. Alternatively, you could draw various stars on sticky notes. Prepare a few dozen. Put the stars around the room, hidden in plain sight.

Instruct kids to sit in the center of the room facing outward. Call out a color, size, or color and size of star (a red star, a large star, or a tiny blue star). The first kid to retrieve a star matching the description earns a point. Call out descriptions and let kids search.

SAY “ How many stars do we have in our room all together? We can count these, but could you ever count all the stars in the sky? No way. In today’s Bible story, God told Abraham his family would be as numerous as the stars. Let’s find out why He said that. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Genesis 12–20. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Made a Covenant with Abraham.” Use the bolded text to retell or review the story.

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

“**Abram and his wife Sarai (SEHR igh) were part of Noah’s family who had spread out on the earth after the great flood. God chose Abram for a special plan. He told Abram to move to a place he had never been. God promised to give Abram a large family and land for his family. “All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” God said.**

This was a good promise, but Abram was sad because he didn’t have any children to inherit his blessing. Still, **Abram obeyed God. He went to the land of Canaan with his wife and nephew. One night, God led Abram outside. “Look at the sky and count the stars, if you can,” God said.** Abram couldn’t count the stars. There were too many! **“Your family will be that numerous,” God promised. Abram believed God, and God was pleased.**

God said, “I will give this land to your descendants.”

“How can I be sure?” Abram asked. So **God did something to show Abram that He would keep His covenant, or promise. First, God told Abram to bring five animals: a cow, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. Abram obeyed God. He brought the animals, cut them in half, and laid the pieces across from each other. Then, when the sun was setting, Abram fell fast asleep.**

While Abram slept, God told him what would happen in the future. He said Abram’s family would be slaves in another country for 400 years. Then God would judge that nation and bless Abram’s family. But first, Abram would live a long, peaceful life. **When it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the animals.** These items represented God. **This showed that God would be responsible for keeping His promise.**

When Abram was 99 years old, God talked to him again. “You will be the father of many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They will become many nations, and some of them will be kings. I will give them the land where you are living, and I will be their God. My promises will last forever.” God was so serious about His promise that He changed Abram’s name to Abraham, which means “Father of Many.” He changed Sarai’s name to Sarah. God said, “I will bless Sarah. She will have a son, and you will name him Isaac.” God promised to keep His covenant through Isaac and his future family.

Christ Connection: God promised to bless all the world through Abraham. God

STORYTELLING TIPS

Display figures: Choose people figures to represent Abraham and Sarah. Hold them up as you tell about them.

Use lighting effects: Dim the lights when telling about God’s ceremony showing He would keep His covenant. Carry a flashlight as a flaming torch.

sent Jesus from His home in heaven to be born on earth into Abraham’s family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed because Jesus saves people from their sins. ”

Small Group Discussion/Questions

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Abraham was a descendant of Noah, and he was living in Haran (HAY ran) when God spoke to him. What did God ask Abraham to leave? Look at Genesis 12:1. [Choose a volunteer to read the verse aloud.] God asked Abraham to leave his land, his relatives, and his father’s house. Abraham didn’t even know where he was going, but he had faith in God. Faith is trusting that God is who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do.

What three things did God promise to Abraham? Look at Genesis 12:2. [Choose a volunteer to read the verse aloud.] God promised to give Abraham a new land, to make him into a great nation, and to bless him.

There were some problems, though. Abraham and his wife Sarah did not have any children, and they weren’t getting any younger. But God was in control. He had made a covenant with Abraham. A covenant is a promise between two people or between a person and God. Sometimes keeping the promise depends on one person’s meeting conditions set by the other person. This covenant depended only on God. God didn’t say, ‘If you and Sarah ever have children, then I will bless the world through them.’ God said, ‘I will do this.’ God would keep His promise no matter what.

Remember in the Bible story when a smoking pot and a flaming torch passed between the animals? Back in that time, when two people made a covenant they would both walk between the animals as a sign that they were promising to keep their part of the covenant. When God made a covenant with Abraham, the smoking pot and flaming torch passed through the animals—not Abraham. This was a sign that God alone was going to keep His covenant promises.

The Bible says Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. This is what the New Testament Book of Romans says. [Read aloud Rom. 4:20-21.] Abraham believed that God could do anything He promised to do. Even though Abraham and Sarah were old and didn’t have any children, Abraham believed God’s promise that his family would be as numerous as the stars. ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ God promised to bless all the world through Abraham. Remember God’s promise to Eve in Genesis 3:15. Eve’s descendant would come from this nation promised to Abraham, crush the head of the serpent, and bring about the greatest blessing to all people. The blessing was not land or family, but salvation from sin. The curse would be broken. Sin would be defeated. Death would be overcome. And all who would trust in the one coming would be blessed. God sent Jesus from His home in heaven to be born on earth into Abraham’s family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed because Jesus saves people from their sins. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ What are some things God might call us to leave behind in order to follow Him? ”

Remind kids that God called Abram to physically leave his home and go to a new land. God might call us to live in a different place; He always calls us to leave behind our old way of living in sin. Emphasize to kids that though we may give up lesser things to follow Jesus, He has so many better things for us.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 6:4.)

| **SAY** “ How does God’s blessing to Abraham extend to us? ”

Guide kids to recall that God promised to bless the world through Abraham’s family. Jesus was one of the numerous offspring God promised Abraham. It is because of Jesus that all people would be blessed through Abraham. All people who trust in Christ are blessed because Jesus provided salvation from sin.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read James 1:12.)

SAY “Are you quick to obey your parents when they give you a command? Why? Are you quick to obey God? Why?”

Invite kids to be honest about their attitude toward their parents' commands. Kids might be tempted to ask questions, drag their feet, make excuses, or flat out refuse to obey. Help them consider why. We might hesitate in obedience to God if we believe our own plans are better than His. Point out that when Abraham chose to believe God, he surrendered his life to God's plan. When we trust Jesus, we surrender our lives to follow God's good plan for us.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 7:2.)