



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 4

Abraham and His Adventures with God

Summary of Today's Story

Abraham is called by God to a new land, which God promises to him and his descendants. God also promises Abraham that he will have descendants that will number as many as the stars in the sky.

Although Abraham and Sarah are very old, Sarah gives birth to a boy, whom they name Isaac. When Isaac is still a boy, God tests Abraham's trust in God by asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. God finds Abraham's faith to be firm and renews the promise made to Abraham.

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

Genesis 12:1-8 (God calls Abraham)

Genesis 15 (God's promise to Abraham)

Genesis 21 and 22 (Isaac)

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church at these times:

Year A:

Second Sunday in Lent

Maundy Thursday

Great Vigil of Easter



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

Today's story is the story of how God chooses Abraham to be the father of "many nations," making him the father of God's chosen people. This is the beginning of our "becoming God's people."

The story of Abraham is the first story in this year's theme: *Once we were no people, but now we are God's people.* This story has several parts:

- God calls Abraham to a new land (Genesis 12:1-8).
- God promises Abraham "progeny as numerous as the stars" and makes a covenant with him (Genesis 15).
- Isaac is born (Genesis 21:1-7).
- Abraham, trusting God, almost sacrifices Isaac and receives a second blessing (Genesis 22:1-19).

Abraham is the father of Isaac, who is the father of Jacob, who is the father of Joseph. Joseph ends up in Egypt, having been sold as a slave by his own brothers (this story will be covered next year). Joseph's father Jacob and Joseph's eleven brothers—who, with Joseph become the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel—follow Joseph to Egypt during a seven-year famine in Palestine.

The next story begins in Egypt as the Israelites become numerous in population, and the Egyptians become afraid of their growing numbers and enslave them.

Before Abraham, all the stories were about people in general: *Once we were no people.* We can see how they are fallen, sinful, arrogant, lost.

In today's story, God chooses one man and his descendants—us—to be God's people. We give thanks to God for adopting us. Later, through Jesus Christ, God helps us become God's children. *We are the children of God.* What a grace!



The Episcopal Thread

The story of the *Akedah*—as the sacrifice of Isaac is called in Judaism—is told on Maundy Thursday and in Lent because we, as Christians, make a connection between Isaac's near-sacrifice and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us. God did not make Abraham go through with the sacrifice of his only son—but then God *did* let Jesus, God's only Son, be sacrificed.

In his letters, Paul makes many references to Abraham, whom "God reckoned as righteous." Abraham's faith in God—faithfully obeying God without question—gave the Jewish people a special relationship with God. As Christians, we rejoice in that glorious heritage, a heritage which we share as part of the Judeo-Christian tradition.



Weaving God's Beloved Community

In a perfect society and a perfect planet, nobody would need to travel far distances to find a good place to live. Abraham was able to do that freely, even passing through lands ruled by people he did not know.

In our world, political boundaries often create sometimes-insurmountable obstacles to free travel, even when fleeing persecution or disaster. Natural disasters and worsening natural environments may also make formerly habitable places uninhabitable.

In a world that reflects God’s Beloved Community, communities would be able to make both political and environmental choices that lead to a more habitable society for all.

Topics that can be discussed with children:

Share the places where you have visited that you have enjoyed, such as parks, beaches, mountains and other places of natural beauty and joy. What have you liked about these places?

Share any times when you have traveled to another city, state, or country, or a place where you would like to travel.



Gathering

As the children come in, have them do a simple activity related to today’s lesson. On

pages 14 and 15, you’ll find two Gathering Activity handouts to use if you wish. Below are other suggestions.

For the younger children, you might provide glow-in-the-dark paint or markers and have children draw a picture of a starry sky, representing Abraham’s descendants “as numerous as the stars in the sky.”

For older children, you might provide word games or puzzles. (You’ll find an online resource for creating puzzles on pp. 1-2 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.) Or you might simply let the children enjoy a brief time of fellowship, giving them an opportunity to visit with each other, establish friendships and build community.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer.



Telling the Story

Read aloud today’s story from a children’s Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-13.

As you can see, there are really three stories this week, but they are all part of the story of God’s choosing Abraham to be the first of God’s chosen people.

This is a good story for entering the mind and heart of Abraham—imagining the feelings of turmoil, fear and trepidation—as he faced the unknown and still trusted in God. Capture these feelings in your storytelling.

This is also a good story for roleplaying, with one child playing *Abraham* and another playing *God*.

You’ll find suggestions for ways to dramatize a story along with other ideas for bringing the story to life for the children on pages 2-3 under Storytelling Enhancements in the Appendix, also found on the Website.

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or asking them to explore its meaning. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

Materials

small table with a cloth to cover it
 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
 matches
 Bible
 cross
optional: flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses, though we recommend keeping the reading short.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Genesis 12:1

For older children: Genesis 12:1-3

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of Genesis:
 (*Read the selected passage.*)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Ask for prayers of thanks to God for God's work in our lives during the past week. This encourages an attitude of thanksgiving and praise to God, the primary act of worship. Remind the children that "it is right to give God thanks and praise" for everything God does for us every day.
- Welcome prayers for God's guidance or healing spirit, for themselves or for others. Petitionary prayers such as these encourage children to reach out to others—even to people whom they don't know—and ask for God's blessings for them.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace. You may use one

of the graces mentioned in previous lessons or try this one, adapted from a prayer found on page 835 of the *Book of Common Prayer*:

- For these and all God's mercies, God's holy name be blessed and praised, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Or invite the children to share a favorite table grace from home. This helps them connect their spiritual life at home with their life in the church.

This is an excellent time to begin talking about the story of Abraham. You can begin by wondering what it might have been like to leave one's home and begin that long journey that God called Abraham to make.

Encourage children to share their reactions to the story by asking questions such as:

- What did Abraham and the people with him eat?
- How did they get their food?
- How did they travel?
- What did the children do?
- How did it feel to be called by God—and then to be commanded to take such a big step?

Trust in the Lord was an important part of Abraham's response to God. He trusted God in leaving his homeland to go to Canaan, a new land. He trusted God who promised him descendants, even when he and Sarah were too old to bear children. And he trusted God who commanded him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Could we do the same?

Also notice that God came on God's own initiative. We do not seek God as much as God seeks us.

Things to wonder about:

- *Trust*: How might it feel to trust God so completely?
- *Fear*: Was Abraham afraid? How do you think he felt? How do we deal with fear?
- *God calling us*: Sometimes God calls us and we don't know where God is taking us. How would that feel?



Memorization

Continue encouraging the intermediate children to memorize the books of the Bible. Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.



Weaving Our Faith

Before your closing prayer, help the children weave today's lesson together with their life experiences and their own thoughts and ideas, by asking the following questions. Such questions help the children assimilate the story into their hearts and minds and also provide them with a simple synopsis of what they have learned today. Ask:

- Who did we talk about today?
- What did God do in today's story?
- What did we learn about God?
- What else did we learn from this lesson?

Encourage the children to remember key words or phrases from today's story, such as:

- *trust*
- *call*
- *promise*
- *new land*



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Thank you, God, for being with us in your love. Send us now to our families in peace, that we may love and serve you by loving them. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord.
Amen.

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



Weaving God's Promises

GENESIS 12:1-9; 15:1-21; 21 & 22

Abram and Sarai move to a new land

Before this story begins, Abraham's name was Abram. He was the oldest of three sons, and his father is named Terah. They live in a land called Ur.

When Abram is grown up, he marries a young woman named Sarai, and they live with Abraham's father and the rest of his family.

One day, Terah decides that he wants to move from Ur and go to a land called Canaan. But somewhere along the way, they come to a place called Haran and decide just to stay there. And that's where Abram and Sarai are when they meet God.

Abram is living in Haran with all his family. He has houses and cattle, and he grows food for his family. He is happy in Haran. He is 75 years old.

One day, God comes to Abram and says to him, "I know you like where you are living, but I want you to go to a different place, far away. I want you to leave your country and your land, leave your father's big family and your father's house."

Abram says to God, "But where do you want me to go? I am here now and I don't know where you want to take me."

God says to Abram, "I will show you. You don't know the land. You have never seen it. But I will take you and your family there. You need to follow me, to receive the blessing that I want to give to you. You can't stay with your father's house and with your father's ways. When you come with me, I will make a great nation out of your family. I will bless you. I will make your name great. You will be a blessing to the whole earth.

“And I will bless anyone who blesses you. And I will curse anyone who curses you, because you and all your family will be the source of blessing for all the families of the earth.”

So Abram packs all of his things and all of his family’s things. He packs his clothes, his animals and his household stuff. He has a lot of things, for he is very rich. He brings with him many, many cows, and sheep, and goats and camels. He brings silver and gold. And when he is all packed, he gathers his family. With him is his wife Sarai, his brother’s son Lot and everything they ever owned in Haran. With all this company, Abram goes from one place to another, not staying, because God has not yet told him to stop.

God makes a promise to Abraham

Abram has been traveling for years. He meets a pharaoh in Egypt. He settles on some land in Canaan, while Lot finds himself some nicer land in a plain near a place called Sodom. Once, Lot is kidnapped by some kings and Abram chases the kings and brings Lot back home.

Then one day at around sunset, God comes to Abram. Abram thinks it may be a dream, but he is afraid anyway.

God says, “Abram, do not be afraid. I will help you.”

Abram says, “But God, how can you help me? What can you give me? I don’t even have a son to pass on my wealth and my name!”

God says to Abram, “Yes, you will have a son, I promise.” Then God takes Abram outside and says to him, “Look up in the heavens and see if you can count all the stars in the sky.” Abram looks at all the millions of stars and just shakes his head. Of course he cannot count all the stars.

God then says, “That’s how many descendants you will have. You will have children and they will have children, and they will have children, and as many people as there are stars in the sky will come from you.” And Abram believes God when God says this.

What God does in the dark

Then God says to Abram, “I am God, who brought you out of that land called Ur. I am now giving you this land.”

But Abram says, “But God, how will I know that this land is mine? Other people live here now—the Canaanites. They think it’s their land!”

God says, “I will make a promise with you. I will show you how to set up the ceremony that will be my promise. Bring me a cow, a goat, a ram, a turtledove and a pigeon.”

Since Abram has lots of animals, he can do this. He goes off to his barns and brings back a cow, a goat, a ram, a turtledove and a pigeon. Then God tells him what to do with these animals.

As God instructs, Abram cuts the animals into two pieces. For the cow, he lays one half on top of the other half. He does the same thing with the goat and the ram, putting one half of the animal down and then laying the other half on top. But God tells him not to cut the birds into two parts, so he leaves them whole.

Now the animals are lying on the ground, very dead. The smell rises up to the sky. The vultures, buzzards and other birds that eat meat fly down to eat the dead animals. Abram chases them away.

Now the sun is going down. God puts Abram into a deep, deep sleep full of deep, deep darkness. Abram is very afraid.

Then God whispers into Abram’s ear. “Abram, one of these days, your people will be slaves in a strange land, and that will last for 400 years. But then I will free them, and they will come out of that land with lots of riches. As for you, you will die in peace, and at a good old age. Now stay asleep while I finish this promise with you.”

Now it is dark. Suddenly a smoking pot and a flaming torch pass in between the pieces of the animals that Abram got ready. That is how God made his promise—what we call a covenant—with Abram. In this promise, God gives Abram the land that God had promised to him a long, long time ago—back

when Abram was with his father in Haran.

Abram has a son

Now God has given Abram and Sarai new names. Now they are called Abraham and Sarah. They are very old, and they still do not have any children. Sarah doesn't think she will ever have a child, for she is really too old, almost 100 years old! When God promised that she will bear a son, she laughed because the idea was so outrageous.

But God always keeps God's promises. So finally, Sarah has a baby boy, and they call him Isaac, which means "laughter," because they remember that Sarah laughed at the idea.

Abraham almost gives up Isaac

Isaac grows up. He is now a teenager, and the family is happy. God has promised that their family will keep on having children and grandchildren, as many as the stars.

But one day, God decides to find out how much Abraham will do what God asks. So God calls to Abraham: "Abraham!" God shouts in his ear.

Abraham says, "Here I am!" even though God knows perfectly well where Abraham is.

God says, "Take Isaac to Moriah, where there is a little mountain. There, I want you to kill Isaac for me, the way you kill a little lamb for me. He will be your offering to me."

The Bible does not tell us what Abraham is thinking. Is he surprised? sad? angry at God? afraid? He probably has some of all these feelings, but he doesn't show them when he has dinner with Isaac and Sarah. He keeps quiet about what God has said.

Abraham doesn't sleep that night. When it is morning, but before the sun comes up, Abraham gets up. He puts a saddle on his donkey. Then he wakes up two young men who are part of his family's helpers. Then he cuts some wood that he will use for the offering, which is to be burned—what they call a *burnt offering*.

When everything is ready, he wakes up Isaac and tells him they need to go on a

journey. Isaac may be confused, but he goes with his father Abraham. They set off. It takes three days to get to Moriah, where the mountain sits waiting for them.

Abraham sees the mountain far away. He says to the two men, “Stay here with the donkey. Isaac and I will go over to that mountain to worship God. Then we will come back and find you.” So the two men set up camp and wait for Abraham and Isaac to come back and take them home again.

Then Abraham picks up the wood he had chopped and puts it on Isaac’s back. Isaac is a strong boy. He can carry the wood up the mountain. Abraham carries the knife and the fire in a little firepot. Abraham and Isaac walk along together for a while.

Then Isaac starts wondering. “Father,” he says. “I have a question.”

“What do you want to know?” says Abraham.

“We have the fire, and we have the wood, and we have the knife for the offering. But where is the lamb? Don’t we need a lamb or an animal to burn?”

Abraham is quiet. He doesn’t know how to tell Isaac that Isaac will be the animal to burn because that’s what God told Abraham. Then he says, “My dear son, God himself will give us the lamb.” He knows that this is not true, but he does not want to tell Isaac that he needs to kill Isaac for God.

Finally, Abraham and Isaac come to an open area. God tells Abraham to stop. This is the place.

Abraham builds an altar. He takes some stones and piles them high. Then he puts the wood on top. He calls Isaac to him. Trembling, Isaac goes to his father. Isaac has figured out what Abraham is going to do. He will be the lamb for the burnt offering!

Abraham ties up Isaac and picks him up. Isaac is heavy, but Abraham is strong. He lays Isaac on top of the wood. Then he takes his knife out of his pocket and lifts it high into the air. He starts to lower the knife toward Isaac as Isaac closes his eyes in fear.

Suddenly an angel calls out with God’s voice, “Abraham! Abraham!”

ABRAHAM!”

Abraham stops, his hand still in the air holding the knife. He is shaking now. “Here I am!” he says.

God says, “Do not touch your son. Do not do anything to hurt him. Now I know that you will do whatever I ask of you. You were even willing to give up your son for me. Now let him go. He will not be the offering you give to me.”

Abraham lowers his hand, throws down his knife, and unties Isaac. He is tired, but very happy. He has tears in his eyes. Isaac gets up off the wood and waits to see what his father will do now. Abraham looks up from Isaac, and there, in the woods, he sees a ram. The ram’s horns are caught in the thick bushes and the ram cannot run away. Abraham says to Isaac, “There is the offering we will give to God!”

So the two of them catch the ram and puts it on the wood, offering the animal to God. And they get on their knees and worship God. When they are finished, they go back down the mountain and find the two men who are waiting for them.

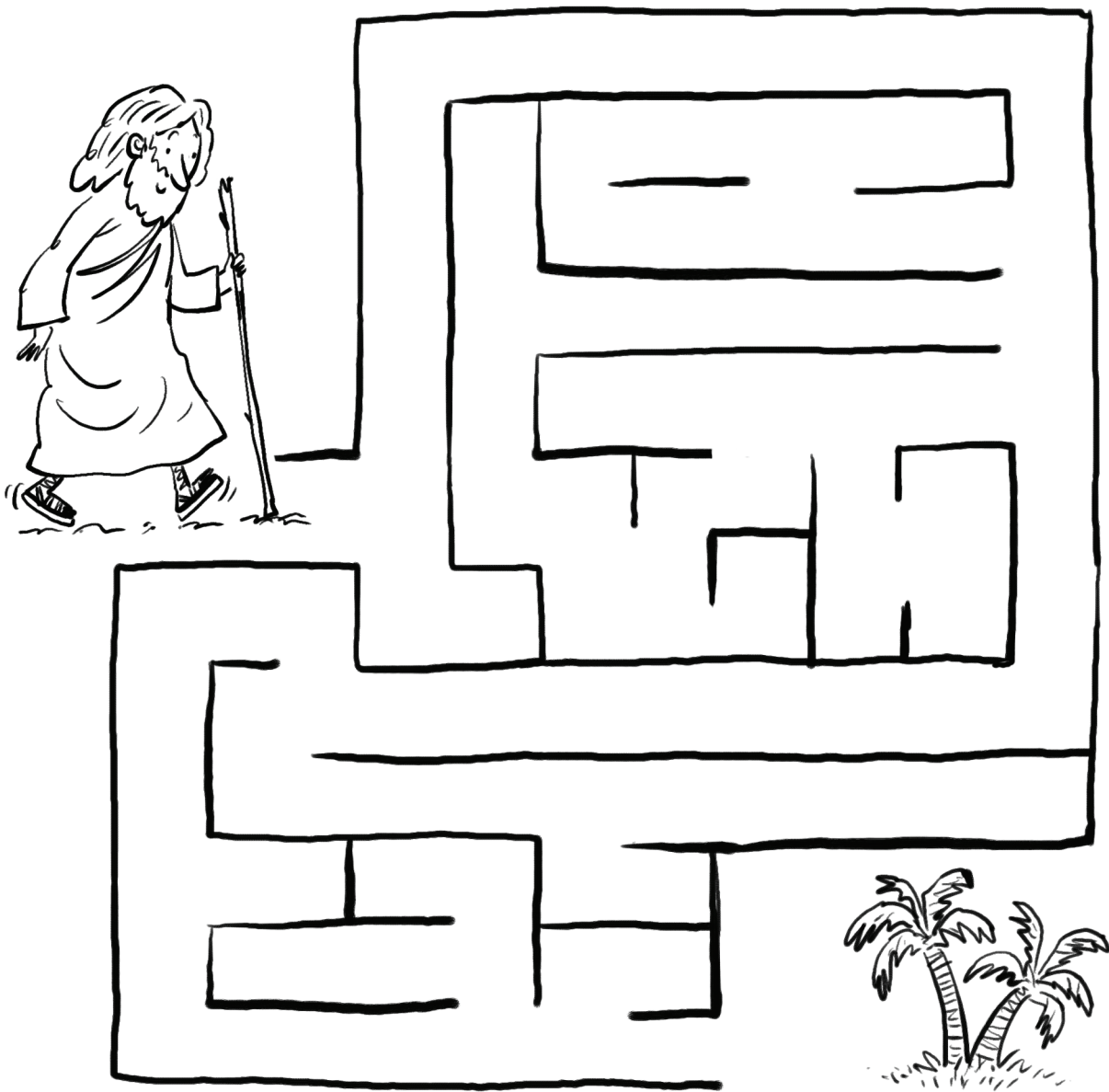
The two men see Abraham and Isaac come back down the mountain. The sacrifice is done, they think, and all is well. Now it’s time to go home.



Weaving God's Promises

GATHERING ACTIVITY: ROAD TO CANAAN

Help Abraham and his family get to Canaan.

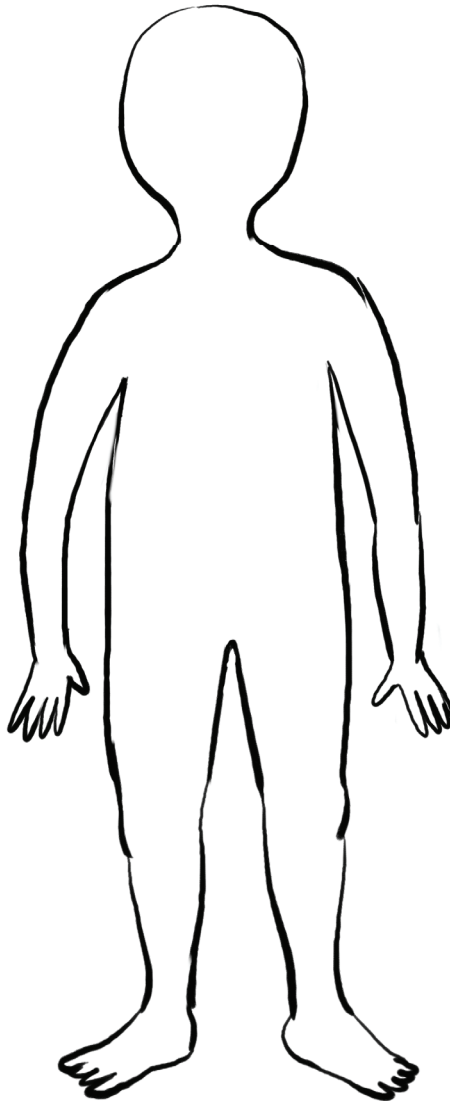




Weaving God's Promises

GATHERING ACTIVITY TRAVELING CLOTHES

What do you need to wear to travel all the way to Canaan? Draw these clothes on the child below. Draw your face, too, showing how you feel about traveling for God.





Weaving God's Promises

STARBURSTS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make stars, a reminder of God's promise to Abraham that he will have descendants "as numerous as the stars."

Materials:

paper
scissors
glue
string

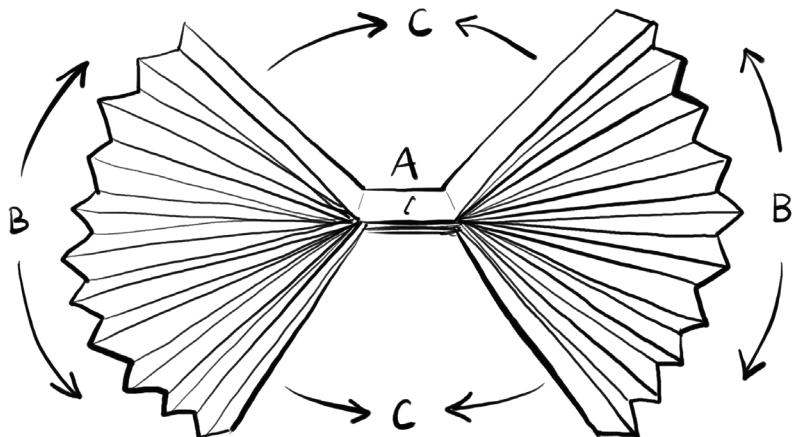
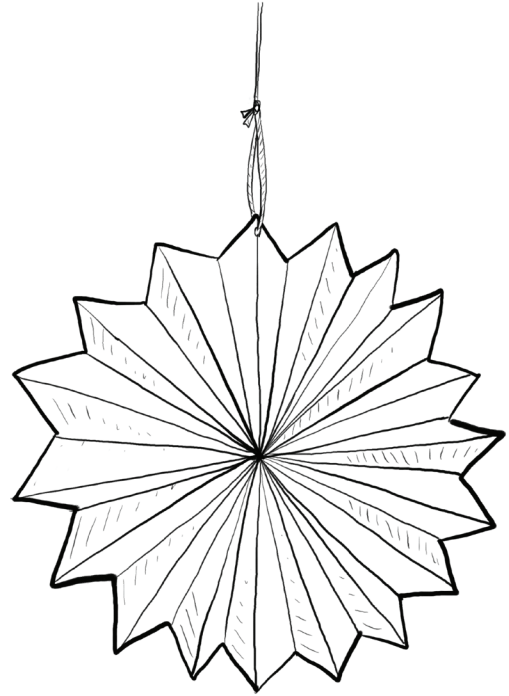
Preparation:

Cut the paper into strips much longer than wide. Make one strip for each child.

Directions:

Distribute the strips of paper and invite each child to make a starburst. Give the children these directions:

1. Fold the paper strip back and forth, accordion-style. Make the folds small and the same size.
2. Staple the folded paper in the middle (A).
3. Cut away the corners and cut out shapes along the sides.
4. Open the paper on both sides of the staple to form fans (B).
5. Glue the fans together to make a circle (C).
6. Tie string into one of the cut-out shapes and hang the star.





Weaving God's Promises

FOOTPRINTS FOLLOWING GOD for Preschool

Children make a class poster with their footprints.

Materials:

construction paper
scissors
markers, crayons, glitter glue, and other decorative elements
glue
butcher paper or poster board

Directions:

Invite the children to make their own footprints and create a Footprints Following God poster:

1. Place pieces of construction paper on the floor. Ask each child to take off one shoe and sock and stand on the paper. Trace around his or her foot.
2. On the footprints, write *We follow God* with a marker or crayon and help the children cut them out.
3. Invite each child to decorate his or her footprint with glitter glue or other decorations.
4. Help the children glue their footprints onto butcher paper or poster board.
5. Display the poster on the wall.



Weaving God's Promises

BIBLE TIME SNACKS for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Invite the whole class together to make and then enjoy snacks like those that Abraham and his family might have eaten. Always be sure you are aware of children's allergies before offering a snack.

Here is a sampling of Bible time snack foods.

Note: Specific ingredients are listed with the snack. Depending upon which snack you choose to make, you'll also need:

- cookie sheet
- pot
- measuring spoons and cups
- knife and fork
- bowls and mixing spoons

Bread Snack

- thawed frozen bread dough
- cinnamon and sugar mixture

Cut small lumps of bread dough and roll in cinnamon sugar. Place on a cookie sheet and let rise for 15-20 minutes, then bake at 400° for 10-15 minutes.

Flatbread

- 2 cups flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- 4 tablespoons shortening
- ¾ cup milk

Mix dry ingredients. Blend shortening with a fork until crumbly. Add milk. Pat into rounds about 4" in diameter and 1/2" thick. Bake at 450° for 12-15 minutes on ungreased cookie sheet. Spread with honey butter.

Honey Butter

- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup softened butter

Mix together thoroughly.

Stuffed Pita Bread

- pita bread, cut into quarters to make triangles
- softened cream cheese
- chopped olives

Spread cream cheese inside the pita bread triangles. Sprinkle olives on the cream cheese.

Beat or shake thoroughly.



Weaving God's Promises

CONSTELLATIONS for Elementary

God promised Abraham as many descendants as there are stars in the sky.

Children create constellations of stars, reminding them of God's promise.

Materials:

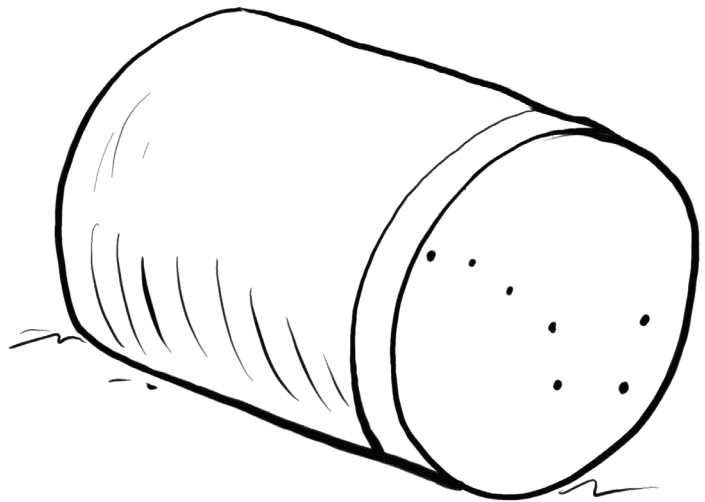
- empty tin cans or oatmeal boxes, 1 per child
- nails
- several flashlights
- sheet of black paper
- hammer (if tin cans are used)
- optional:* book with pictures of constellations

Directions:

Hand out empty cans or oatmeal boxes and invite each child to create a constellation of stars:

1. Show the children how to punch holes in the bottom of a box or can. Nails alone can be used with oatmeal boxes, but a hammer is needed to punch holes in the cans. Then invite each child to make holes in their box or can. Supervise carefully.
2. To see their constellation of stars, have the children shine a flashlight from outside their cans into the holes or aim their cans or boxes toward an open window.

Because this is an art project and not a science project, encourage the children to invent their own constellations. However, some children may want to copy real constellations. For these children, provide a children's book showing the constellations of stars.





Weaving God's Promises

FATHER ABRAHAM'S STARS for Preschool, Primary

Children make pictures of a nighttime sky full of sparkling stars.

Materials:

- black or dark blue construction paper
- white glue
- cotton swabs
- salt in shaker, glitter, sugar, sand or colored rice
- plastic lids, 1 per child
- cardboard boxes or lids for catching the glitter, 1 per child

Preparation:

Set out the cardboard box and salt shaker or other things to sprinkle (glitter, sand, rice). Pour a little glue into the plastic lids.

Directions:

Give each child a sheet of construction paper, a plastic lid with glue and two cotton swabs and invite each child to make a starry sky. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

1. Use the cotton swabs to dot glue on the paper.
2. Place your glue-dotted paper in one of the cardboard boxes or lids and sprinkle salt or glitter over it.
3. Gently shake off the excess salt or glitter into the box.
4. Set aside your starry-sky pictures to dry.



Weaving God's Promises

ABRAHAM PACKS HIS BAG for Preschool, Primary

Children play and sing this action song to the tune of “Farmer in the Dell.”

Directions:

Ask the children to stand in a circle and invite them to sing “Abraham Packs His Bag” and join in the accompanying game.

1. Pick one child to be *Abraham*, who stands in the center of the circle. The rest of the children are *Abraham's stuff* (*coat, book, teddy bear, etc.*).
2. Teach the children the song, then explain the actions (*italicized text beneath the words to the song*):

Abraham packs his bag, Abraham packs his bag,
Hi-ho the derr-i-o, Abraham packs his bag.

Abraham packs a _____, Abraham packs a _____,

(Abraham picks one child to be a coat—or any other stuff that he might want to pack. That child moves into the center of the circle.)

Hi-ho the derr-i-o, Abraham packs a _____.

(The coat picks another child to be a book—or any other stuff. That child then joins Abraham and the coat in the center of the circle.)

3. Have children continue singing and adding stuff until Abraham gets to the last child. Then add the last verse:

We're all set to go, we're all set to go,
Hi-ho the derr-i-o, we're all set to go.

Here are suggestions for what *Abraham* might pack:

coat	blanket	doll	cross
book	Bible	crayons	crackers
teddy bear	hat	socks	candy bar
cat	dog	goldfish	

Variation:

Change the first verse to:

What should Abraham pack? What should Abraham pack?

Hi-ho the derr-i-o, what should Abraham pack?

Ask the children to name an item and add it to the next verse. In this way, everybody will know what to sing before they start the second verse.



Weaving God's Promises

ROAD TO CANAAN for Preschool

Children move square by square along the color-coded road to the *Promised Land* in this child-sized board game.

Materials:

- different colors of construction paper
- scissors
- star cutouts or star stickers for prizes
- bag or large hat

Preparation:

Cut each color of construction paper into small pieces and put them into a bag or hat. Make sure you have several more pieces of uncut paper of these same colors.

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Road to Canaan game:

1. Place pieces of the uncut paper in a line on the floor to make a road leading to the *Promised Land*, placing the colors in random order. Put small prizes at the end of the road.
2. Have the children line up at the start of the road. The first child picks a scrap of paper out of the hat. He or she then moves to the first stepping stone on the floor that is the same color as the one he or she picked out of the hat.
3. The next child then picks a scrap of paper out of the hat and moves to the first step of that color. Continue until all children have reached the *Promised Land*. Give them each a prize for finishing.



Weaving God's Promises

TRAVELING WITH ABRAHAM for Elementary, Intermediate

We bet the weather was not great and the shade trees were few on the way to Canaan. How was the trip? The children find out and then act it out!

Materials:

index cards or slips of paper
pencils or pens
small paper bag

Directions:

Invite the children to participate in this drama:

1. Ask each of the children to write on a card or slip of paper something that one might encounter on the trip to the Promised Land. It could be scenery such as *shade trees, water holes, hills and mountains, quicksand* or *cities*. It could be dangers such as *scorpions, snakes and tigers, marauding armies, beggars, thieves and sandstorms*. Or it could be *food and game, hot sun, trade caravans*—encourage the children to use their imaginations!
2. Collect the cards and put them in a bag.
3. Pick 2 or 3 children to act out Abraham's journey, beginning with God's call to Abraham.
4. Soon after they start out, draw a card out of the bag and give the actors "stage directions," using the idea on the card. Have the children act out the scene accordingly. For fun, pull out several cards and give the actors "stage directions" in rapid succession and have them act out the scene incorporating all the ideas.
5. After a few minutes, call time and invite other children to be the actors.



Weaving God's Promises

MAIL FROM ABRAHAM for Primary, Elementary

Pretending to be along on Abraham's travels, children make postcards and write notes about their trip to people whom they know.

Materials:

- card stock paper or poster board
- scissors
- pens
- markers or crayons
- optional*: postage stamps

Preparation:

Cut the card stock to postcard size, about 4" x 6".

Directions:

Hand out the postcard-size pieces of card stock and invite each child to make a postcard from Abraham's travels. Give the children these directions:

1. Draw a picture of a scene from Abraham's travels on one side of your blank postcard. Add words like *Wish you were here* or other postcard-type text if you wish.
2. On the back, draw a line down the middle. Pretending you are traveling with Abraham, write a note about your travels on the left half of the card. On the right side, address the postcard.

What to do with the postcards:

- Give the children real stamps and have them mail the postcards to real people. (The paper must be at least as stiff as a regulation postcard.)
- Have the children deliver their postcards to another church school class or to your clergy.
- Invite the children to put their postcards on a bulletin board in your church to show what they have been studying.



Weaving God's Promises

BIG PICTURE OF ABRAHAM'S ADVENTURES for Primary, Elementary

Children create a mural of the road from Ur to Canaan, the setting of Abraham's adventures.

Materials:

butcher paper
fabric and felt scraps
paper
construction paper
paints and paintbrushes
scissors
markers
glue

Preparation:

Cut out a large sheet of butcher paper and tape it to a wall.

Directions:

Invite the children to work together to make this mural of Abraham's adventures. Give the children these directions:

1. Paint a long road from Ur to Canaan on the butcher paper.
2. Draw on separate pieces of paper:
 - Abraham and other people
 - things that Abraham would take with him (camel, suitcases, etc.)
 - the city of Ur
 - the city of Canaan
 - things that Abraham would have seen or met on the road (snakes, cacti, trees, beggars)

Make the pictures big!

3. Glue the pictures onto the butcher paper.



Weaving God's Promises

STUFF TO LUG for Elementary

Children help Abraham pack his bag to travel to Canaan. Their challenge is to make sure he has what he needs!

Materials:

- 2 sturdy backpacks of equal size
- various items for traveling or camping—both necessary and frivolous
- dot stickers or masking tape
- felt pen

Preparation:

Assign a point value to each item based on how much one needs it to survive (for example, bottle of water = 100 points, bluetooth speaker = 5 points). Put the point value on a sticker or piece of masking tape and attach to the item.

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Stuff to Lug game:

1. Divide the class into two teams. Ask the teams to go to one end of the room and stand in a line with the children on each team standing one behind the other.
2. Place the traveling items in one big pile in the middle of the room. Place the backpacks at the far end of the room, one in front of each team.
3. Explain that the object of the game is to have teams pack their backpacks with items that contain the most survival points—but they can pack only one item at a time.
4. The first player from each team takes *one* item from the pile, runs to the team's backpack, stuffs the item inside, then runs back and tags the next player in line. If an item does not fit into the backpack, the player must return it to the pile and pick another item.
5. The second player then runs to the pile, takes an item and stuffs it into the backpack.
6. Continue the game until everybody in line has played.
7. At the end of the game, count the point values in each backpack. The team with the most points wins.



Weaving God's Promises

OUR OWN FAITH JOURNEYS for Intermediate

Children explore their own faith journeys through this activity and discussion.

Materials:

Directions for the Road (pp. 30-31)
whistle, bell or other noisemaker
scissors
scarves, bandannas or other cloth
bags

Preparation:

Make a copy of the *Directions for the Road* for every 2-4 children in your class. Cut the page into four parts and put them into a bag. Add 3-4 scarves. Do this for each group of 3-4 that you think you'll have.

Directions:

Invite the children to participate in this Conversation Jump-Start. Begin with this follow-the leader exercise:

1. Divide the class into groups of 2-4. Each group will take all four journeys, picking a different leader for each journey.
2. Each group leader picks a set of *Directions for the Road* from the bag. Any leader who draws Journey 4 also takes the scarves.
3. The leader reads and follows the directions, leading his or her group on a journey without telling them where they are going. When the group arrives at their destination, the leader asks the questions listed on the directions sheet.
4. Give the groups about 5 minutes to complete each journey, then use the noisemaker and have them change leaders and begin a new journey.

When every group has taken every journey, invite the children to come back together and join in a group discussion. Jump-start the conversation with these questions:

- What does it mean to have faith in God, to do what God asks us to do?
- How can faith in God keep us from being afraid?
- What do our faith journeys look like today? What is easy? What is hard?
- How would prayer to God help us gain strength and confidence?

DIRECTIONS FOR THE ROAD



Journey #1

Lead your group to a location within this room.

When you get there, say:

- Pretend you are Abraham. God has asked you to take a long journey...but you don't know where you're going! You have *lots* of questions. What three questions would you like to ask God before you start?



Journey #2

Lead your group to a place within this building. Have the group members hold hands while walking.

When you get there, say:

- Imagine a stranger suddenly says to you, "Come with me. I'm going to take you somewhere." Would you trust him? Would you go?
- Now imagine a good friend asking you to go. Would you go with your friend?
- Think of your church. Who in your church would you trust to lead you somewhere new?

DIRECTIONS FOR THE ROAD 2



Journey #3

Lead your group to a place outside the building. Have the group members line up behind you, close their eyes and put one hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. Then lead them slowly to the spot that you have picked.

When you get there, say:

- Pretend that God is the glue that keeps us safe and together even when we can't see where we are going. How can believing in God help us during the scary times in our lives?
- How would you ask God for help?



Journey #4

Hand out scarves and tell everyone to hold one end of a scarf and hand the other end to the person behind them. Everyone should be linked to the person in front of them and behind them with a scarf. (If there are not enough scarves for everyone, you can have more than two people to a scarf.) Lead your group, linked together by scarves, around the building and back again.

When you get there, say:

- Imagine that the scarves are our links to the people that God put in our lives so that we can stay connected and help each other. When you are having trouble, how can you ask a friend or family member—or someone else you trust—for help?

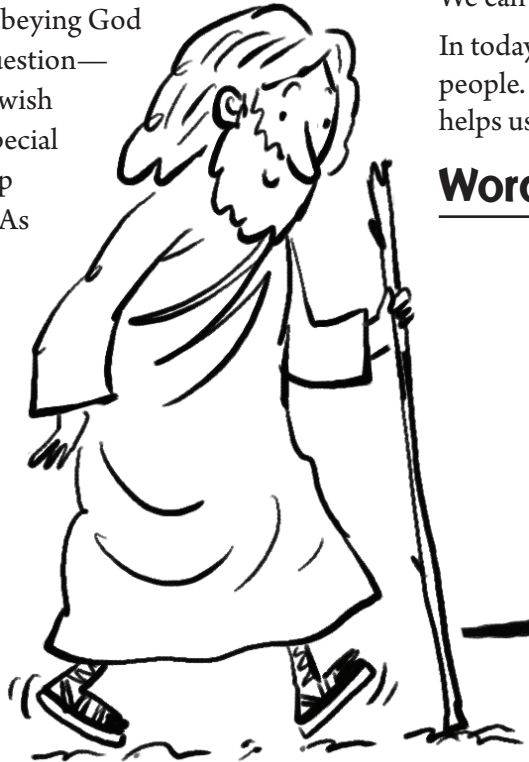
LESSON 4: ABRAHAM AND HIS ADVENTURE WITH GOD



We Believe . . .

The story of the *Akedah*—as the sacrifice of Isaac is called in Judaism—is told on Maundy Thursday and in Lent because we, as Christians, make a connection between Isaac’s near-sacrifice and Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for us. God did not make Abraham go through with the sacrifice of his only son—but then God *did* let Jesus, God’s only Son, be sacrificed.

In his letters, Paul makes many references to Abraham, whom “God reckoned as righteous.” Abraham’s faith in God—faithfully obeying God without question—gave the Jewish people a special relationship with God. As Christians, we rejoice in that glorious heritage, a heritage which we share as part of the Judeo-Christian tradition.



Today’s Story:

Genesis 12:1-8, 15, 21-22

Today’s story is the story of how God chooses Abraham to be the father of “many nations,” making him the father of God’s chosen people. This is the beginning of our “becoming God’s people.”

The story of Abraham is the first story in this year’s theme: *Once we were no people, but now we are God’s people.* This story has several parts:

- God calls Abraham to a new land (**Genesis 12:1-8**).
- God promises Abraham “progeny as numerous as the stars” and makes a covenant with him (**Genesis 15**).
- Isaac is born (**Genesis 21:1-7**).
- Abraham, trusting God, almost sacrifices Isaac and receives a second blessing (**Genesis 22:1-19**).

Before Abraham, all the stories were about people in general: *Once we were no people.* We can see how they are fallen, sinful, arrogant, lost.

In today’s story, God chooses one man and his descendants—us—to be God’s people. We give thanks to God for adopting us. Later, through Jesus Christ, God helps us become God’s children. *We are the children of God.* What a grace!

Words of Faith



Trust—to believe that someone or something is true and reliable

Call—an invitation to do something, be something, go somewhere . . .

Promise—to say that you will complete some future action

New land—the place to which God called Abraham and Sarah; a place of new beginnings

God calls us to new places, new experiences, a new way of being. We can trust that God is with us, no matter where we go or what happens to us.





Sharing

Read the story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible. Because there are multiple stories, you may want to choose just one *or* spread them out over several story times.

There may be many questions about Abraham and Sarah, especially when exploring the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac, for example:

- Would God ever ask us to pick up and leave everything we know and love?
- Why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice his own son? What if God hadn't stopped Abraham?
- Is God really with us always? What about when bad things happen?

Reinforce the idea that God does promise to be with us always and everywhere, even when it's not obvious and we don't feel it.



Weaving God's Promises



This Week at Home

- **Ask each member of the household** to answer this question: "If you could live anywhere else in the world for one year, other than here, where would it be? Why does this place attract you?" Have a world atlas or map available so everyone can find the places mentioned. Let the atlas or map spark other ideas, like, "If you had to move to a place that you've never heard of before, what might it be?" With a computer or tablet handy, you could also quickly look up these places to see what the might be like.
- **Pick one person in your household to play Abraham.** If you are the one playing *Abraham*, imagine that God has just told you to do something. Pretend you are listening to God and talking back (or pretend to answer a phone call from God). Then share with the other family members what God has told you. Let them ask questions. Also imagine what it feels like to get a message from God: scary? exciting? fun? Take turns playing *Abraham*.
- **If your family has experienced a move, talk about that.** What do people remember about the move? What was hard about it? What was exciting? What did you learn about yourselves? about each other? Now imagine Abraham and Sarah's move. What made their move exciting? What made it hard? If you could have given them some advice before they set out, what would you have said? How can you help a new neighbor or classmate that just moved to town? As a family, consider organizing a welcome party to help them feel at home.
- **Roleplay Abraham's family meeting when he and Sarah announce they are all packing up and moving...**but they don't know where to. Choose one person to be Abraham and others to be his children and siblings and servants. As Abraham, how would you break the news? As Sarah or one of the children, how would you react? "Where are we going, Dad?" "Well, I don't know, but pack your things anyway"? This could be a very funny conversation.



Household Prayer

We give thanks, Lord, that you are always here to lead us to new adventures. Help us always to remember that you stay by our side so that we may not stumble or fall, and grant us your blessing today; in Jesus' name we pray. *Amen.*

