



6

Abraham and Sarah Believe God's Promises

Scripture

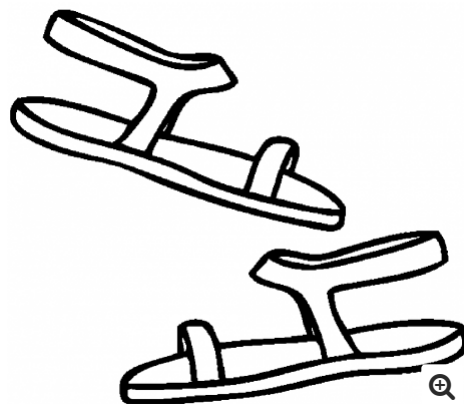
Genesis 11:31-12:9

Focus

Abraham and Sarah believed God's promises and moved to a new land, as God had told them to do.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Tell how Abraham and Sarah trusted God's promises.
- Trust God even when we don't know what will happen.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

If anyone remembers anything about the Heidelberg Catechism it's the poignant words at the very beginning: "My only comfort in life and death is that I belong . . . to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." That comfort of belonging is the theme for this unit.

But the road to ultimate comfort in Jesus Christ begins long before the events of the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. It begins even before this story of Abraham and Sarah. It begins in the loving heart of the Creator God, who made this world and all its creatures, with human beings as its crowning glory.

Even after we defaced God's good creation with our sinful rebellion, God did not let us go. He determined to redeem his world and restore us as his magnificent, image-bearing children. This began already in the garden as Adam and Eve hid in shame. But in today's episode, the story of God's redeeming love takes a whole new direction. Starting with just two people, then a family, a tribe, and a nation---and one very special person, his Son, Jesus Christ---God begins the long, long journey of reclaiming a world and a people that belong to him.

The author sets the scene for this story in chapter 11. It's like Google Earth: the "camera" swoops in from far away in Ur with a list of names and then zeros in closer and closer until the whole screen is filled with just two people, Abram and Sarai.

In their faces we see lines of sadness. These two relatively old people have no children, an especially tragic circumstance in that day. What we're really seeing is a dead end. From Adam and Eve slinking out of the garden to the tragi-comic bewilderment of Babel, human effort comes to this: barrenness.

Right there, at the end of the rope, in the bitter reality of human helplessness, God enters the scene. A call, a voice? Who knows what the experience was really like, but Abram heard its compelling invitation: "Go!" Amazingly, Abram and Sarai follow that stunning invitation to a new land, leaving everything behind. But more than a command or even an invitation, it's a promise: "I will bless you . . . and all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you."

God is on the move! And here's the wonderful thing: God determines to use the very creatures that rebelled to be partners in blessing (redeeming) the world God made.

Belonging to God doesn't just mean that God finally does something to redeem us from sin and death, but that we humans will be his covenant partners in bringing it about. Belonging involves God's claim and God's call; his purpose includes our partnership.

Steps

Step 1 Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. (*Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.*)

Step 2 Tell and Wonder

Materials: A few yards/meters of fabric • cane or walking stick

Files: [Story Symbols \(full unit\): Year 2 Unit 1](#)

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? (*Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.*)

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Read "Abraham and Sarah Believe God's Promises" aloud, pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions. NOTE: It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Re★formed

The initiative for a new start here is entirely God's. God is about to begin an amazing plan—to choose a people to become God's family, and from it to bring the Savior into the world. Abraham and Sarah's positive response to God's command to move is astounding, but the story's spotlight is on our promise-keeping God!

Story: Abraham and Sarah Believe God's Promises

Open your Bible and read Genesis 12:1-2. Tell the kids that this is how today's part of God's great story begins—with God telling a family to leave their home and promising to take care of them.

Put on your costume, telling your group that today you will be telling the story as Abraham.

Hello! My name is Abraham and I have a true story from God's Word to tell you. It's about me—Abraham—and my wife, Sarah. But it's mostly about God and God's plan to grow a family.

Before I begin, I want you to think about a time when you did something new. Maybe you could remember your first day of school, or your first time riding a bike, or your first time coming to our *Dwell* group.

Tell me, how did you feel? (*Pause for responses.*) **What made you the most nervous or the most excited?** (*Pause for responses.*)

Has anyone ever moved to a new neighborhood? Do you remember how it felt to pack everything up and leave your room, your house, and your friends behind? Even if you haven't moved lately, can you imagine what it would be like? If you can, then you know how Sarah and I felt a long time ago. Let me tell you about it.

Sarah and I lived in a place called Haran. It was our home. We didn't have any children, but our relatives lived there and so did all our friends. We imagined we would stay in Haran for the rest of our lives.

But God had different plans for us. One day I got the surprise of my life. God—the Creator and Ruler of the entire world—talked to me directly. Think of that! God talked to me, of all people! Believe me, I listened very carefully to every word God said. God told me, "Abraham, I want you to leave your country, your people, and your home and go far away. I will show you where to go."

I wonder what questions might race through your mind if God said something like that to you? (*Pause for responses.*)

You can be sure that a whole lot of thoughts raced through my mind. But I hardly had time to think about them, because God started talking again. This time God gave me some very, very big promises! God said, "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 to all the people on earth."

How would you feel if God gave you those great big, giant promises? (*Pause for responses.*)

I didn't know why God wanted Sarah and me to leave our home in Haran or where God wanted us to go. But I decided to obey God. It was so hard to leave the home we loved and all of our family and friends! But we started packing, along with our servants. We got everything ready to take along—all our clothing, our cooking pots, our dishes, our tools, our favorite things, our tents. Nothing could be left behind! Even our flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle would have to come along. Hardest of all was that Sarah and I had no idea where God would lead us. For all we knew, we could be walking for years!

Tip

When it's time to tell the story, drape a few yards/meters of fabric over your head to serve as a cloak similar to what Abraham might have worn. Or tie a scarf around your head to hold it in place. Pick up your cane and you're ready to go!

Early one morning we left Haran with everything we owned. On and on we walked, day after tiring day under the hot desert sun. Finally, we came to the land of Canaan. Oh, it was such a beautiful place to live! Sparkling rivers and streams, beautiful fruit trees and grapevines, and plenty of green grass for our herds. We hoped that this was the place God wanted us to live.

We set up camp there for the night. Think about it. Every evening when we stopped, we had to build a fire to make supper, and we had to find food for our hundreds of animals. **If you had been with us, what job would you have chosen for the evening chores?** (*Pause for responses.*)

One night while we were in that area, God spoke to me again. Just as before, I listened carefully to every word. "Abraham, do you see all the land around you? I promise to give this land—the land of Canaan—to your children and to your children's children. It will be theirs to live in and enjoy."

Naturally I rushed off to tell Sarah and the others what God had just said. She was so happy! This land would belong to our children and grandchildren. That was a great, great promise from God. It meant that God was going to give us children of our own! And after a while we would live right here in Canaan too. Imagine how happy we were!

And do you know what? Sarah and I believed every word that God said. We trusted God to make those promises come true. We were so thankful that I built an altar to God. All of us worshiped and praised the Lord for bringing us to Canaan and for giving us such great, wonderful promises!

Step 3 Pray

Close in prayer, using the following prayer or your own words:

Thank you, dear God, that Abraham and Sarah obeyed you. Thank you that they trusted you to care for them and bring them to the right place. Thank you for your promises to them and to us. Help us to trust you even when we don't know exactly what will happen. Amen.

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Step 4 Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #14 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

**God's Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.*

Easy Extras

1. Arrival Activity: Promises, Promises, Promises!

Materials: whiteboard or newsprint and markers

Before your session begins, print the heading Promises, Promises, Promises! at the top of the newsprint or whiteboard. Prepare a large enough area for all the kids to find a place to write a couple of promises.

Tell them that today's story is about promises. Ask them to share promises they have made to others and promises others have made to them. Have each child write or draw two of these on the board or newsprint. You can also pair older children with children who are too young to write their own promises. Ask the older children to be helpers, writing for the younger kids.

After the story, come back and look at your list of promises together. Point out that we all make promises, and God makes them too.

If you're leading this session online, write the promises on a piece of paper as the children share, and then hold up that piece of paper on your screen for your group to see after the story.

2. Age-Specific Activities

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- Preschool: [Abraham and Sarah Obey God](#)
 - Kindergarten-1st Grade: [Abraham and Sarah](#)
 - 2nd-3rd Grade: [Abraham and Sarah Believe God's Promises](#)
-