


the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

Son of laughter

God's special promise to Abraham, from Genesis 12–21

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.

☉ Briefly recap the main point of the previous story: “Last time we learned that people thought they could live without God and could get to heaven without God. The way they tried to do it was to build a very tall tower. We said that trying to live without God is called sin and we memorized a verse about sin.”

☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Genesis 6:5 — ‘The LORD saw that the human heart was only evil.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, say: “Raise your hand if you have tried to count to a really high number. Thank you, hands down. Raise your hand if you have tried to count the grains of sand on a beach. Raise your hand if you have tried to count the number of stars in the sky.”

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and introduce the idea of counting the stars.

Materials: None.

1. Say: “We are going to play a counting game. Look around and count all of the things in the room that have legs. Stand up and raise your hand when you have a number.”

2. When the majority of the group is standing, ask them for their answers, commenting appropriately.

3. Say: “Good, sit down. Look around and count all of the things in the room that are blue. Stand up and raise your hand when you have a number.”

4. When the majority of the group is standing, ask them for their answers, commenting appropriately. Then ask everyone to sit down.

5. Repeat with other examples, such as: things that are round, things that make noise, things that you can sit on, etc.

6. Play this quickly so that the children are standing up and sitting down quickly and so expending energy.

7. Toward the end of the allocated time, say: “There are some things that are too many to count, like sand or stars. Imagine if someone told you that you had to count all the stars in the sky. In our story today that is exactly what Abraham tried to do.”

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 56–61 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CDI track 6.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

When God calls Abraham in Genesis 12, God promises in verse 2–3: “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 ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

First, God promises to make Abraham into “a great nation,” in other words, into a whole new country or society. Second, God promises that Abraham will be blessed and get a great name. This second promise means a special covenantal and personal relationship with God. Third, God promises that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through Abraham.” This is, of course, astonishing. Ultimately, God is going to save his people through Abraham’s family.

But all of these incredible promises rest on one linchpin promise. In verse 7 God says that Abraham will have “offspring.” If no child is born to Abraham, there is no possibility for any new humanity or salvation for the earth. But Abraham’s wife Sarah is barren. Genesis 11:30 says that Sarah was “childless because she was not able to conceive.”

Packed into this little phrase is a world of misery. In ancient societies all aspirations were focused on one’s family. It was for the success, prominence, and prosperity of one’s family that everyone dreamed. In that context, then, the importance of having children was paramount. All the hopes and dreams anyone had were bound up in having strong, faithful, successful children who carried on the family name and honored their parents.

Sarah’s barrenness, then, would have been a source of the greatest shame, pain, and discouragement. It also meant that the redemption of the world would hinge on the miraculous birth of a child to a barren woman.

So if God’s promises are to be fulfilled, if salvation is to come, then everything depends on something that Abraham and Sarah cannot accomplish in their own ability. All of it is based on the gracious, miraculous birth of the son of promise. There will have to be a supernatural intervention of God into history for all of this to take place. The birth of Isaac shows not only that God is gracious and powerful beyond all imagining but also that salvation will not come through human effort.

This is the main theme of Genesis: how God fulfills his promises to Abraham by grace and, through those promises, restores the world lost in Eden. Of course, from our vantage point we can see that this is not just the theme of Genesis, but of the whole Bible and therefore of all of human history.

It is hard not to notice that centuries later another angelic messenger comes to another incredulous woman to tell her about another miraculous birth, and he answers her doubt by saying: “No word from God will ever fail” (Luke 1:37). Unless Isaac was born, God’s people could not be blessed and saved, but in the end, he only points to the ultimate “Isaac” through whom all God’s promises are ultimately fulfilled.

Understanding the Story

15 min. 

Aim: To introduce the promise God made to Abraham regarding his family and to understand that God keeps his promises.

Materials: Crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: “An important word in today’s story is ‘promise.’ What is a promise? That’s right; a promise is when you say something that you are going to do for someone and you commit to doing it.”
2. Give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Say: “On your paper, you can see some thought bubbles near the pictures of Abraham and Sarah. The game is to write down inside the thought bubbles what Abraham and Sarah were thinking.”
3. You may want to allow the children to work together in pairs. (You may want to ask the children who are struggling to draw rather than write what Abraham and Sarah are thinking.)
4. Say: “Let’s start with Abraham. God told Abraham to count all the stars in the sky. In **thought bubble number 1**, write down what Abraham was thinking as he tried to count the stars.”
5. Give the children 1 minute and then ask some of them to share their answers; e.g., “Too many!” “This is impossible!” “I can’t do this!” etc. Share your own answer.
6. Say: “Even though it is impossible, God had a reason for asking Abraham to count the stars. God promised that counting Abraham’s family will be as hard as counting stars. God promised Abraham a very big family. God also promised Abraham that God would rescue his people through Abraham’s family. What was Abraham thinking when God made these promises? In **thought bubble number 2**, write down what Abraham was thinking when God promised him a very big family.”
7. Give the children 1 minute and then ask some of them to share their answers; e.g., “This is impossible!” “I am too old to have a family!” “How can this be true?” etc. Share your own answer.
8. Say: “It really was an incredible promise. God promises to give Abraham a very big family even though he is old with no children, and God promises to rescue his people through Abraham’s family. In **thought bubble number 3**, circle the correct answer. Did Abraham believe God or not believe God?”
9. Ask: “Who circled that Abraham believed God? You are right. Abraham believed that God could do anything.”
10. Say: “Let’s move on to Sarah. What does Sarah think when she hears God’s promise? In **thought bubble number 4**, write down what Sarah thought when she heard God’s promise that she would have a family.”
11. Give the children 1 minute and then ask some of them to share their answers; e.g., “My dream can’t come true!” “I am too old to have a baby!” “It’s too late!” etc. Share your own answer.

12. Ask: "Does Sarah believe the promise? In **thought bubble number 5**, circle the correct answer. Did Sarah believe God or not believe God?"

13. Ask: "Who circled that Sarah did not believe God? You are right. Sarah did not believe that God would give her and Abraham a very big family. She had forgotten that when God says something, it's as good as done. Sarah laughed a sad laugh when she heard the promise that she would have a baby at such an old age."

14. Ask: "But did God keep his promise to Abraham and Sarah? Raise your hands in the air if you think God kept his promise. Thank you, hands down. Yes, God kept his promise and Abraham and Sarah had a baby. What does Sarah do when she sees that God has kept his promise? In **thought bubble number 6**, write down Sarah's thoughts when she has a baby."

15. Give the children 1 minute and then ask some of them to share their answers; e.g., "My dream has come true!" "I am so happy!" etc. Share your own answer.

16. Say: "Yes, Sarah laughs again, but this time with happiness and joy. What do Abraham and Sarah name their baby? Say it together. Correct, Isaac."

17. Say: "God told Abraham to count the stars. Do you remember from one of the first stories, who created the stars? Yes, God did. Do you think the God who created the stars is able to keep his promises? Raise your hand if you think the God who created the stars is able to keep his promises. Thank you, hands down."

18. Say: "God is able to create the stars out of nothing. That is how powerful he is. When God makes a promise, God is always able to keep it. God's words will always come true. When God makes promises, God keeps his promises. "

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher. Each teacher can then ask the preceding questions and help their circle understand the story and fill out the thought bubbles.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: "In this story God made some special promises to Abraham. God promised to give Abraham a very big family and promised that he would rescue his people through Abraham's family. God gave Abraham and Sarah a baby, even though they were too old to have a baby."

Say: "And one day, God sent another baby, and this baby was one of Abraham's children's children's children's children's children, and he would be called the Promised One, the Rescuer. Does anyone know the name of this baby?"

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: "What did we discover about Jesus from today's story?"

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, thanking God that he is the God who makes promises and keeps his promises. Thank God for the great promises he made to Abraham and that Jesus is the result of those promises.

Ask the children to pray, thanking God that when God makes promises, God keeps his promises.

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

2 min. 

☉ Introduce the verse: "We are going to memorize a very short but very important verse about Abraham."

☉ Announce the verse: "The verse to learn at home is Genesis 15:6 — 'Abraham believed the LORD.'"

☉ Read the verse out loud together as a group.

☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents and to memorize the verse for next time.



1

2

3

4

5

6

Abraham

Sarah

I believe God.
I do not believe God.

I believe God.
I do not believe God.

Jesus in the Story

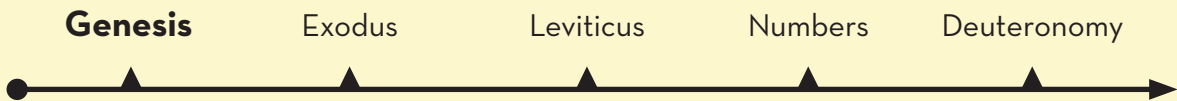


What did you discover about Jesus from this story?

Jesus

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

Abraham believed the LORD. (Genesis 15:6)



Notes for parents: From the story we learned that God promised to give Abraham a very big family and promised that he would rescue his people through Abraham's family.
Please help your child to memorize the verse and the Scripture reference for next time. Please review with them the place of the book of Genesis, using the diagram above.

www.jesusstorybookbible.com

