



God's Covenant with Abram

10

Key Themes

- God provides salvation from sin through Jesus—the seed of Abraham.
- God is faithful to His promises.

Key Passages

- Genesis 15:1–6, 15:9–21, 17:1–5, 17:19; Galatians 3:16

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the covenant between God and Abram.
- Identify the descendant of Abraham who would bless all nations.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will decipher a “Backward Message” relating to the lesson.



Studying God's Word

page 5

God made a covenant with Abram and it was ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ—a descendant of Abram through Isaac. Jesus Christ is the promised descendant through whom all nations have been blessed. He alone brings the hope of redemption to the world.



Activity 1: How Many Stars?

page 7

Students will draw as many stars as they can in two minutes and compare that to how many stars are in the sky.



Activity 2: Genealogy Sort

page 10

Students will put cards in order that name descendants of Adam and Eve and then recite the memory verse.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Backward Message worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Backward Message worksheet for each student



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one The Covenant worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your own use.
- Print one Memory Verse Picture sheet and Picture Key from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Print God's Covenant With Abram image to show during the lesson.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Memory Verse Picture sheets
- Memory Verse Picture Key
- The Covenant worksheet for each student
- The Covenant answer key
- God's Covenant With Abram image
- Pencils



HOW MANY STARS

- No preparation necessary.

- Blank paper
- Pencils



GENEALOGY SORT

- Print and cut out one set of Genealogy Sort cards from the Resource DVD-ROM for every 2–3 students.
- Paper clip sets together.

- Genealogy Sort cards for every 2–3 students



Memory Verse

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this lesson, read the following passages: Genesis 15:1–21, 17:1–27; Galatians 3:15–18.

Before the beginning of time God established a plan to redeem a people to Himself (Genesis 3:15). According to God's plan this people would descend from His servant Abram. Abram would not only be the physical father of the Israelites (Genesis 12:2) but would serve as the spiritual father of all who would come to faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 4:11). Throughout these chapters in Genesis, God's promise to Abram and his descendants—the Abrahamic Covenant—is given, confirmed, and amplified. The covenant begins in Genesis 12:1–3, where Abram is promised:

- God will make him a great nation (Genesis 12:2).
- God will bless him (Genesis 12:2).
- He will be a blessing (Genesis 12:2).
- God will bless those who bless Abram (Genesis 12:3).
- God will curse those who curse Abram (Genesis 12:3).
- Through Abram all nations will be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

But Abram is childless. How will this promise ever come to pass? His question is finally voiced in Genesis 15:2: “Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless?” God's response? “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars . . . So shall your descendants be” (Genesis 15:5).

God was faithful to His promises as He continued to shape Abram's life to His purposes. Chapter 17 revealed God again confirming this covenant made between God and Abram and his descendants (Genesis 17:7). The sign of the covenant was to be circumcision (Genesis 17:10). And it is here that God changed his name—from Abram, meaning *exalted father*, to Abraham, meaning *father of a multitude* (Genesis 17:5). Even in this name change we see God reassuring Abraham of His faithfulness.

Throughout this amazing saga and in spite of apparently impossible circumstances, we know that Abraham “believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). In fact, we see these words repeated throughout the New Testament (Romans 4:3, 4:22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23) as a reminder that it is not our works of obedience but

faith in God—the belief in what He says—that leads to righteousness.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

More and more we are confronted by a culture that refuses to believe that the Bible is God's inerrant Word. Though these people rarely read or study the Word of God themselves, we are often able to present them with historical information and recent findings.

For example, as God described the land Abraham was soon to overcome and inhabit, He mentioned the Hittite people (Genesis 15:19–21). Many skeptics have discounted the accuracy of the Bible and the history of the Old Testament because of the lack of extra-biblical historical information about the Hittites. Archaeologists in 1832 confirmed God's Word when they discovered a city that proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire, Hattusa, at modern-day Boghazköy in Turkey. Now the Hittites are accepted as a once-great civilization, and God has silenced those who would doubt Him in this matter.

At one time skeptics even questioned God's Word because of His statement to Abraham that his descendants would outnumber the stars of the heaven and be as numerous as the sands of the sea (Genesis 22:17). It was thought that no more than 10,000 stars existed. They did not appear to be as numerous as the sand on the seashore and certainly not more than we could count. But with the invention of powerful telescopes, today we can actually estimate the number of stars, and we know that in our galaxy alone there are over 100 billion stars.

With the reliability of the Bible increasingly under attack, it's encouraging to observe God using science and archaeology, not as enemies of His truth, but as confirmation that His Word—every word—proves true (Proverbs 30:5–6).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It was much more dramatic than a simple handshake. It was a sacred sign that a covenant had been made. It seems strange that God would request a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon after Abraham questioned Him about the land he was to inherit (Genesis 15:7–9).

But this was the requirement of some ancient covenants. A promise between two individuals sometimes involved cutting animals in half and placing

them on either side of a pathway. The pledging parties would walk between the freshly killed animals as a sign of the curse they were willing to accept—if they reneged on their agreement, may they too be cut limb from limb just as these animals had been (see Jeremiah 34:18–20).

The covenant with Abram was not a typical ancient covenant; it included the God of Israel. God caused Abram to fall into a deep sleep, and after dark, a smoking oven and a burning torch passed between the animal pieces (Genesis 15:17). While Abram slept, God Himself, represented by the oven and the torch, bound Himself solemnly to His promise. God alone made the commitment because God alone could fulfill it. His promises to Abraham would indeed be kept.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Lord, you have shown me what faith in you looks like through your servant Abraham. Abraham never saw the fulfillment of your promise through Jesus Christ—yet he believed and obeyed. I pray, Lord, that you will enable me to learn how to trust you more and rely on your promises—even through distressing trials. Thank you for your amazing plan of redemption that began in Genesis and made its way through history for 4,000 years until the birth of Jesus Christ—my Savior. May the children come to see the hope and the future in that plan and one day submit themselves to faith and obedience to your Word and to Jesus Christ.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Distribute the Backward Message worksheets for students to decipher.

To make it more exciting and engaging for the class, you may want to have your students compete by setting up teams—with girls against boys, blondes against brunettes, etc. Time them to see who can figure the message out first.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme posters from previous weeks, quickly review the lessons with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you review the Lesson Theme posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.

Review the memory verse using the Memory Verse Picture sheets. Pass out the sheets. Have students recite the verse as a class together. Next have the students fold the Memory Verse Picture sheets in half. See if they can recite the verse while looking at the left half only. Now turn the paper over. See if they can recite the verse while looking at the right half only.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Turn to Genesis 15. We're going to read verses 1–6. Choose a volunteer or two to read the verses.

Genesis 15:1–6

EXAMINE THE WORD

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to see what it is saying to us. Fill in your blanks as we study this passage. Pass out *The Covenant worksheet* and pencils.

Observe the Text

- ? Who is speaking to Abram in verse 1? *The Lord*—answer to question 1.
- ? What did the Lord tell Abram? **Genesis 15:1.** *Do not be afraid*—answer to question 2.
- ? What did the Lord call Himself? There are two answers here in **Genesis 15:1.** *His shield. His great reward*—answer to question 3.

That's right. The Lord is Abram's shield and great reward. Abram did not need to be afraid. Remember that the Lord had promised Abram's family would be a great nation one day. Yet he didn't have any children.

- ? As we move to Genesis 15:2–3 Abram is questioning the Lord. He seemed to be concerned about something. What was it? *He was childless. He had no offspring—answer to question 4.*

That's right. He had no children of his own. He was older now, and he realized that what God had promised seemed more impossible. He was wondering how the Lord God could give him this great nation—and so many descendants after him.

- ? Let's move on to Genesis 15:4. Who did the Lord tell Abram his heir would be? *One who comes from his own body—answer to question 5.*

When the Lord says it will be “one who will come from your own body,” that means it will be a child of Abram's, not a servant or another relative. He's confirming to Abram that he will still have a child.

- ? In verse 5, God tells Abram to look toward heaven. What does he tell Abram to do? *Count the stars—answer to number 6.*

- ? And what did the Lord tell Abram about the number of stars? In Genesis 15:5. *So shall your descendants be—answer to number 7.*

- ? How many descendants did God say Abram would have? *Allow discussion.*

When God told Abram to count the stars—if he could—he was telling Abram that his descendants would be numerous—just like the stars. Did you know that there are more than 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone? God is saying to Abraham that his descendants would be too numerous to count.

- ? What did Abram do in Genesis 15:6? *He believed the Lord—answer to number 8.*

- ? And what did God think of Abram when he saw Abram's faith? *He was righteous—answer to number 9.*

Discover the Truth

Abram did believe God. He had faith that God would fulfill His promise. And God accounted Abram's faith to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:9–21

Show God's Covenant With Abram image while you are discussing this. God wanted to officially seal, or finalize, the covenant He made with Abram. And He did it in a rather peculiar way. We find this account in Genesis 15:9–21. Let me tell you about it. After God made His promise to Abram He commanded Abram to get a three-year-old heifer (a heifer is a young cow that hasn't had her first calf), a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Abram killed these animals and cut the

large animals in half and placed each piece opposite the other, like he was making a pathway. He did not cut the birds but laid them on either side of the path. When the sun went down, the Lord caused Abram to go into a deep sleep. And after dark, there appeared what looked like an oven and a burning torch and they passed between the cut up animal pieces. These items represented the Lord's presence.

? Now what do people normally do today when they agree on something and want to make a deal? *Shake hands.*

Yes, a hand shake seems a lot easier to me. But the agreement I just described was a sacred sign that a covenant or promise had been made. This was the way agreements were reached back then. It was perfectly normal to do it this way. The difference here is that only God walked between the dead animals. Abram was asleep. God was showing us that this was His agreement to be made and kept. Abram had nothing to do with it. God alone would fulfill and keep His promise.



How Many Stars?

MATERIALS

- Paper
- Pencils
- Calculator

INSTRUCTIONS

Abram would one day have so many descendants they couldn't be counted, just like the stars in the sky can't be counted. Let's see how many stars we can draw.

I'm going to pass out paper and pencils and when I say "go" I want you to start drawing stars on your paper as quickly as you can. When I say "stop" we'll count everyone's stars up and see how many our entire class can draw in two minutes!

Pass out paper and pencils. At your signal, have students make as many stars as they can on their paper. They'll have two minutes. At the end of two minutes have them stop and count how many stars they were able to make. Write each student's number on the board and total it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

? Wow! Going as fast as we could, our class was able to draw ___ stars in two minutes. Is that very many compared to how many are in the night sky? *No!*

? How many stars do you think are in the sky? *Encourage guesses.*

Believe it or not there are trillions of stars in the sky, so many that we can't begin to count them. And more stars are being discovered every day as more powerful telescopes are developed.

But this is where God told Abram to look—into the sky to count the stars—to see that just as he couldn't count the stars in the sky, so he wouldn't be able to count the descendants he would one day have.



Genesis 17:1–5

READ THE WORD

Now Turn to Genesis 17 and we'll see what happened next. We'll read verses 1–5 first. *Assign readers for all of the text.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? How old was Abram? It is in Genesis 17:1. *Ninety-nine years old.*
- ? What is God once again telling Abram in Genesis 17:4? *You shall be a father of many nations.*
- ? Look at Genesis 17:5. What is God doing? *God is changing Abram's name to Abraham.*

God once again promised Abram many descendants. And God changed Abram's name to Abraham! Abram means "father"—and Abraham means "father of a multitude, or many." God was telling Abraham that he would be a father of many. But Abraham was an old man—99 years old—and he had no son! What is God up to? Let's find out!

Someone skip down and read Genesis 17:19 for me. *Assign a reader.*

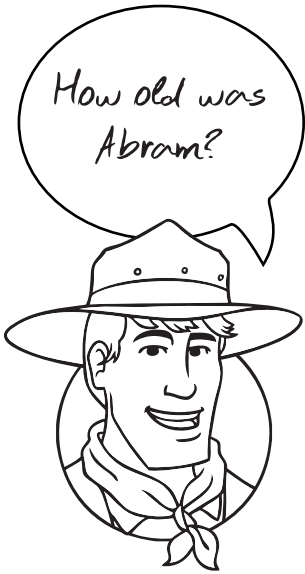
- ? Who are the characters in this verse? *God and Sarah.*
- ? That's right, but someone else is mentioned. Who is it? *Isaac. Abraham and Sarah's son.*

Yes. Finally God is telling Abraham—and us—who that special son would be that would begin the line of all the nations that God promised to Abraham.

- ? Who is the son that God promised to Abraham? The son that will continue Abraham's family and his promised descendants—the descendants that cannot be numbered? Read it in Genesis 17:19. *Isaac.*

Discover the Truth

Finally! God changes Abram's name to Abraham, and God gives Abraham the name of his son—Isaac! Isaac is the son that will continue Abraham's family. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. He waited such a long time. Yet Abraham continued to have faith, and God proved His faithfulness to Abraham.



Genesis 17:19

So the covenant, or promise, that God made to Abraham that he would have descendants beyond his imagination—more descendants than anyone could count—was finally beginning. It began with the birth of his son Isaac. And Isaac was very special—just as Abraham was. It was through Abraham and then his son Isaac that many nations would be blessed. How would many nations be blessed through this son? Let's find out!



READ THE WORD

We're going to read one verse in Galatians. That book is in the New Testament. It is a letter written by the Apostle Paul. *Refer to the Books of the Bible poster to see where Galatians is. Have students find it in their own Bibles.*

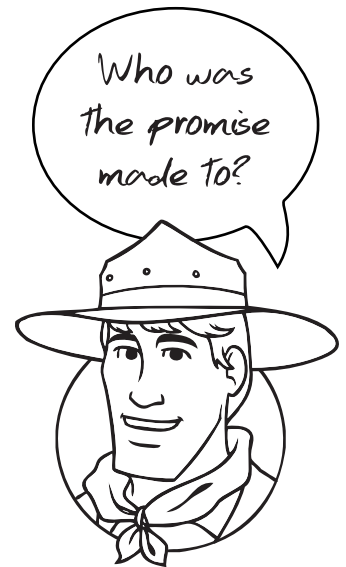
Let's read Galatians 3:16. *Choose a volunteer to read verse.*

Galatians 3:16

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? This verse is speaking about a promise. Who was the promise made to? *To Abraham and his offspring.*
- ? Who was the very special descendant of Abraham that would bless many? This verse tells us. *Jesus Christ.*



Discover the Truth

Abraham's son, Isaac, was Abraham's descendant. Isaac would help to continue Abraham's family through which the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be born.

- ? Who remembers how old Abraham was when Isaac was born? *100 years old.*
Yes. He had waited a long time to have this son who would carry on after he was gone. And in the book of Galatians we hear that one day—long, long after Isaac was born—God would finally keep the promise He made to Abraham. Jesus Christ would be born; our Savior would then bless many nations as the Gospel spread to all the nations of the world.

The promise of the Savior, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was the promise God made to Abraham. God didn't rush, did He? We know that God first promised a Savior to Adam and Eve. That was 2,000 years before God promised that same Savior to Abraham. And then it was another 2,000 years before Jesus was born. *Refer to the Seven C's Timeline as you review this amazing plan!*





Genealogy Sort

MATERIALS

- Genealogy Sort card sets for every 2–3 students

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the class into teams of 2–3 students. Hand out the cards. Have each team place them face down. Have students race on your signal to be the first to put their cards in order according to how the people listed on the cards descended from the beginning of time.

When I say, “Go” each team needs to arrange the cards in the order of the birth of the people listed on the cards. See if you know the order of these descendants. It shouldn’t take you long, and when you’re done, touch your nose.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

You probably think that was pretty easy. Good. Some people have no idea that Adam was the first man, that Noah was a descendant of him, and that Abraham was a descendant of Noah. Did you get that? And then today we learned that Isaac was a descendant of Abraham. And finally, good for you if you remembered that Jesus was a descendant of Isaac.

God told Adam and Eve that the Promised One would come from their seed. The Bible records the history of God fulfilling that promise. In this lesson we’ve learned about two more people that God used to be a part of the genealogy of that Promised One we know was Jesus:
Abraham and Isaac.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God made a covenant with Abram. A covenant is a promise. That promise was that he would have so many descendants that he wouldn’t be able to count them all. God promised Abram that many nations would be blessed through his descendants.

God changed Abram’s name to Abraham as a sign of the promise. Abraham continued to believe God and had faith that what God said was true. He waited patiently for many years before his son Isaac was born. And it was through Isaac that God would bless Abraham—and bless many nations.

The very special promise God made to Abraham was that the Savior, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be one of his descendants. Jesus would one day be that special descendant of Abraham who would bless all nations by offering the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for everyone who believes and trusts in Him.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Abraham had faith in God and that faith was credited to him as righteousness. He had the kind of confident faith in God that pleases God and that we need to please God. That kind of great faith will sustain us when we go through very difficult times.

We live in a fallen world, don't we? *Yes.*

? So we experience trials. What's the most difficult thing you've ever had to go through? *Allow answers.*

Some of us have had huge trials and some of us haven't yet. But all people encounter trials and suffering during their lives. If you haven't, you will. And when you do, think about Abraham. God remained faithful to Abraham and Abraham remained faithful to God.

Abraham had to be patient, didn't he? Abraham was looking forward in time to Jesus, the Promised One, his descendant. We look back at Jesus our Savior, descendant of Abraham. It's only through Jesus that we can enjoy salvation and righteousness today. *Refer to the Seven C's Timeline to illustrate this.*



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His Word—that it teaches us about His faithfulness and the faithfulness of people such as Abraham who believed and trusted in Him.
- Thank God for Jesus Christ who was the descendant promised to Abraham—the one who brought forgiveness for sins and hope for eternal life.

