



# 9

## God Calls Abram

### Key Themes

- God's plans are perfect.
- God rewards faith and obedience.

### Key Passages

- Genesis 11:27–12:9; Hebrews 11:8–16

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Abram demonstrated his faith in God.
- Distinguish between rewards on earth and rewards in heaven.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Write on the board, "How does God reward faith and obedience?"  
Have students use bookmarks to mark Genesis 11:27 and Hebrews 11:8 in their Bibles.



### Studying God's Word

page 4

God called Abram to leave his family and his father's house. God promised him that he would have a great land, a great nation, and a great name, and that he would be a blessing. Abram believed God and demonstrated amazing faith and obedience. We learn in Hebrews that because of his faith, Abram was confident in the heavenly rewards he had not seen.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Abram's Journey map
- Go Before the Throne.



### Activity: A Heavenly Hope

page 7

Students will discuss the difference between receiving rewards on earth and hoping for rewards in heaven.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



### Optional Activity: Heavenly Rewards: Worth the Wait

page 8

Students will be offered a treat but asked to wait to eat it. You will demonstrate it is better to wait for heavenly rewards than desire earthly rewards that can't satisfy.

- Simple candy or cookies like mints, Starbursts, animal crackers
- Larger more impressive treats like full-sized candy bars, brownies, cake, ice cream



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this lesson, read Genesis 12:1–9, 13:1–8; Hebrews 11:8–12.

Before the creation of the world, God determined to reveal Himself through His merciful plan of redemption (Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4). God offers this plan by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) and originally revealed it to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the midst of the Curse that came as a result of their disobedience, God gave the promise of a Redeemer who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

As we learn of God's call to Abram (later renamed Abraham), we see more of the promise whose fulfillment is revealed throughout Scripture. God's eternal plan to bring redemption continued with the Abrahamic Covenant—God would make Abraham a great nation that would in turn bless all nations (Genesis 12:1–3). Abraham was called physically to be the father of the Jewish nation; but more than that, he was called to be the father of all those who believe by faith in the promised Messiah, both Jew and Gentile (Romans 4:9–12).

It was because of Abraham's amazing faith—faith in things hoped for but not yet seen (Hebrews 11:1)—that he could obediently follow God's lead and believe the incredible promises made to him (Genesis 17:17). In fact, his faith provided the stamina for him to leave his home, go to a foreign country, and wait for his wife Sarah to conceive and bear a child. This was the child that would produce for Abraham descendants as many as the stars of the sky and as innumerable as the sand by the sea (Hebrews 11:8–12). These descendants would become a new nation, appointed by God Him-

self, through which He would ultimately bring a Savior, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1).

As mentioned earlier, our faith comes through grace, as a gift from God. In Romans 4, the Apostle Paul presents Abraham as an example of faith. Abraham proved his faith by his obedience. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith (Romans 4:20). And God counted Abraham's faith for righteousness (Romans 4:22), just as it is our faith in God's provided Savior, Jesus, that brings us to a righteous standing before Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

We trust the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and stand on it soundly as our authority in all things. But it is exciting when God allows us to confirm biblical accounts with present-day discoveries as He has done for us in this account. You see, the ancient city of Ur (Abram's birthplace as mentioned in Genesis 11) was rediscovered and excavated by archaeologists between 1922 and 1934, providing much more information about the city and life during the time of Abram (Genesis 11:28).

The people of Ur had adopted Nanna-Sin, the moon god, as their patron. A ziggurat was erected as a temple to Nanna-Sin, perhaps hearkening back only a few generations to the Tower of Babel, when God judged the people for disobedience and idolatry by confusing their language. Ur was a thoroughly pagan city where the religious leaders and rulers used their idolatry to control the populace. Royal burial pits were discovered that included masters and their servants—giving the appearance that once the royalty died,

servants willingly (or unwillingly) committed suicide. In one case, as many as 68 servants were found buried with their master.

After realizing the pagan, godless nature of the people of Ur, we are not surprised that God would call Abram to move from that city and journey to a new location where He would continue the fulfillment of His plan of redemption for all who would believe.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What better way is there to look at the history of Abraham than to consider the genealogy carefully recorded by God? Genesis begins at the beginning and gives us details of the history of mankind—starting with Adam. (See Genesis 10 and 11.)

These genealogies are God's way of revealing His intention from the very beginning to use sinful man to accomplish His perfect plan of redemption. We witness generations of the descendants of Adam weaving through history to the patriarch Abraham. We recognize his role in the plan and watch expectantly as he begets Isaac to carry on the seed that will one day provide the Messiah, the sinless God-Man.

The history of this account includes God's call to Abram to leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan. Abram was traveling with his father and family (Genesis 11:31) and stopped short of Canaan in Haran (Acts 7:2–3). We aren't told why this caravan stopped in Haran, but we do know that Abram's father, Terah, succumbed to the idolatry of that pagan city (Joshua 24:2). It was after Terah died in Haran that God again called Abram to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1). Once Abram arrived in

Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and promised the land to his descendants.

Here again we observe the faith of Abram as he built an altar to the Lord and worshipped Him despite the fact that he was still childless. Abram believed God and knew that the truth and promises yet to be fulfilled in this land would include all mankind for all eternity.

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



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Lord, thank you for your Word and for opening my eyes to your truth. Lord, as I teach this lesson, please increase my faith and trust in you—in what you do. Help me to see that all of your purposes are good—even when tears are running down my face. Help me to realize fully that only the things you promise through faith in your Word will bring me true joy. No amount of earthly goods or pleasures will fill my heart like your truth can. I long to be completely yours—to look to the heavenly city that God has designed and built for me. And please take the minds of my students, and their hardened hearts, and mold them to your will. Give them the faith of Abraham that will bring obedience to you and your Word. Help them, Lord, to see that the things of the earth cannot satisfy and won't last. Fix their eyes on the things above as only you can do.

➤ **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.



## Review

Last week we looked at the life of Job. We saw how God brought trials into Job's life through the actions of Satan. Job lost his ten children and almost all of his possessions. Then his body was covered with boils.

? **Who can describe how Job responded to the trials he was facing?** *Job recognized that God had given him his possessions and that God had taken them away. Rather than cursing God, Job worshipped God because he understood God rightly.*

? **Job was visited by three friends who tried to comfort him in his trials. How did Job's comforters misrepresent God's character and Job's trials?** *They accused Job of sinning, and they believed that God would only bring these trials to Job in response to his sin. They failed to recognize that bad things often happen to those who are following God.*

We looked at how trials and pain were not a part of God's creation, but were caused as a result of mankind's sin against God. We also read from Romans 8 and saw that, in the context of trials, God works all of those situations together for good for His children. Ultimately, we are being conformed into the image of Christ, but this will have its final fulfillment when we see Him in glory. We should find great comfort in knowing that a wise, loving, sovereign Creator God is holding us in His hands.

Today, we are going to look at someone who was a contemporary of Job. We are going to look at Abram (or Abraham) in the next four lessons.



➤ Write on the board, "How does God reward faith and obedience?"

➤ Have students use bookmarks to mark Genesis 11:27 and Hebrews 11:8 in their Bibles.



## Studying God's Word

### READ THE WORD

Abram was alive at about the same time as Job. If you remember from our lesson on the age of the earth, Abram lived right between Adam and Christ—about 2,000 years after Adam and 2,000 years before Christ. An interesting note about Abram is that he was alive during Shem's lifetime, about 350 years after the Flood. *Refer to the Seven C's of History timeline to help the students recognize the position of Abraham in history.*

Let's read Genesis 11:27–12:9 together. *Divide the passage for members of the class to read aloud, possibly at 12:3.*

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

? **Who are Abram's relatives mentioned in this passage?** *Terah, his father; Nahor and Haran, his brothers; Lot, his Nephew; Milcah, his sister-in-law; Sarai, his wife.*

? **What do we learn about Sarai in verse 30?** *She was barren, unable to have children.*

- ? **Where did Terah and his family travel from and to?** *They began in Ur of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran.*
- ? **What was the intended final destination?** *The land of Canaan.*
- ? **Why were they traveling to Canaan?** *God had told Abram to leave his country and his family and travel to a land.*
- ? **Did Terah make it to Canaan?** *No, he died in Haran at the age of 205.*
- ? **Describe the promises God made to Abram in 12:1–3.** *God would make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, make him a blessing, bless/curse those who bless/curse him, and bless all families of the earth in him.*
- ? **When would Abram be shown the land God promised to him?** *Abram was told to go first, and then God would show him the land.*
- ? **Why is this important?** *Abram would have to obey God in faith before he would see the results of his obedience.*
- ? **What additional detail is given to Abram in verse 7?** *The land of Canaan would be given to his descendants.*
- ? **How old was Abram when he left Haran?** *75.*
- ? **Who went into Canaan?** *Abram, Sarai, Lot, and all of their servants.*
- ? **How did Abram demonstrate his faith in God’s words?** *According to Genesis 12:4, he left just as God told him to do.*
- ? **Where did God appear to Abram once he was in Canaan?** *Near Shechem.*
- ? **What did he do afterwards?** *He built an altar to the Lord.*
- ? **Did Abram stay in Shechem?** *No, he moved to the area between Bethel and Ai where he built another altar and then moved south.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *Abram was called by God to leave his home and family by faith to become the beginning of a great nation.*

## Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let’s look at a map of Abram’s journey so far. *Use the Abram’s Journey map to show the route.*

Abram traveled with his father and Lot from Ur to Haran, about 600 miles. Then Abram and Lot headed south toward Canaan, about 400 miles, stopping in Shechem and then moving on to Bethel, about 20 miles away. After this, there was a famine and they continued south toward Egypt. Eventually they returned to Canaan—but we will get to that later.

We know from archaeological excavations of the city of Ur that it was a city centered on the idolatrous worship of Nanna, the moon god. Abram was called out of this culture to become the founder of the Israelite people who would build the culture that worshipped God rightly.

- ? What other information do we learn about the relationship between Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 20:12? *She is his half-sister by a different mother.*

This came into play in chapter 13 when Abram told Sarai to tell the people of Egypt that she was his sister—which was true, but not the whole truth. This is one demonstration of the truthfulness of the Bible. Rather than covering up all of the flaws of the “heroes” in the Bible, their human flaws are exposed and we learn how God uses people like Abram in spite of their problems. If God only used perfect people, He wouldn’t get much accomplished through men. Despite Abram’s shortcomings, his faith in God was evident by his obedience.



## READ THE WORD

### Hebrews 11:8–16

Now we are going to look at Hebrews 11:8–16 together. As we do so, keep in mind that this chapter of Hebrews is often referred to as the Hall of Faith. It tells of saints throughout history who have had great assurance of their salvation by faith in God’s promises. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

- ? How was Abraham able to obey God? *By faith.*
- ? Did Abraham know where he was going to settle when he left Ur? *No.*
- ? How was Abraham able to live in tents in the land of promise? *By faith.*
- ? Who are Isaac and Jacob? *Isaac is Abraham’s son, and Jacob is Isaac’s son.*
- ? What was Abraham waiting for as he was dwelling in tents? *He was waiting for a city built by God.*
- ? Did Abraham receive the promises of God while he was alive? *He did not receive the promises, but trusted by faith that God was faithful to fulfill them.*
- ? How did Abraham view his time on earth? *He saw himself as a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth, looking forward to a future city.*
- ? What do we learn about the promise of making Abraham a great nation? *From Abraham came descendants like the stars in the sky and the sands of the seashore. This is foreshadowing that will be discussed in the next lesson.*
- ? What phrase is repeated through this passage? *By faith.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about God? *God is the builder and maker of the city (heaven) and He is not ashamed to give it to those who have faith.*

### Discover the Truth

- ? What is meant by “the land of promise”? *This is a reference to the land of Canaan that was promised to Abram.*

- ? What is the city referred to in verse 10? *As verse 16 also states, this is a heavenly city, not a worldly place.*
- ? Why is Abram referred to as Abraham? *God had changed his name (Genesis 17:5).*
- ? What did Abraham view as his homeland? *Even though God had promised the land of Canaan to his descendants, Abraham was looking forward to heaven and trusting that God was faithful to deliver on that promise.*

Rather than looking for material blessings on earth and having a kingdom established that he could reign over, Abraham saw himself as a pilgrim. He trusted God to fulfill His promises, but he never actually saw those promises fulfilled. This is truly a great example of faith for us to follow. Just as Abraham had assurance that God was faithful to honor His promises, we can have that same assurance by faith. We are going to take a few minutes to discuss this idea in groups so that we can make a connection to our individual lives.



## A Heavenly Hope

### MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Have the students break into groups to answer the questions in their Student Guides.*

We are going to take a few minutes to stop and think about the ideas of faith and obedience and consider where we are placing our hope. There are several questions in your Student Guides for you to discuss in small groups. We will come back together to discuss these ideas.

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Thinking through issues like these can raise lots of questions. Hopefully, we are not just learning from Scripture so that we can know more, but so that we can be growing and changing to be more like Christ.

- ? The Colossians passage that you read calls Christians to set our minds on heavenly things rather than things here on earth. In what ways is Abraham a role model for us in this matter? *Abraham understood that the promise of God would be fulfilled, but he looked forward to the hope of heaven rather than the establishment of an earthly kingdom.*

As Christians, we should not place our hope or the focus of our activities in earthly things, but in heavenly things. God's riches for us are not found in earthly treasures but in the salvation that we have in Christ. In Ephesians 1, Paul calls us to recognize the inheritance that we have through the grace of God sending Christ to die for us. Abraham recognized this same idea in God's promises—he had a hope of dwelling with God after he died.





# Heavenly Rewards: Worth the Wait (Optional)

## MATERIALS

- “Simple” treats—such as animal crackers or bag of small candies like Starbursts or mints for each student
- “Better” treats—such as brownies, cake, ice cream, or full-sized candy bar for each student

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Before class begins, place the “simple” treats in front of each student.*

Who would like to eat their snack right now, before we get started? Everyone? Well, wait just a minute. I have something else for you. If you wait until later in the class, I’ll give you brownies [cake, etc.] instead. But you won’t get them until later. Can you wait? *Go on with the class without eating any treats.*

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

We talked about earthly rewards and heavenly rewards today, didn’t we? Abraham had the promise of earthly rewards, but

he didn’t see them immediately. He also had the promise of heavenly rewards, the heavenly country that God had prepared for him. He kept his eyes on those rewards and continued to be faithful to God because of his trust that those heavenly rewards would be worth the wait. *Now distribute the “better” treats.*

That’s like our treats. The animal crackers [mints, etc.] looked great when you first saw them. But you were all willing to wait for the “better” treat. And it was worth the wait, right?

We think we have to have the things of the world to be happy. And we always want them right now! But they don’t satisfy; they can’t make us happy. And we’ll only want more and more. What the Lord has promised for all of eternity is so much better and worth waiting for. Let’s enjoy our better treat!



## Applying God’s Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about what we have read about Abraham, we see his faith and his hope of heaven. He exercised his faith in his obedience to leave his homeland, and in the next several lessons we will see how he continued to obey God in faith.

### GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Let us make sure that we think of how we can apply these ideas as we leave and go out into the world we live in.

? We know that God has promised to reward those who place their faith in Him. When can we expect to receive those rewards? *While we may receive blessings here on earth, we should not expect them. There are many believers across the globe who face great persecution and the loss of property and life; their hope must be fixed on heaven. Most of us have lost sight of those truths in our prosperous situations.*

? Have you ever heard the expression “you are so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good”? Is this a biblically grounded idea in light of what we have been studying today? *Unless it involves locking yourself in a monastery, which really isn't “heavenly minded,” being focused on heavenly things is the goal of believers. As we understand more about the things of God, we will be moved to respond to God's call to serve Him and those around us.*

? Why is it so important to understand God's attribute of faithfulness as we seek to follow Him in faith? *Without knowing that God's character includes perfect faithfulness, we might doubt that God will actually keep His promises. Yet Scripture is full of examples, like Abraham, to assure us of the truth of His faithfulness.*

? How does the world react to the idea of storing up treasures in heaven rather than seeking to build fortunes and seek pleasures here on earth? *Most in the world are seeking their own gain and to tell them otherwise would be quite radical.*

? In what ways are you failing to set your mind on things above? How can you seek to change this attitude? *Discuss various answers, recognizing that it is only by God's grace and trusting in His faithfulness that we can accomplish such things.*

? As you seek to live your life with a focus on heavenly things, how will this be viewed by unbelievers? *Discuss various answers, recognizing that as we live lives of distinction, it will provide opportunities to share the gospel that gives us the hope of heaven.*



## FAITHFUL

*(Refer to Attributes poster.)*



### 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.

- Ask God to give each person assurance of His faithfulness to fulfill everything He has promised.
- Thank God for His faithfulness and for the hope of heaven that we have through Christ.
- Ask God to help each person seek those things that are above.

