



10 God's Covenant with Abram

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, 17:1–5, 17:19; Galatians 3:16

Objectives

Students will be able to:

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



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Children will unscramble the words from the memory verse on the Acts 17:26–27 Word Scramble activity sheet and then color the picture on the sheet.



Studying God's Word

page 5

God made a covenant with Abraham, and it was ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ—a descendant of Abraham 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?

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Teams of 3–4 children will attempt to draw 5,000 stars in two minutes on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or newsprint paper.



Activity 2: God Is Faithful to His Promises

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Children will review several of the promises God presents in His Word, reminding them that God is always faithful to keep His promises.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Word Scramble activity sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Word Scramble activity sheet for each student
- Pencils and crayons



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 use.
- Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use in planning your lesson.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- The Covenant worksheet for each student
- The Covenant worksheet answer key
- Pencils
- Lesson Board Work outline



HOW MANY STARS?

- No special preparation needed for this activity.

- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or newsprint paper
- Chalk, markers, or crayons



GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES

- Print and cut Promises of God sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM. Put promises into cup or container.

- Promises in cup or container
- Ball
- A CD of the hymn "Standing on the Promises" or another appropriate song
- CD player or computer to play CD



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 changes 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 . . .

- They will unscramble words from the memory verse on the Word Scramble activity sheet.
- They will color the picture on the sheet.



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



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme posters from previous weeks, quickly review the previous 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.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

God made a covenant with Abram where He promised him many descendants, a great nation, a special land, a great name, and many blessings. Turn to Genesis 15. This is where we are going to start today.

Read Genesis 15:1–6 to the children after they have found the verses in their Bibles.

Genesis 15:1–6

➤ Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for easier planning.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to see what it is saying to us. The Scripture I just read is on these worksheets. I want you to fill in the blanks as we talk about it. *Pass out The Covenant worksheets and pencils.*

Observe the Text

- ? Who is speaking to Abram in verse 1? Look at the sheets I handed out and find the answer. *The Lord—answer to question A. Write on the board, "The Lord."*
- ? Great. And who is Abram's reward? *The Lord—answer to question B. Write on the board, "The Lord."*

➤ As you answer the questions, put the answers on the board so the children can copy the answers onto their worksheets.

That's right. The Lord is Abram's reward. We talked last week about how Abram never saw the promises that God made to him. But he believed that God would do what he promised. Abram had faith in God, and he was looking to things above—not the things on the earth. He was longing for a city built by God—for heaven.

➤ Re-read the appropriate verses while studying God's Word and filling in the worksheet.

? Let's move on to verse 2. Look at your sheets. Who is Abram questioning in this verse? *The Lord God—answer to question C. Write on the board, "The Lord God."*

? Good. Now do you see the word *childless* there? What does that mean? *Abram had no children of his own—answer to question D. Write on the board, "No children."*

? Now, what is an heir? Another word for that is *offspring* or *descendant*. What does that mean? *A child. Children of your own. The family that will live after you through your children. Answer to question E—children. Write on the board, "Children."*

What the Bible means by descendants is children, then grandchildren, then great, grandchildren, then great, great, grandchildren, and on and on—all related to you through your very own children.

? So, why is Abram questioning God? Why is he worried? *He has no children—answer to question F. Write on the board, "No children."*

That's right. He had no children of his own. If he doesn't have any children of his own, he knows he can't have all of the descendants that God is promising. He is wondering how the Lord God could give him this great nation—and so many descendants after him.

? Let's move on to verse 4 and see what God has to say. Who is speaking in this verse? *The Lord God—answer to question G. Write on the board, "The Lord God."*

? Who will Abram's heir be? Do you see in verse 4 that the Lord says it will be one who will come from your own body? What does that mean? *His own child—answer to question H. Write on the board, "His own child."*

? Just a couple more verses. Which verse is next? *Verse 5.*

? Right. In verse 5, where did God tell Abram to look? *Toward heaven—answer to question I. Write on the board, "Sky; heaven."*

? What did God tell Abram to count—if he could? *The stars—answer to question J. Write on the board, "Stars."*

? 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 he would have so many descendants he wouldn't be able to count them all—just like the stars. There are so many, we can't begin to count them. So the answer to number 11 is "a lot—too many to count." *Answer to question K. Write on the board, "A lot! Too many to count."*

? Great. See verse 6? Did Abram believe God? *Yes. Answer to question L. Write on the board, "Yes."*

? And why was Abram considered righteous in God's sight? *Because he believed God—answer to question M. Write on the board, "He believed the Lord."*

Discover the Truth

Abram did believe God. He had faith that God would fulfill His promise. But there are times when our faith gets tested. And Abram's faith was tested in this. He wondered how in the world he would have all of these descendants after him when he didn't even have a son yet! In fact, Abram tried to take things into his own hands. Abram tried to help God with the promise. And he had a son—Ishmael—but he wasn't the son God intended to fulfill the promise.

God intended to bless Abram in a very special way—and with descendants that could not be counted. And soon we will see how these descendants would one day lead to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer!



How Many Stars?

MATERIALS

- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or newsprint paper
- Chalk, markers, or crayons

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the class into teams of about 3–4 students. Each team will get a space on the chalkboard, whiteboard, or newsprint paper where the children will draw stars.

Tell them they have two minutes to draw 5,000 stars on the paper, chalkboard, or newsprint—all of the teams should draw at the same time. They will not be able to draw that many stars, which will lead to your teaching point.

I'm going to put you into teams and assign you a space on the [chalkboard, whiteboard, or newsprint]. Each of you should have something to write with—either chalk, a marker, or a crayon. When I say "go" I want you to begin drawing stars—and I want your team to draw 5,000 stars in 2 minutes. I'm going to time you! *Gather the*

children into their groups, assign their team spaces, and say "Go." After two minutes tell them to stop.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Were you able to draw 5,000 stars? No? Five thousand stars is a lot isn't it? Yet when we look into the sky we know 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 how many descendants he would one day have. God was telling Abram that He could trust God. Abram would one day have so many descendants he would not be able to count them—just like the stars in the sky.



READ THE WORD

So many descendants that no one could count them all—that was God's promise to Abram. But he still needed to have his own son in order to begin this line of descendants. Turn to Genesis 17 and we'll see what happened next.

Genesis 17:1–5

I am going to read Genesis 17:1–5 first. Listen carefully and follow along in your own Bibles. *Read the passage after the children have found it in their Bibles.*

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. *99 years old.*
- ? Now look in Genesis 17:5. What was God changing in verse 5? *Read the verse again and see if the children can answer this. God was changing Abram's name to Abraham.*

That's right. God changed Abram's name to Abraham! Abram means "father," and Abraham means "father of a multitude, or many." God was still promising—even through Abraham's new name—that he would have many descendants, and that these descendants would be from many nations. But Abraham was an old man and there was still no son! What was God up to? Let's find out!

Listen carefully as I read Genesis 17:19. It is about Abraham's wife Sarah. It is something that God was telling Abraham. I think God is finally telling Abraham—and us—who his son would be. *Read the verse.*

- ? Who is the son that God promised to Abraham? The son that would continue Abraham's family and his promised descendants—the descendants that cannot be numbered? *Isaac.*

Discover the Truth

Finally! God gave Abraham the name of his son—Isaac! This is the son that would 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 to be faithful to Abraham.

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!



Genesis 17:19

READ THE WORD

We are 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 the children find it in their Bibles.*

I am going to read Galatians 3:16.

Galatians 3:16

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? This verse is speaking about a promise. Who was the promise made to? Listen again as I read. *Read the verse again. To Abraham and his offspring.*
- ? Now listen as I read this. It will answer the question we asked before. How would Abraham and Isaac bless many nations? Who was the very special descendant? This verse tells us. Listen carefully. *Read the end of verse 16, "And to your offspring, who is Christ."*

Discover the Truth

Abraham's son, Isaac, was Abraham's descendant. Isaac would help to continue Abraham's family. And through Isaac would one day come our Messiah—Jesus Christ.

- ? 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, our Savior, would bless many nations. And now as the truth about Jesus spreads around the world, many nations are being blessed.

The promise of the Savior, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was the real promise God promised Abraham. And God did not rush! 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 Cs Timeline as you review this amazing plan!*





God Is Faithful to His Promises

MATERIALS

- Promises of God from the Resource DVD-ROM in a cup or container
- Ball
- A CD of the hymn “Standing on the Promises” or another appropriate song
- CD player or computer to play CD

INSTRUCTIONS

Have the children sit in a circle. Give one child a ball. Play the hymn “Standing on the Promises” by Russell Kelso Carter, or another appropriate song. Children will pass the ball as the music plays. Stop the music. When the music stops the child with the ball will go and pull a promise from the promise jar and read it to the class.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The Bible is full of promises that God has given us. God is faithful to all of His promises. Abraham believed that God would one day fulfill those promises. Abraham waited for God’s faithfulness. And finally, when he was 100 years old, his son Isaac was born.

We need to believe that God will keep His promises even when we have to wait. God’s Word is true and His promises are sweet for those who love Him and trust Him.



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 many, many descendants—so many he wouldn’t be able to count them all. God promised that Abram would have a great name, a great land, and many blessings. God told 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. But 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 forgiveness of sins and eternal life for everyone who believes and trusts in Him.

God sent His Son, Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, to die for our sins so that all who would believe in Him, turn away from their sins, trust Him, and humbly accept the free gift of forgiveness would be His forever!

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Abraham had faith in God even though God asked Abraham to do some difficult things. He had to leave his homeland and travel to an unknown land. He didn't know where he was going. And God promised him a special son—but he had to wait a long time for that son.

We often go through very difficult times, too. Maybe your dog died, or someone in your family died, or you have to move or change schools and make all new friends. Some children get sick and have to go to the hospital. Or, their parents or brothers or sisters are sick. These are all very difficult things. And everyone goes through difficult times. But we need to remember that God's Word is true and it is full of promises—like the promises we just read from our promise jar.

God is faithful to His children and faithful to His promises. He will bring us comfort, help, and strength when we need it. He is always with us and will never leave us. He loves us and will hear us when we pray. His Word is full of these promises, and His Word is true; we can trust Him because He is faithful.



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children 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, the descendant promised to Abraham—the one who brought forgiveness for sins and hope for eternal life.

