

God Calls Abram

Genesis 11:26-12:9

MEMORY VERSE

HEBREWS 11:8a

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

White construction paper or poster board. Cut out credit card shaped pieces before class (as many as the number of children in your class), markers or crayons, and scissors.

As many plain, white sheets of paper as the number of children in your class and crayons or markers.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Fall Back on God

Have some of your students volunteer to “fall back” on you. Tell them to close their eyes and fold their arms in front of them. Position yourself to catch them as they fall back into your arms. If they have complete faith in you, they will be able to fall back without turning their heads, folding their bodies, or opening their eyes. When they fall back make sure to catch them.

When they have finished “falling back” ask them some questions. Establish that they fell back on you because they trusted you. Ask them what they would have done if they felt the person they were falling toward wasn’t strong enough to catch them, or worse were mean enough to let them fall.

Explain that the object of our faith must be strong enough and faithful enough to not let us down. It is really not our faith that is the most important thing, but who it is we are putting our faith.

God is the only one with a perfect track record; He is the only one worthy of our faith.

LESSON TIME!

A time period of about two thousand years is covered in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The next thirty-nine chapters of Genesis only cover four hundred years. What we see is God dealing with Abram and the first three generations of his descendants. This is the beginning of the nation of Israel. This lesson will introduce us to Abram, the friend of God. Abram teaches us that **we must have complete faith in the promises of God.**

GENESIS 11:26-30

Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot.

And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Here we have the beginning of the story of Abram. His father, Terah, had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran was the father of Lot who was the nephew of Abram. It is said that Haran died before his father Terah. In verse twenty-nine, we are told that Sarai was Abram's wife, and in verse thirty that she had no child. At that time in history, having no children was a major problem.

People often believed they were out of God's favor if they didn't have any children.

This would become a faith-building experience concerning the promises of God for Abram's life. We will see what the Lord does in their lives over the next few weeks. God is going to make some pretty awesome promises to Abram and we will see how he responds to those promises.

GENESIS 11:31-32

And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

In the next 2 verses, we see Abram and his wife, father, and nephew leaving the land of Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. Now, we know that the city of Ur was located in southern Mesopotamia. Ur was also a very idolatrous city as we can see from Joshua 24:2, "...Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river of old, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods."

The Lord told Abram to leave Ur as we see in Acts 7:2-4; "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our father, Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran; and from there, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, in which you now dwell."

Abram left Mesopotamia, but with his father and Lot, and they only got as far as Haran, about 550 miles from Ur. Now the Lord had commanded him to do three things:

- 1) Leave his own country,
- 2) Separate himself from his kindred,
- 3) Go forth unto a land which God had promised to show him.

Now he obeyed the first part of the commands, but he did not obey the last 2. He left Ur, but instead of separating himself from his kindred, his father Terah and his nephew Lot went with him. There was a delay in his travels, for they spent five years in Haran, perhaps because of Terah being with them.

Interestingly enough, the name Terah means "delay." The land of Haran was the point at which caravans for Canaan left the river Euphrates to cross over the desert, and Haran means "parched".

In Isaiah 51:2 we are told that God said, "I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." But we see a beautiful work of God's grace in a person's life, for although Abram did not obey God fully God would still use him in a great way. Even though we are sinners and saved by the grace of God we still aren't obedient all of the time. But God still chooses to use our lives.

In the New Testament, Abram's failures are not mentioned. It is said in Hebrews 11:8, "By faith Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

Let each of us examine our own lives as to whether our obedience is total obedience or partial obedience? Delayed or partial obedience is disobedience. Yet when we fail, there is grace flowing to us from

the throne of God, if we just repent and obey Him. **We must have complete faith in the promises of God.**

GENESIS 12:1-3

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

In these verses God makes a wonderful promise to Abram. He tells him that He would make him a great nation, that He would bless him and make His name great, that he would be a blessing to others and through him all of the families of the earth will be blessed. These are some pretty amazing promises.

Notice that it is God doing the work, not Abram. Sometimes we feel that we have to do great things in order to be great. Abram was just someone willing to believe the Lord and be used by Him. But when we look at anyone who is great in the Bible or even today in God's work we always need to look at the great God behind that person who is doing the work and not the person.

We see in this promise that from Abram would come a nation. This is the nation of Israel. The nation would come from Abram's descendants (children and grandchildren, etc.) Ultimately this nation would be a blessing to the entire world. There was also a promise of blessing upon those individuals and nations that bless Abram's descendants, and a curse lay upon those who persecute the Jews.

We also see four personal promises given to Abram; 1) to be the father of numerous descendants, 2) to receive personal blessing, materially and spiritually; 3) to receive personal honor; and 4) to be the channel of blessing to others. The promise to the Gentiles, those that honor Abram, is that they will be blessed. A curse is upon those who curse Abram.

There is only one slight problem with all of this. How can Abram have a lot of descendants and begin a great nation if he doesn't have any children. Why would God ask such a thing of a man whose wife was unable to have any children? Has there ever been a time in your life when something seemed to be impossible? That may have been what Abram was thinking. But we learn from this that God will often do the impossible to show Himself strong in our lives. This was no exception. If this promise were to come true it would happen because of God and His power, not because Abram was strong, smart or even clever enough to make something happen.

The only thing that was necessary on Abram's part was faith and obedience to God's call. God would perform all that He said He would do. In the first 3 verses we see the call upon Abram, as we saw in the book of Acts. It was a call that demanded absolute confidence in and obedience to God's word. Abram was to be separated from all the ties of his past, from the natural man. He was called upon to go from his kindred and go to a place he did not know.

In the same way we are called from our "home" here in this world to look forward to our home in the heavenly city. Abram is a picture of every believer who leaves this world and its ways in order to gain eternity. Of course the only way we can gain eternity is through faith in God's Son Jesus Christ. **We must have complete faith in the promises of God.**

God's Promise Card

Explain to your class that when a person wants a "credit card" they have to establish a good credit history. This is a person's track record as to how well they have kept their promises about paying what they owe.

Ask your class how well God has kept His promises. Did Abram believe that God would keep the promises God had made Him?

Using white construction paper or poster board cut out credit card shaped pieces. Before class you can write God's "Promise" Card with a marker. Allow the children to cut out and decorate their "credit card". Remind the children how that God keeps all of His promises. You may also want to write a reference to a verse on the card concerning how that God keeps His promises.

Abram is an example for us of the life of faith. The call of Abram gives us the starting point of the life of faith. The first requirement is separation from the world. He was called to leave his father, who was an idolater; Abram believed in the Lord God. Even though God required him to leave his "home," He gave him tremendous promises. There was a command, a hard command, but with it came glorious promises. When God calls us to be "separate" from the world, the blessings He bestows on us when we obey Him are wonderful. All we must do is to simply put our faith in Him. **We must have complete faith in the promises of God.**

GENESIS 12:4-6

So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in

Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

Now in verse 4, we see Abram departing from the land of Haran. It wasn't until after Terah's death that Abram left Haran and came into Canaan. That which held Abram back was now dead. Just as our "old nature" must die before we are to enter into God's promises. We must realize in our lives that we have been crucified with Christ and have died to our former self (Galatians 2:20). Shechem is situated on the eastern side of the pass between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim in central Palestine.

GENESIS 12:7-9

Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

In verse 7, after Abram obeyed God, we see that "the Lord appeared unto Abram." Prior to this, God had told Abram that He would "show" him the land, but now upon Abram's obedience, God now says that He will "give" the land to his seed. At this appearing, God reveals Himself to Abram for communion, and the result is that Abram builds an altar. We have no record of an altar in Ur or Haran. With the separation from the world, the obedience of faith, there is sweet communion and fellowship with God.

Then Abram moves southward along the ancient highway to Bethel, which means "the house of God." It is situated about ten miles north of Jerusalem. Ai was the site of an ancient ruin about two miles southeast of Bethel. It was this area that Abram spread his tent, built an altar, and "called upon the name of the Lord." The altar and tent can be symbolic in Abram's life. The altar represents his fellowship with God and the tent represents his earthly pilgrimage from place to place, in utter reliance upon God. **We must have complete faith in the promises of God.**

Hebrews 11:9-10 tells us "dwelling in tents...For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." In verse 9 it says, "Abram journeyed on" (literally "pulled up stakes"), still going toward the Negev, that is, the South. This geographical reference is deeply significant; southward was Egypt.

Abram was a man of faith. Of Abram, God said, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance" (Hebrews 11:8). He was called the "friend of God", and the "father of faith." Abram teaches us that **we must have complete faith in the promises of God.**

Chart Abram's Journey

After reading the story of Abram, have your class draw what they believe his journey would look like in map form. Make sure they mark the places Abram inhabited: Ur of the Chaldeans, Haran, Canaan, etc. Have them mark these landmarks with the stories description, i.e.: Ur might have idols, Haran might have Abram's father, Terah, and Canaan might have a tent and an altar. Allow the children to look up maps in the backs of their Bibles for help.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of faith in the promises of His word. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.