

God Makes A Promise To Abram

Genesis 15:1-17:19; 18:1-16

MEMORY VERSE

ROMANS 4:13

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A balloon.

Newspaper, a dish pan full of sand and small treasures like small rubber balls, small erasers, stickers, etc.

As many cardboard stars sealed in envelopes as the number of children in your class and crayons.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

No Let Down

Have your class stand in a large circle. Blow up a balloon and toss the balloon into the circle. Do not let the balloon fall to the floor. Tell the class that they may only hit it with their hands, and they must not catch or hold it. For every hit, count by 10's. The goal is to reach 1000. If the ball falls to the ground, you must start over.

When you have reached your goal (or run out of time), ask the following questions:

How did we sometimes let the balloon down?

How do we sometimes let people down?

Is it sometimes hard to keep promises?

Can we depend on God?

Does He always keep His promises? Of course, God always keeps His promises! **God wants us to trust Him.**

LESSON TIME!

In this portion of scripture, we will see God's promise to Abram, his response, and the testing of his faith. **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 15:1

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

The words, "After these things," speak of the events that had just occurred in Abram's life--the rescue of Lot and the offer of the riches of Sodom. Abram was victorious in both things. Here, God tells him that He was Abram's shield, Abram's protector, and his great reward. Abram lost nothing when he refused the reward offered by the king of Sodom.

We can rest in the fact that God is our shield in the time of battle, and He is our "exceedingly great reward," as we wait upon Him. As Abram refused the world's riches, God rewarded him. We must wonder how much God's people are missing, because they accept the world's favor. May our hearts only desire our God and what He has for us, by faith. **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 15:2-5

But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Abram now responded to God by asking the Lord how he was to become a great nation, for he was aware that humanly speaking he was pretty old and still childless. He wondered if his servant, Eliezer, would be his heir. Without a son to continue his line and receive his inheritance how could he hope his descendants would become a great nation?

When Abram responded to God's promise with a question, God did not rebuke him. His honest question did not express unbelief. In verse 4, we read God's answer, "And behold, the Word of the Lord came to him..." Eliezer would not be his heir and gave him the precious promise that a son would be born unto him. God then told him, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them...so shall your descendants be."

Abram could never count the stars, but God could. As Abram looked at the stars, he saw an order, a number he could not count; yet, it was symbolic of God's promise to him. So Abram believed God even though, from the human point of view, the fulfillment of such a promise seemed impossible. It was this trust in God, in the face of a future that seemed hopeless, that caused Abram to be remembered as the hero of faith for all time to come. **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 15:6

And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Abram believed in God; that is, literally, he built his faith on God. Because of Abram's act of faith, God declared him to be righteous. To be righteous is to be living in a right relationship with God. This declaration of righteousness God gave to Abram was because Abraham believed and trusted God. It was not based on anything good that Abram had done. Abram entered into fellowship with God by faith, and God entered into fellowship with Abram by grace. We, also, are saved by faith and trust in Jesus Christ, not by doing good things.

Again, Abram did not look at the natural impossibility of the situation; he trusted in God's promise. Do we put trust in our circumstances, or are we trusting in our God and His Word? **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 15:7-21

Then He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

"And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

"Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

"But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—

"the Kenites, the Kenezites, and the Kadmonites;

"the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Rephaim;

“the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

Here we see God reminding Abram of the covenant He made with him. God repeated to him the promise that he should inherit the land, and Abram asked Him for a sign. Again, Abram’s request for a sign to confirm God’s Word to him was not unbelief. God responds to our honest desire to know and confirm His Word and will for our lives.

Hidden Treasures

Spread newspaper on a table or the floor. Fill a dishpan with sand and hide several little treasures like small rubber balls, small erasers, stickers, etc. Let the children take turns digging for treasure.

Explain to your class that, just like the buried treasure, sometimes God’s promises are hard to see; but, we can trust Him because He always keeps His promises. **God wants us to trust Him.**

Abram was obedient in preparing the sacrifices God asked him to prepare. He was given a prophecy that his descendents would leave the land and go into captivity for 400 years and afterwards return with great substance. Abram would pass in peace to his fathers before these things would happen. This prophecy is actually talking about a time in the future when the nation of Israel would be enslaved in Egypt and then delivered by God through Moses.

GENESIS 16:1-3

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

After this wonderful act of faith, we see that the next recorded event is the challenge of that faith and God's promise. This chapter is a record of the attempt on the part of Abram, at the prodding of Sarai, to accomplish the purposes of God by human ways. Waiting is hard for the natural man; it is a testing of our patience. Abram listened to his wife.

How often it is that those who challenge our faith are those nearest to us, those in our own homes. How important it is for husbands and wives to seek the Lord together and wait upon Him. Almost immediately, Abram begins to reap the consequences of his mistake in the bitterness that sprang up in his home. Sarai blames Abram even though it was her idea. He refuses to accept the responsibility of Sarai's wrong actions and leaves her to deal with it. In doing this, he now surrenders to her his position as head of the household and lets her deal with Hagar.

The end result is Hagar's flight from the household because of Sarai's harsh dealings with her. History has revealed to us the far-reaching effects of Abram's choice. Even today, the world suffers the consequences of this action, as we see some of the nations that are opposed to Israel come from the line of Ishmael.

Where faith fails, evil occurs. Yet, through this failure, we see the compassion of God's heart. Hagar, helpless in the wilderness, is given a promise that her son should become a great nation and that she was to go back to her mistress and submit to Sarai. May we, in obedience to God, wait for His fulfillment of the promises He gives to us and not attempt to accomplish them on our own. It will only lead to trouble if we jump out ahead of God. **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 17:1-3a

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

“And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

Then Abram fell on his face,

Thirteen years passed and Abram was ninety-nine years old. God came to him again and declared Himself to be the Almighty God. Sometimes God has to remind us of His nature. He was declaring Himself to be "El Shaddai." This name of God declares not so much the might of God, but rather His resources, "God, All-Sufficient." He told Abram to walk before Him and to be perfect (or upright and sincere).

God was about to act in grace, for Abram had come to the end himself. It has been said that, "God's opportunity does not come until man comes to the end of himself." God always has a reason for His delays. It is in the strength of the resources of God that man is able to walk. **God wants us to trust Him.**

God then made a covenant with Abram, promising to multiply his descendants. In this chapter, God confirms His covenant with Abram only through His Word. Abram's acceptance is indicated by the fact that he bows in humility and reverence before God. He worships the Lord.

GENESIS 17:3-8

Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying:

"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.

"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.

"Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Here we see Abram's name changed from Abram, “exalted father,” to Abraham, “father of a multitude.” He was promised that the fruit of the covenant should be the making of a great nation and the coming of kings. It also would be a continuous covenant as God would establish it between Himself and the seed of Abraham throughout their generations on the condition of their faithfulness. **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 17:9-14

And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;

“and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

“He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any stranger who is not your descendant.

“He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

The symbolic rite of circumcision sealed the covenant. It was the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible relationship. It represented the true dedication of the heart to God. In obedience with God's command, Abraham circumcises all the male members of his household, including Ishmael, who, we are told, was 13 years old.

GENESIS 17:15-19

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

"And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!"

Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him."

Now we see Sarai's name being changed from Sarai (the meaning is uncertain) to Sarah, which means "princess." The promise is that she would become the mother of nations. Abraham falls on his face and laughs in his heart at the wonder of the promise made. He pleaded with God that Ishmael might live in His sight and enjoy divine protection so that he might be the one through whom the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled. God's will was firm.

Sarah would bare a son whose name would be Isaac. It is interesting that Isaac's name means laughter, reminding us of Abraham's laughter when he first heard the news. God can do the impossible! **God wants us to trust Him.**

GENESIS 18:1-8

Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

"Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

"And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." And they said, "Do as you have said."

So Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes."

And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

Here we see Abraham sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. He greets three men who appear before him, bowing himself to them and offering them his generous hospitality. We will see that one of them is the Lord. It is a beautiful picture of Abraham providing lovingly and gladly of his best for them. We also see the beauty of the grace of God. God was willing to be the guest of those who would receive Him.

GENESIS 18:9-16

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Here, in the tent."

And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well-advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?'"

"Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

After his great generosity, Abraham was receiving instead of giving. God was repeating his gracious promises to him with more detail. Sarah did not appear to the male visitors; but she was close by, listening. Then, they brought the startling news to Abraham that Sarah, his wife, who was advanced in years, was going to have a son by the next year.

When Sarah who was listening in at the tent door heard this, she laughed and said, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" In response to her laughter, the Lord tenderly rebuked her. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" He who created the heavens and the earth and all their host is able to do all things. Those who truly have faith are not taken by surprise by what God does.

Abraham was a mighty man of faith. He was the friend of God. He had tremendous faith; and along with that faith, he had tremendous testing. At times, he failed, but we must always remember that though we may be faithless and fail, God is always faithful, and accomplishes His plan through us by his wonderful grace. Abraham shows us that **God wants us to trust Him.**

Promised Surprise

Enclose cardboard shaped stars in as many envelopes as the number of children in your class. Explain that there is something special in each envelope. Hand out crayons to your class and have them gently rub the crayon over the hidden shape in the envelope. The shape should appear where the crayon is rubbed. Show your

class how to shake the envelope and move the star around, allowing for additional star shapes to be drawn with different colors.

Ask your class if they could see what was in the envelope before coloring over it. They could not, but because you told them they believed you. Explain that God makes promises, too. We cannot always see them, but we can trust Him to be true. **God wants us to trust Him.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust the Lord in all things--first to believe in Him for salvation and then to trust Him to show us how to live our lives for Him. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.