

Lesson #3-2

God's Promise to Abram

Genesis 15:1-6

3rd - 6th

Key Verse:

[God] brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then [God] said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Genesis 15:5

The Point:

God cares for us as communities, families, and individuals.

Making Connections:

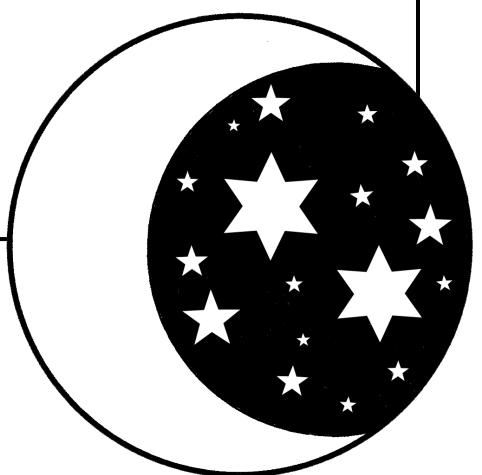
Promises Made, Promises Broken

Bible Nuts & Bolts:

Origin Stories

Spiritual Practice:

Fellowship



Activities a la Carte

Activities

Into the Story

Promises, Promises

Share promises that were made, kept, or broken.

10 min.

Supplies

† None

Bible Nuts & Bolts

Origin Stories

Share baby pictures to emphasize interest in origin stories.

15 min.

† Bibles
† Baby pictures (pictures of firsts: steps, smiles, etc.)
† Optional: the students' baby pictures

Learning the Story

Count the Stars

Count the stars see God's promise to Abram.

15 min.

† Bibles
† Photos or videos of stars and galaxies
† Internet-connected device

Living the Story

Our Church Fellowship

Learn about the origin of your congregation.

15 min.

† Photos of your congregation's history
† Church directories from over the years
† Optional: a longtime church member

Additional Activities

Jesus' Family Tree

Create a family tree.

15 min.

† Bibles
† Activity sheet #3-2.A
† Internet-connected projection device
† Scrap paper

Activities a la Carte

Additional Activities

Finding Stars

Count the stars.

20 min.

- † Activity Sheet #3-2.B
- † Crayons or markers
- † Optional: timer

Father Abraham

Sing the motion song, “*Father Abraham*.”

15 min.

- † Optional: Internet-connected device

Bible Book

Optional ongoing activity.

5 min.

- † Bible Book page (found at end of lesson)
- † Cardstock or plain paper
- † Pens or pencils
- † Markers or crayons
- † Optional: three-ring binders, hole punch

Sending the Story

5 min.

- † None

Background for Teachers

Making Connections

Following the first sin and its consequences, Adam and Eve's son Cain murdered his brother, Abel. Humanity's downward spiral continued until enough was enough. God sent a flood, but first God made a way for Noah and his family to survive and for animal life to continue. Even after that fresh start, people struggled with pride and temptation. Despite the negative actions of humankind, God reached out with yet another promise: to make Abram a father to nations.

Story Summary:

God's Promise to Abram

Abram believed in God and lived for God. God told Abram that God is Abram's shield, and Abram's reward would be great. Abram asked how he would be rewarded because he had no children or heirs. God told Abram to look at the stars in the sky. God promised Abram that he would have that many descendants.

Abram believed God's promise. God cared about Abram, about Abram's family, and about the community that would come from Abram's descendants. (Note: Later, God changed Abram's name to Abraham.)

The Point

God cares for us as communities, families, and individuals. In today's text, God's blessings for Abram and Sarai (Sarah) demonstrated God's love and care for Sarai and her desire to give birth, for Abram and his desire to have a son, and for Abram and Sarai's marriage and family. The text also shows God's love for those who would live in the community that would grow as a result of their son's birth, for all generations to follow. Each person is important to God and plays a unique part in God's plans for humanity.

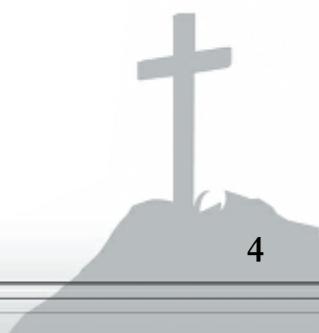
Bible Nuts & Bolts:

Origin Stories

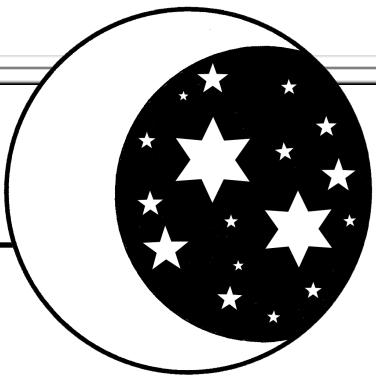
Origin stories are stories used to explain the origin or cause of something. Genesis as a whole is an origin story. It begins with two stories about the origin of the universe and then addresses the origin of the people of Israel. The call of Abram, along with the promise to make of Abram a "great nation" is often considered to be the origin story of the Israelites through Abram and Sarai (Abraham and Sarah). Within Scripture, the purpose of these stories is often to explain how something came about, comment on how God is interacting with the world, and provide the Israelite people with a clear cultural and historical identity.

Spiritual Practice: Fellowship

As individual members of the Body of Christ, bound together in the love of God, we are each a part of the family that began a long, long time ago. Do you experience joy when in the fellowship of believers? Why or why not? How can you extend the hand of fellowship to the families of the children that you minister to each week? Perhaps a card or an email would be a nice touch. How can you help the families who are only as involved as dropping their children off each week to see the joy of fellowship at your church?



Lesson Plan



Into the Story (10 minutes)

Promises, Promises

Share promises that were made, kept, or broken.

You will need:

† Nothing

During class:

1. **What kinds of things do people do to agree to or seal a promise?** *[Shake hands, pinky promise, cross their heart, sign their name, etc.]*
2. **What does this mean?** Cross your fingers, so the children can see them, and keep them crossed as you say, **I promise to give you a million dollars.** *[It means you really do not promise; it cancels the promise.]*
3. **Who can share an example of when someone made a promise to you and crossed arms, legs, or fingers when promising?** *[Answers will vary.]* Perhaps nothing was crossed, but someone failed to keep a promise. Can anyone share an experience when someone seemed genuine about the promise but then did not keep it? *[Answers will vary.]* Why do you think people go back on their word? *[Answers will vary.]*
4. Let us be more positive. Can you share some examples of situations when you or someone else kept a promise? *[Answers will vary.]*
5. People, including us, sometimes go back on their word. God, however, is a promise keeper.

Bible Nuts & Bolts (15 minutes)

Origin Stories

Share baby pictures to emphasize interest in origin stories.

You will need:

- † Bibles
- † Baby pictures (pictures of firsts: steps, smiles, etc.)
- † Optional: the students' baby pictures

Before class:

1. Optional: contact the parents during the week and ask them to send a baby picture of their child.

During class:

1. If you have baby pictures of "firsts" (someone's first child, the baby's first smile, the baby's first step) show the pictures and explain what they are. Optional: ask the children to show their baby pictures and tell something about them. (Be sensitive to those who do not know their families of origin and who may not have baby pictures or to those who may no longer have access to their family photos.)
2. **We like to capture and remember beginnings or firsts. We like to look back and see what we were like as babies. Looking at history, remembering beginnings or origins, helps us make connections with who we are and how we got where we are today.**
3. Distribute the Bibles and help the children locate Genesis.
4. **The Book of Genesis is the book of beginnings or "origin stories".** Ask the children to repeat "origin stories." **Genesis tells the story of the beginnings of the universe, the beginnings of sin, and the beginnings of God's blessings for the whole world through Abram, Isaac, and Jacob.**
5. In unison, read Genesis 1:1. Ask the children to repeat the first three words *[in the beginning]*.

Learning the Story (15 minutes)

Count the Stars

Count the stars to see God's promise to Abram.

You will need:

- † Bibles
- † Photos of stars and galaxies
- † Internet-connected device

Before class:

1. Locate photos of stars and galaxies. Photos can be found online (NASA and the Hubble Space Telescope are excellent sources) or in library books. Determine how best to display the image(s) in your space (e.g. project the image, make copies).

During class:

1. Display a photo or video that is packed with stars. Ask the students to count them. Allow them time to try counting. **How many stars are there? Can you actually count them?** *[Answers will vary, but most will say they cannot count all those stars.]*
2. Ask for two volunteers. One will read the part of God; the other will read the part of Abram. (The children may need some assistance with a few of the words. Before they start reading let them know that some of the words may be difficult and to let you know if they need help.)
God – Genesis 15:1
Abram – Genesis 15:2-3
God – Genesis 15:4-6
3. Display again the photo or video packed with stars.
4. **How many people live with you?** *[Answers will vary.]* **We will call this your immediate family.**
5. Draw attention to the photo or video packed with stars.
6. **Imagine God taking Abram outside and telling him to look in the sky to see if he can count the stars. Then imagine Abram hearing God tell him that his descendants (his family and his son's family, and his grandson's family, and so on) will be that many people. What does that say to you about how much God cared about Abram?** *[God cared a lot.]*
7. **God cared about Abram, his family, and his future descendants. God's promise to Abram affected not only him, but it also affected everyone after him.**

8. God kept the promise to Abram. If God kept such a big a promise to Abram, what might that tell you about how God will keep the promises in the Bible for you, too? [God will do what God says.]

Living the Story (15 minutes)

Our Church Fellowship

Learn about the origin of your congregation.

You will need:

- † Photos of your congregation's history
- † Church directories from over the years
- † Optional: a longtime church member

Before class:

1. Optional: contact a longtime church member and invite that person to come share a bit of the church's history with the children.

During class:

1. This activity will vary depending on your church fellowship and your resources. Modify it to meet your needs.
2. Share photos from when your church was built, talking a bit about the congregation's origin. Stop often to allow questions. Give the children the chance to point out the differences in the pictures from the construction of the building to the present.
3. Look at the church's photo directories from over the years. Give the children the opportunity to point out friends and family. Count the number of people (or pages) in each directory.
4. Optional: a longtime church member can share a brief account of the church fellowship's beginnings or history, on a child's level. Emphasize parts of the building that may be there now but were not when the church was first constructed. List different pastor's names and different families' names. Was there always a choir? An organ?
5. Optional: if your congregation has historical displays in a hallway or room, take a field trip to visit those displays.
6. Ask the children: **What did you think was the most interesting thing about the fellowship's origin?**



Additional Activities

Jesus' Family Tree (15 minutes)

Create a family tree.

You will need:

- † Bibles
- † Activity Sheet #3-2.A
- † Internet-connected device with projection
- † Pens and pencils
- † Scrap paper

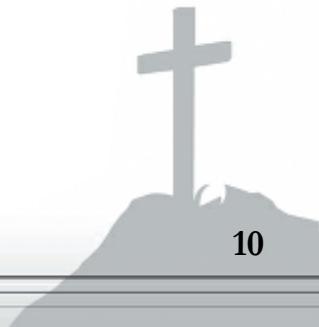
Before class:

1. Do an Internet search for an image of the “family tree of Jesus.” Prepare to display it.
2. If you do not have Internet access or a projector in the room, review Matthew 1:1-17.

During class:

1. **Many people have an interest in genealogy or in learning about their roots, their family's origin, and various family members. They conduct research and create a large family tree showing as many generations as possible including grandparents, parents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Some hold family reunions every year, or every few years, and try to get as many people in the family to attend as possible.**
2. Display the family tree of Jesus image from online. **This tree lists the generations in Jesus' family leading up to his birth.** Read some of the names on the tree and emphasize that Abram's name is at the top. **We can also find this information in Matthew 1:1-17.** Distribute Bibles and help children locate Matthew 1. **Reading names can be challenging.** Ask for a few volunteers who want to take the challenge and read a few verses of names.
3. **Now it is your turn to create a family tree. Family trees can be made many ways. We are going to list names in a tree shape.**
4. **You might want to list names of your family members on scrap paper first, so you do not miss anyone when you start to fill in the tree.**

5. As the children begin their work, be sensitive to differences in family structures. You can explain: **Some of us live in adoptive or foster families, and we will include those people in our family tree. Some live in blended families or step families and will have a lot of people to include. Big or small, adoptive, birth, and blended families are all important to God.**
6. Give the children the opportunity to share their trees with each other.
7. **These are beautiful trees, and they can remind us that God cares for individuals and families in our church and community.**



Finding Stars (10 minutes)

Count the stars.

You will need:

- † Activity Sheet #3-2.B
- † Crayons or markers
- † Optional: timer

Before class:

1. Make a copy of Activity Sheet #3-2.B for each student.
2. Provide three different colors of markers or crayons for each student.

During class:

1. **God told Abram to count the stars in the sky. In the real sky there are way, way too many stars to ever count.**
2. **Let's play a game where you can count the stars on this Activity Sheet!**
3. Decide whether students will count the entire number of stars, or if they will count each size of stars (small, medium, and large). Students can circle or color in each different size with a different colored marker.
4. There are 64 total stars (4 large, 28 medium, and 32 small).
5. For an added challenge, you can see how many stars students can count in 30 seconds (longer for younger students).
6. **The stars here remind us that part of the fulfillment of that promise to Abram was that many, many, many years later, there was a shining star in Bethlehem, announcing the birth of Jesus, a descendent of Abram.**

Father Abraham (15 minutes)

Sing the motion song, “Father Abraham.”

You will need:

- † Optional: Internet-connected device

Before class:

1. If you do not know the words or motions to this song, you may find a video on the Internet to familiarize yourself with them.
2. If you so choose, you may replace “sons” in the traditional lyrics with “kids” (i.e. “Father Abraham had many kids”).

During class:

1. **Our story today is about a man named Abram and his wife Sarai. But, later God renames them as Abraham and Sarah, names we might have heard of.**
2. **We read that when Abram and Sarai did not think there was a chance of having a baby, God promised Abram a son and so much more. Let us celebrate that promise.** Lead the children through several rounds of “Father Abraham”, getting faster with each round.
3. After singing, say: **A long, long time ago when God promised Abram that his descendants would be more than the number of stars in the sky, God knew that you would be one of those descendants all of these years later. What does that tell you about God’s love for you? [God has thought about me for a long time; God cares about me; God loves me; I was part of the promise that God made to Abram; I am important to God.]**
4. If there is time, go through the song a few more times. Children usually enjoy doing this a number of times.

Bible Book (5 minutes)

Optional ongoing activity.

You will need:

- † Bible Book page (found at end of lesson)
- † Cardstock or plain paper
- † Pens or pencils
- † Markers or crayons
- † Optional: three-ring binders, hole punch

Before class:

1. Make copies of this week's Bible Book page on cardstock or copy paper for each student.

During class:

1. Hand out Bible Book pages.
2. **What are some of the important things we have learned from today's story?**
[Answers will vary.]
3. **On the bottom of your page, please write one or two important things that you have learned from the story today. In the middle of the page, draw a picture from the story or illustrate one of the important things you've learned. Don't forget to put your name on the back of the page, please!**
4. Optional: Collect and three-hole punch the pages, and put them in individual binders for each student to be kept at church until the end of the year. If you wish, you can investigate other options for binding the Bible books through a local print shop at the end of the year instead of using a three-ring binder.

Sending the Story (5 minutes)

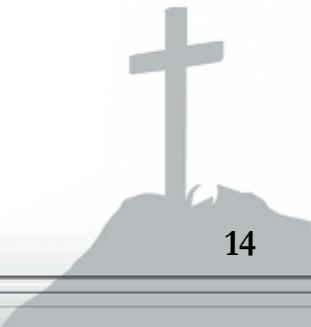
1. Who made a promise to whom in today's story? *[God made a promise to Abram.]*
2. How many descendants did God promise Abram? *[The same numbers as there are stars in the sky.]*

Prayer

Before ending class, make a point to come together to pray. Use the following or say your own prayer.

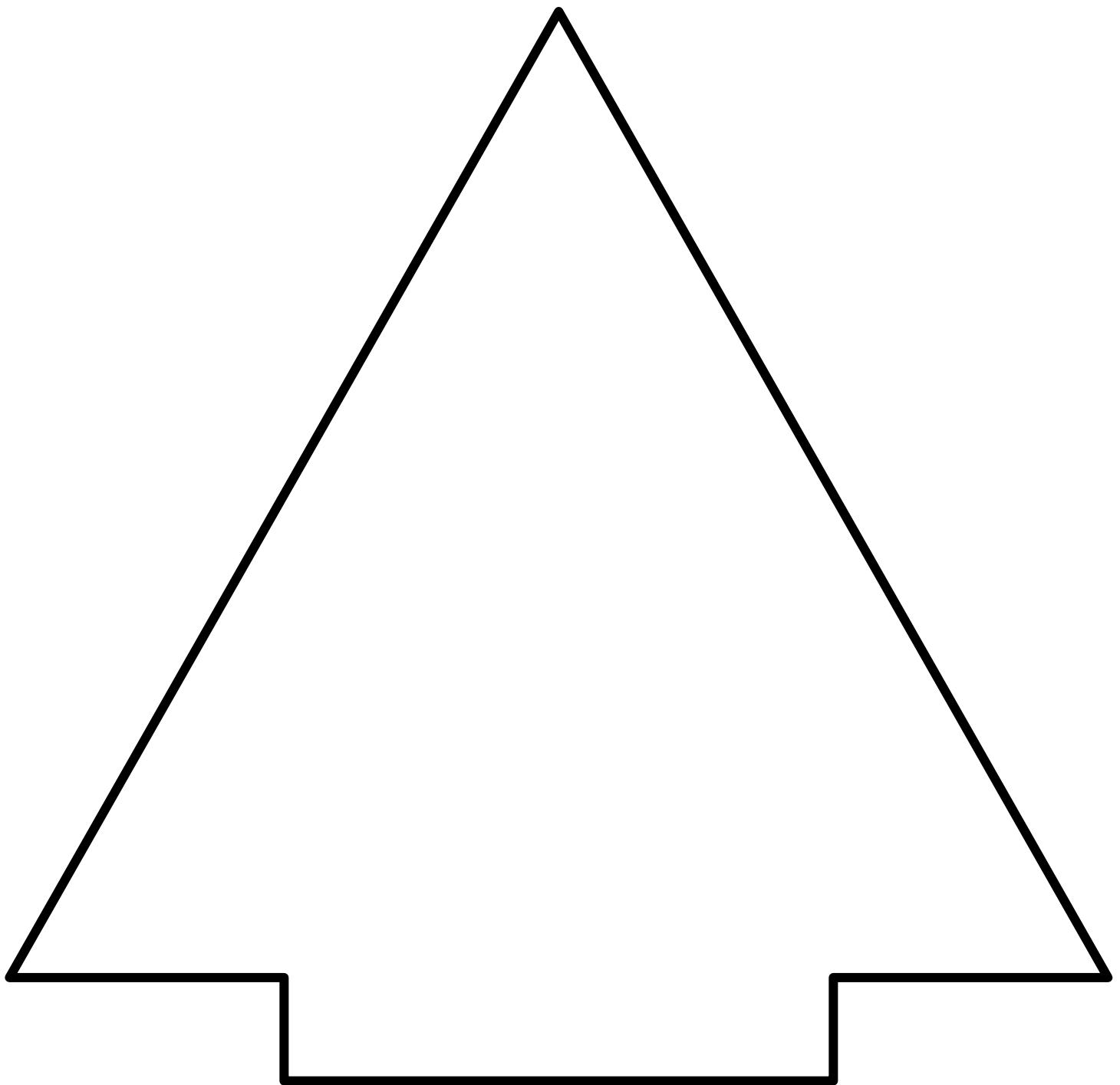
Join hands and ask the students to repeat each line after you.

God, you made a promise (echo)
To a man named Abram (echo)
And, you kept that promise. (echo)
Thank you (echo)
For giving me the promise (echo)
That you will always love me (echo)
I know that you will keep it. (echo)
Amen. (echo)



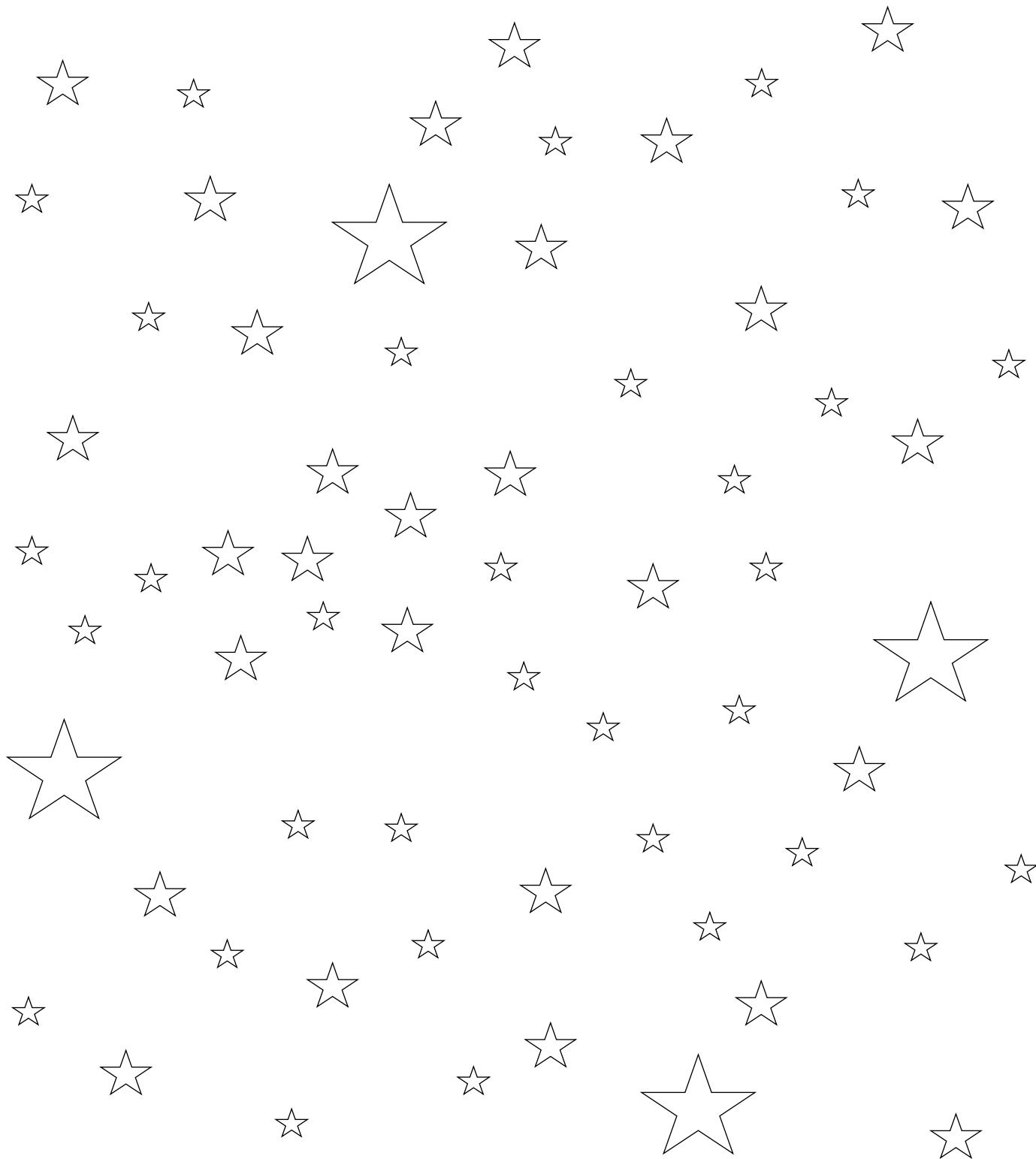
Jesus' Family Tree

Create a family tree.



Finding Stars

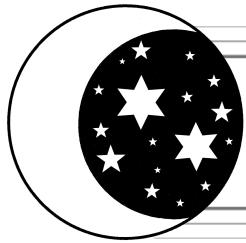
Count the stars.



God's Promise to Abram

Genesis 15:1-6

I Learned:



The Story@Home

3rd-6th

Living the Word: Teaching Kids God's Story

Narrative Lectionary, Year 3 (2020-2021)

Lesson #3-2

Genesis 15:1-6

Last Week

At the beginning of creation God makes a promise to the first humans, but they quickly break the promise they make to God (Genesis 2:4b-7, 15:1-17, 3:1-8).

This Week

God promises Abram (Abraham), that he and his wife Sarai (Sarah) will have many descendants, even though they are old and have no children (Genesis 15:1-6).

Story Summary

God's Promise to Abram

Abram believed in God and lived for God. God told Abram that God is Abram's shield, and Abram's reward will be great. Abram asked how he would be rewarded because he had no children or heirs. God told Abram to look at the stars in the sky. God promised Abram that he would have that many descendants. Abram believed God's promise. God cared about Abram, about Abram's family, and about the community that would come from Abram's descendants.

Practice: Fellowship

How can your immediate family extend the hand of fellowship to others in the family of God? Contact another family at church, perhaps one that you have not spent much time with, and invite them to a night of games and dessert (or other fun activity). Enjoy a time of fellowship.

The Point

God cares for us as communities, families, and individuals.

Bible Nuts & Bolts

Origin Stories

Origin stories are stories used to explain how something began. Genesis is a book of origin stories. It begins with two stories about the origin of the universe and then addresses the origin of the people of Israel. The call of Abram, along with the promise to make of Abram a "great nation" is often considered to be the origin story of the Israelites through Abram and Sarai (Abraham and Sarah). Within Scripture, the purpose of these stories is often to explain how something came about, comment on how God is interacting with the world, and provide the Israelite people with an identity.

Next Week

Despite many difficulties, God keeps Abram's great grandson Joseph safe and keeps the promise God made to Abram, too. (Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-20).

Family Discussions

Use the questions below or other questions you think of to discuss today's Scripture reading (listed above) with your family.

- † What do you learn about God in this story?
- † What do you learn about people in this story?
- † What can we thank God for after hearing this story?

Family Devotions

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? How should we respond?

Sunday—Read Genesis 15:1-6

God promised Abram would be a father of nations. Look through a family photo album and remember good times with family members.

Monday—Read Genesis 17:1-8

God changed Abram's name to Abraham. Adults, share with the children what their names mean and why they were given their names.

Tuesday—Read Genesis 18:1-15

God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, something that seemed unbelievable at the time. Share stories about the most unbelievable thing that ever happened to you.

Wednesday—Read Genesis 21:1-7

Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. The name Isaac means "laughter." Laugh and laugh and laugh. Tell a joke or do something to make everyone laugh.

Thursday—Read Genesis 22:1-14

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son. Have the children jump off a step, porch or chair and into the arms of an adult who promises to catch them.

Friday—Read Genesis 27:1-17, 30-38

Isaac blessed his son Jacob with Esau's blessing after Esau exchanged his birthright for a bowl of Jacob's stew. Have each person draw a cross with their finger on another person's forehead or hand and say, "God loves you!"

Saturday—Read Genesis 35:9-15

God appeared to Jacob and blessed him. Lay hands on each family member, one at a time, and pray for God to bless them.