



LESSON 8

God makes a promise to Abram

GENESIS 11:27-12:9



God blesses the world through Abram.



"Now the LORD said to Abram... 'I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'" (Gen 12:1-3).

Supporting Truths

1. God is good.
2. God's blessing comes through faith.
3. God's blessing comes through the Messiah.
4. God chooses whom He will bless.
5. God's goodness overcomes obstacles.

Objectives

1. List a few of the seven blessings God promised to Abram.
2. Describe what Abram did that proved that he believed God.
3. Explain how God's story focuses on the family line of the Messiah.
4. Compare God's choice of Abram to His choice of Noah and Shem.
5. Identify two obstacles that seemed like they might stop God's plan.



Lesson Summary

At the tower of Babel, the people were divided into many nations. Out of all these nations God chose one man, Abram, to be the father of a nation special to God. These people were chosen by God to be a blessing to all nations. But for this blessing to come, Abram had to believe God, leave his home and family, and go to an unknown place that God would show him. Abram did believe and obey, so in response to his faith, God confirmed his covenant and added the additional blessing of a promised land.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The tower of Babel shows that people continued to sin after the days of Noah. The flood could not wash away the stain of sin. However, God's promise to crush the power of Satan by the seed of the woman also continued (Gen 3:15) after the flood. Through Abram's descendant, Jesus, God has blessed all nations. But to receive this blessing, we must trust God just as Abram did.

LAST WEEK



God judges the nations
at Babel

Genesis 11:1–9

THIS WEEK



God makes a promise
to Abram

Genesis 11:27–12:9

NEXT WEEK



Abraham and Sarah
doubt God

Genesis 16:1–6;
17:15–21; 18:1–15

Lesson Commentary

God blesses the world through Abram.

As a result of the tragedy of Genesis 3 (the fall of Adam and Eve), man's perfect relationship with God was lost. Sin now separated God and man. Man's only hope was that his relationship with God might be restored through the removal of sin (something he could not accomplish himself). But God had a plan. This plan began in the Garden after man's first sin with God's promise of a seed who would defeat Satan (3:15). This plan continued with God's promise to Abram. God chose Abram's offspring as a people for himself, through whom He would also bring salvation to all nations.

Abram belonged to a specially chosen family (11:27–32)

A new story begins in Genesis 11:27: "Now these are the records of the generations of Terah." This new story is about Terah's descendants, specifically about Abram, Terah's son. But before talking about Abram, Moses tells us about Abram's family. It is important to know that Abram was a son of Terah for two reasons. First, Terah was from the line of Shem, and Shem received Noah's blessing in Genesis 9:26: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem." God had chosen to call a special people from the line of Shem, and Jesus would one day be born to the line of Shem.

Second, Abram's father is important because of what Terah failed to do. Terah lived in Ur, then in Haran, two cities that were centers of moon worship. Terah himself was an idol worshiper (Josh 24:2). So even though there were already signs of God's blessing to the line of Shem, there were also obstacles preventing that blessing. God was the God of Shem, but He was not the God of Terah.

Terah's idolatry was not the only obstacle to God's blessing. Sarai was **barren**, or unable to have children (Gen 11:30). This statement is a major problem: how

can a great nation and a blessing come from Abram if he has no children? God focuses on this problem to prove the faith of Abram and Sarai and to demonstrate His power. So Moses introduces the call of Abram by connecting back to the line of Adam, Noah, and Shem, the line of the Messiah. But he also sets up problems that only a great God can resolve.

God called Abram to begin a specially chosen people (12:1–3)

The call begins by saying, "The LORD said," not "God said."

It uses the name LORD, or Yahweh, the name God uses especially with His covenant people. This name reflects God's purpose to have a people for Himself, a people who dwell with Him as His own. The LORD is calling Abram to be His own, to begin a nation to be His own, and to call people from all nations to be His own (Exod 19:5).

The LORD promised blessing, but also demanded faith. He required Abram to leave his family and his country (Gen 12:1). In

the modern day, travel is much easier, but in those days it was difficult and dangerous. Security and stability were found only in the extended family living together. So asking Abram to give this up was asking Abram to trust not in any human resources, but in God alone. God did not even tell Him where to go. He just told Abram to leave and trust that God would guide him to the right place.

After commanding Abram to leave, God told him why: in order to receive great blessing. A **blessing** is a gift that is not earned. God promised to do seven good things, with the promises expanding outward from Abram to the whole world.

1. Despite Sarai's barrenness, **God would make Abram a great nation (12:2a)**. Through the

THINK ABOUT IT
God calls man
before man ever
comes to God.



THINK ABOUT IT
Abram had to
walk by faith, not
by sight.



THINK ABOUT IT
Genuine faith is
proven and purified
through problems
(Jas 1:2–4).

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God makes a promise to Abram • Genesis 11:27–12:9



Abram obeyed God and God led him to a specially promised land (12:4–9)

God's blessings sound incredible, but Abram had to prove that he believed what God said by obeying God's difficult command. And he did, just "as the LORD had spoken to him." Even though he was already 75, he left his land and his relatives, packed up all his possessions, and left, without even knowing his final destination (Heb 11:8).

His journey was a journey by **faith**: he was trusting God. The pattern was prayer, then progress, then prayer, then progress. Twice he stopped to build an altar to the LORD and worship Him. The word for altar is "a place of slaughter." Like Abel and Noah before him, Abram communed with God by means of a blood sacrifice. The first altar happened to be at Shechem (Gen 12:6–7), which was right in the center of the territory God was going to give him. In response to Abram's faith, God revealed the land that would belong to Abram and to his descendants, adding the land as one more promise to the ones already given (12:7).

Abram exemplifies the man who believes God is **good**. He believed that God loves to help and bless. Abram walked by faith, not by sight. When Moses wrote Genesis, this record of Abram and the names of places Israel was about to return to (Shechem, Bethel, Ai, and the oak of Moreh) would have been a great encouragement to them to trust that God is good. And God is good—to all people. God promised that through Abram "all the families of the earth will be blessed" (12:3). How would they be blessed? Through the salvation offered through Jesus, the son of Abraham (Matt 1:1). But to receive this blessing, we must trust God just as Abram did.

THINK ABOUT IT
The rich man who lived in Haran became a nomad living in tents.



people of Israel God would reveal His Word, and through Israel God would send the Savior.

2. God promised to **bless Abram (12:2b)**.
3. God promised to **make Abram's name great (12:2c)**. Adam and Eve tried to make themselves great by eating the forbidden fruit. The people at Babel tried to make a name for themselves by building a tower to heaven. In contrast, God is telling Abram not to honor his own name, but to trust God to give him an honored name. What name? God named him Abraham, which means "father of many" (Gen 17:5).
4. God promised that Abram **would be a blessing (12:2d)**.
5. God promised to **bless those who bless Abram (12:3a)**.
6. God promised to **curse those who curse Abram (12:3b)**.
7. God promised to **bless all the families of the earth through Abram (12:3c)**. This is the climax of God's blessing. God's curse in Genesis 3 had affected all mankind, but now God speaks a blessing that will one day do away with the curse completely. Through Abram God would grow a nation to proclaim Him, and all the world can now benefit from the Word of God delivered through the people of Israel (Rom 3:2). Also, through the people of Israel would one day come a Savior for the whole world, even for Gentiles (Acts 10). The call of Abram thus carries forward the story of God's redemptive plan that He first promised in Genesis 3:15 with the promise of a seed who would crush Satan. Truly God is good. He pours out blessing simply because He is so good.

Lesson Outline

God blesses the world through Abram.



AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. God blessed Abram by promising many children (12:2).
2. God blessed Abram by blessing the whole world through him (12:3).
3. To receive God's blessing, Abram obeyed God and left his home (12:1, 4–9).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. Abram belonged to a specially chosen family (11:27–32).
 - Abram's father Terah was from the blessed family of Shem (11:27; 9:26).
 - The blessing seemed to have a problem: Abram's wife Sarai was barren (11:29–30).
 - Terah moved with his family from Ur to Haran but failed to reach Canaan (11:31).
2. God called Abram to begin a specially chosen people (12:1–3).
 - God told Abram to leave his family's land and go to a land He would show him (12:1).
 - God promised to make Abram into a great nation (12:2a).
 - God promised to bless Abram and make his name famous (12:2b).
 - God promised to make Abram a blessing to others, to all the families of the earth (12:2c–3).
3. Abram obeyed God and God led him to a specially promised land (12:4–9).
 - Abram left Haran with Sarai, Lot, and all their possessions (12:4–5).
 - When Abram came into Canaan at Shechem, God promised Abram all that land (12:6–7).
 - Abram built an altar to worship God at Shechem and again at Bethel (12:7–8).





Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Where did Abram live?**
Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldeans and in Haran.
- 2. What did God tell Abram to do?**
God told Abram to leave the place where people worshiped idols.
- 3. How would God bless Abram?**
God would make Abram into a great nation.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Where did Abram live?**
Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldeans and in Haran.
- 2. What did God tell Abram to do?**
God told Abram to get out of his country, away from his family and from his father's house.
- 3. Why did God tell Abram to leave the city of Ur?**
The people of Ur worshiped false gods called idols. God did not want Abram to be like those people.
- 4. What did God call that place where Abram was to go?**
God called it "the land which I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). This was going to be a special land for Abram and his family.
- 5. What happened when Abram arrived in the land of Canaan?**
God promised Abram that Canaan would belong to his children.
- 6. What did God promise Abram?**
God promised to make Abram a great nation; to bless Abram, to make Abram's name great; to make Abram a blessing; to bless those who blessed Abram; to curse those who cursed Abram; and to bless all the families of the earth through Abram.
- 7. What did Abram do after God promised him the land of Canaan?**
Abram built an altar and thanked God.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

GOING ON A TRIP

Have the children sit in a circle. Have each child say what he would take on a trip. Tell the children that in today's lesson they will learn about a man who took a trip to his new home.

FAMILIES

Let each child tell the class how many people are in their family (you could include pets, too!). Explain that in today's lesson we will learn about a man God promised to make a great nation (Gen 12:2).



ILLUSTRATE

PACKED SUITCASE

Bring a suitcase filled with bags of pennies (wealth); stuffed sheep or cows (herds or flocks); and blankets, a pot and pan, and clothes (possessions). Start the lesson by asking the children what they would bring if they were moving to a foreign country. Explain that in today's lesson, they will learn about a man named Abram and how God called him to live in a new land. Open the suitcase and describe the various things Abram took with him when he moved.

COUNTING THE STARS

Bring in a telescope. Explain how it is used and how it allows us to see many more stars than we could see just using our eyes. Tell the children that even with a telescope there are more stars than we can count. Explain to the children that God told Abram that he would make his descendants great like the number of stars in the sky.



APPLY

GOD IS MY SHIELD

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons.

Directions: Genesis 15:1 tells us that God comforted Abram by reminding him that He was his shield. Discuss why Abram would need God as a shield (possibly to protect him from his enemies after freeing Lot). Copy the shield (in craft book) onto cardstock for each child. Have children cut out the shield and color the cross red and the stars blue. Cut strips of cardstock (2 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches) for each child to attach to the back for a handle. Read Ephesians 6:10–18. Discuss what the shield of faith can do. How might the flaming arrows of Satan be put out by using our shield of faith?



God Is My Shield
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God makes a promise to Abram • Genesis 11:27–12:9



AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

INTRODUCE A FRIEND

Ask each child to introduce another child by giving his name and telling the class one thing he knows about the child. When every child has had a turn, open your Bible and tell the children you are going to introduce them to a new person in the Bible lesson today. His name is Abram, and they can read about him in the book of Genesis.

PROMISES, PROMISES

Explain to the class that a covenant is: 1) an unchanging agreement between two people or groups of people, 2) designed to establish friendship or peace, 3) accompanied by clear conditions, an oath, witnesses, and ratified by a written contract and sacrifice, and 4) identified by salt, shaking hands, feasts, gifts, or pillars.

Make a covenant with the class. Choose two children to swear by it, designate the rest of the class as witnesses, and ratify by having two children sign a contract. Have them shake hands at the end. Give each child a little bag of salt, with a tag highlighting the meaning of a covenant, to take home as a reminder.



ILLUSTRATE

TRAVEL AND TENTS

Set up a small tent, or throw blankets over a table to make a tent. When you talk about setting up and taking down tents, have another teacher set up or take down the tent. This will need to be done quickly as you talk about how the people set up the tents and took them down day after day.

JOURNEY BY FAITH

Ask for 2 volunteers. Place a blindfold over the eyes of the first volunteer. Tell the second volunteer to guide the blindfolded child safely to the other side of the room. Explain that in today's lesson we will learn about a man who trusted God by moving to a new country even though he didn't know where he was going (Heb 11:8).



APPLY

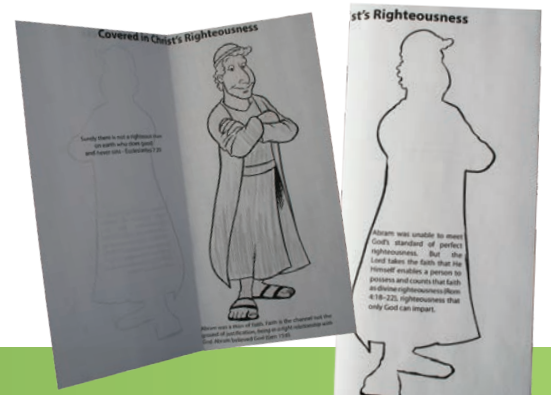
COVERED IN CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Crayons, paper with outline of person, larger cutout of person, tissue paper, glue.

Directions: Print the two sheets in the Year 1 Craft Book double-sided onto one sheet of paper. Give each child a copy. Encourage the children to color the person completely (or clothe the person with glued-on tissue paper). Explain that this is a picture of a sinner covered with sin. Fold the piece of paper so that the outline of the man covers the colored picture. Explain that Christ lived a perfectly righteous life and that He imputes (credits) that righteousness to those who believe in Him and confess Him as Lord and Savior.

Covered in Christ's Righteousness
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



FUTURES, PART ONE

Use with “Futures, Part Two”. Cut three slips of paper. On the first write, “God will make me very fruitful.” On the second write, “God will make many nations come from me.” On the third write, “God will make kings come from me.” Give the slips to three different children. Have the children read their slips to the class. Tell them that their futures will come true within the hour. Explain that Abram’s future held the same promises. How would those promises be fulfilled? How will the future promises to the three children be accomplished?

FUN FACTS: STARS

On a moonless night with no clouds, you can see about 2,000 stars. It has been estimated that there could be 1,000 billion stars in the Milky Way. If you counted one every second for your whole lifetime (without any sleep), you wouldn’t get past three billion! In today’s lesson we will see that God promised Abram descendants as numerous as the stars.



FUTURES, PART TWO

Have three baskets filled for the completion of “Futures, Part One”.
Fruitful: Fill with enough grapes or fruit slices for each child.

Nations: Fill with flags from the nation of Israel.

Kings: Fill with an assortment of objects signifying kings.

Call the three children whose futures were foretold up to the front of the classroom. Have them read their slip of paper again. Give these children their “fulfilled promises” by giving them the correct baskets and instructing them to distribute their contents to the class. We will see in future lessons how these promises to Abram do get fulfilled, even if our promises did not turn out exactly as we thought.

AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH

Bring in a glass jar filled with jelly beans. Ask the children to guess how many jelly beans are in the jar. Explain that in today’s lesson we will learn about Abram, a man God promised to bless with descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth (Gen 13:16).



SIGNIFICANT REPETITIONS

To demonstrate Abram’s pattern of obedience, have the students read through Genesis 12:7–9; 13:4; and 18 to see how many times Abram built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.