

Review the last stories a bit, focusing more on the most recent story, The Flood.

- What is the story of Adam and Eve?
- What happened with Cain and Abel?
- What did we learn about God and people in the story of The Flood?

Ask a few more questions to clarify some words you'll read in the story.

- What are descendants?
- What are generations?
- What is an inheritance?

Tell the Story *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

I'm going to tell you a story that starts many years after Noah and his family made a new start...

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how he had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick. They said, *"Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are."*

God saw how people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of him. At that time everyone on earth spoke the same language. So God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then he scattered them all over the earth.

A few generations later, God established a special relationship and a promise with a man named Abram. This special promise was called a *covenant*—representing the deepest of all agreements between two people.

God made this covenant with Abram:

I will make you the father of a great nation—famous throughout history.

I will bless you and make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.

The entire earth will be blessed through your descendants.

This was an amazing promise that God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family of people! There was just one problem... Abram's wife, Sarai, had not been able to have children, so how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? Not to mention that they were getting old. At that time Abram was about 75 and Sarai about 65!

God told Abram, *"I want you to leave your country and your family and go to the land that I will show to you."* So Abram and his family left, as God had said, and went to a land called Canaan. There, God told Abram, *"Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants."* This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land".

Some time passed, and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child. Abram asked God, *"What good are all of your blessings if I don't even have a son? I am getting old and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants."*

God replied to Abram, *"No, you will have a son who will inherit everything that I have promised you."* Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, *"Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your family will be like this—too many to count!"* And Abram believed what God said, so God called him "righteous" because of his faith.

More years past and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to have a child for her. Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai were not getting along. During Hagar's pregnancy, she began to hate Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again saying, *"I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations'. Remember this... I will always be your God, and you will always be my people."* Then God added, *"I am also changing your wife's name to Sarah, which means 'mother of many nations'. Very soon she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac."*

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God's promise. Abraham wondered, *"How can I become a father at 100 years old? How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?"* Sarah thought, *"How could a worn out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is even older than I am!"* Abraham asked God, *"Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?"*

But God said, *"No. Sarah will have a son about a year from now, and it is through him that I will pass on my blessing. Why would you laugh at this thought, Abraham? Is anything too hard for me?"*

Sure enough, a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means "laughter." Isaac's birth caused Sarah and Hagar to hate each other again, so Hagar and Ishmael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abraham's family.

The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God completing the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.

Retell the Story

This may seem redundant, but it helps you remember and own the story. You will want to help them retell the story by giving them leading questions like: *So, where did the story begin? What happened next? Why did God give us many languages? Did Abraham and Sarah believe God at first? Why not?*

Dialogue

These questions are a good start to draw out observations about the story.

- Why did God stop the people from building a monument to themselves?
- What do we learn about Abraham from the story? About Sarah?
 - » God chose him to carry out his blessing.
 - » He was old!
 - » He trusted God and left his home.
 - » Even though they trusted God in the end, they found it hard to believe what God had said.
- Where in the story was it hard for Abraham to believe the promise?
 - » Abraham thought he would have to give up his inheritance to one of his servants.
 - » Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise and thought "How could this happen...?"
- What was God's relationship with Abraham?
- What do we call this special promise that God made with Abraham? How is it special?
- Where have we seen God make a promise or covenant before?
 - » With Cain and with Noah.
- What did God promise to Abraham?
 - » To make him the father of a great nation, giving him many descendants.
 - » To bless and protect him.
 - » To bless all the nations of the earth through him.
- What does this promise tell us about what God is like?
 - » God wants to bless all people.
 - » God has chosen a family (nation) to be his blessing and to live in his ways.
 - » God will protect and bless his people.
- If you had to wait 25 years for a promise of God to come true, would you still believe God?

Application (Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)

- What questions do you have about the story?
- What from this story will you remember the most?
- How does this story make a difference in your life?
- What is the most important promise you've ever made? Did you keep it?
- What do you think it means to be blessed by God?
- How do people in our world build "monuments" to themselves?

Scripture Memory Verse

Is anything too hard for the LORD? Genesis 18:14

