**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 3 of 4

# Abraham

### MEETING AIM

To discover that God makes and keeps promises with his people.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-6

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

The story of Abraham is a complex one, full of customs and cultural references that are difficult for children to grasp. However, that God makes promises to Abraham and keeps them, however unlikely they might appear, speaks of God’s faithfulness, power and love for Abraham, his descendants and, ultimately, us. Abraham is a key figure in the story of God and his people, so helping children to encounter such a person of faith and wrestle with his story will mean that they can deepen their understanding of who God is and explore their own faith.

We have used Abraham here, rather than Abram, to void confusion in children’s minds about who it is we’re discussing.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

As the children arrive, sit everyone down in a circle. Ask the children if they have done anything this week and to tell the group about it. Share something that you have done this week too.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** pop songs with lyrics about promises

Before the session, find some pop songs that have promises in them and print out the words (make sure the words are appropriate for your children). Play the song from YouTube (or other video site) and let the children read the lyrics or sing along. Decide together which of your songs is about keeping promises and which aren’t. What does it feel like when someone keeps a promise? Or doesn’t?

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** bags, suitcases and other luggage; cloaks and / or coats; cardboard boxes (shoebox-sized and larger); a large pot plant, inflatable tree or similar

Before the session, choose a route that you can safely go on with the children in your group. This could be round the corridors of your church to another room, or around the grounds of your building. At the end of your route, set up the potted palm / inflatable tree (or if you’re using an outside route, use a real tree!) and put all your boxes in a pile next to the tree. Arrange the luggage, cloaks and coats at your starting point. Make sure you have enough luggage and coats for each child to carry and wear something.

Gather all the children together at our starting point, and tell this story:

Thousands of years ago, there lived a man called Abraham. Abraham was a friend of God and lived in a city called Haran. He was 75 years old, but he had no children. One day, God spoke to Abraham. He said: “Abraham! Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you. I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others.”

*Ask the children what they think of what God told Abraham to do. If they were Abraham, what would they have said to God? What do they think Abraham did?*

Abraham did what God told him to do. He, his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot and his whole household packed their belongings and set off.

*Encourage the children to put on a coat or cloak, pick up a bag or suitcase and get ready to leave. Once everyone is ready, lead the children off on your route. As you walk, remind the children that God said he would show Abraham where to go. Ask them what they think was going through Abraham’s mind as he walked along. When you get to the end of your route, and the tree you have set up, put down your bags.*

Finally, Abraham and his family got to a place called Shechem, where there was a precious tree. There, God said to Abraham: “I’m going to give this land to you and your family forever!” And there, Abraham built an altar to God to remember what God had said. Altars are places where people used to worship God. They were important memorials of what God had done for people. Whenever anyone saw this, they would remember God’s promise.

*Work together to build an altar from the boxes you have provided. As you work, chat about what Abraham has done so far: he had obeyed God, left his hometown and followed God. Stand by the altar and tell the next part of the story.*

Later, God made another promise. Abraham was sad that he had no family to pass on his possessions to. But God promised Abraham that he would have a large family.

*Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine the night sky. How many stars can they see? If the children know any facts about space and stars, chat about those now, then continue with the story.*

God promised Abraham that he would have a son. He took Abraham outside to look at the night sky.

“Look at the sky,” said God. “Can you count all the stars? That’s how many descendants you will have!”

And Abraham believed God. He believed that God would keep this promise. And God did. Abraham had a son, called Isaac. Isaac had sons called Esau and Jacob. And Jacob had twelve sons – the start of the people of Israel.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* What is your favourite part of this story?
* Which part do you find surprising? Or want to ask a question about?
* What does this story tell us about God? What is he like?
* Has anyone ever made a promise to you and not kept it? How did that make you feel?
* What do you want to say to God after hearing this story?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** small boxes (such as empty matchboxes); glue and sticky tape; wooden building blocks; plastic construction bricks

Give children the various blocks, bricks and boxes you have collected and explain that you’re going to think about promises and memorials. Remind the children that God made Abraham a promise and Abraham made an altar as a memorial of that promise. Play together at creating little memorials, and as you work, ask the children if they have kept any promises, or if they know any other promises that God made his people. You might think about Jesus’ promise to be with his followers until the “end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). Share with the children when God has made and kept a promise to you (if appropriate). Give them time to ask you questions about it – Abraham saw the fulfilment of the first part of the promise (about a son) but not the second (about the thousands of descendants). Sometimes we have to wait, but God always comes through in the end.

If you have children on the autistic spectrum, explain before you start that if they use the construction toys, they won’t be able to take their memorial home.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** Post-it notes; pens

You will need to decide what to pray about depending on how the session goes. If the children are happy with the idea that God keeps his promises, then have a time of ‘thank you’ prayers, where the children write what they have to say thank you to God for – the things he has done, and the promises he has kept.

If the children feel like God hasn’t kept his promises, give them the space to express that by writing on a Post-it what they want to say to God about it. Gather the Post-its together and ask God to answer our questions. Return to these next time you meet so that you can explore how God has answered your prayers so far.

**ALEX TAYLOR**

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children’s Work*.