

LESSON 59

Abraham: Father to All by Faith

ROMANS 4:1-25



BIBLE TRUTH

ABRAHAM IS THE FATHER OF ALL WHO PLACE THEIR TRUST IN CHRIST

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Romans 4:1–25 from the Scriptures or read story 137, “Abraham: Father to All by Faith,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Understanding the Word “Credit”

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ✓ a coin
- ✓ slips of paper with the numbers 1–10 written on them
- ✓ a bag to hold the slips of paper

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Atonement

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two apples
- ✓ two helpers to act out the skit

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Abraham's Descendants

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

LESSON SNAPSHOT

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Faith Like Abraham Bible Discovery

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ questions (below) printed out
- ✓ Bibles for the class

TOTAL 75 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Abraham is our example of faith—Paul used Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish faith, to demonstrate that our standing of righteousness before God has always been by faith and not by works. Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 where, after God told Abraham that his children would be as numerous as the stars, the text simply reads, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3). Abraham did no work to earn his righteousness; he simply believed God’s promise. Righteousness was God’s free gift.

Abraham is the father of all who would believe—The Jews would have believed Abraham to be their father. They even called themselves the “children of Abraham.” They also believed that circumcision marked their right standing before God. In this text Paul exploded their thinking by pointing out that God counted Abraham as righteous before circumcision. Abraham is the father of all those who have faith, whether circumcised or not—he is the father of all who believe! Later, in the book of Romans, Paul goes a step further and tells us that God’s children are those who are children of the promise by faith, not those who are the natural children of Abraham (Romans 9:7–8). Abraham is not just the father of the Jews but of “many nations” (Romans 4:17).

Abraham believed against all hope—Abraham trusted God’s plan. This is a wonderful picture of our need to trust in Christ. Abraham’s body was as good as dead, just as we are dead in our sins. There was nothing Abraham could do in his own strength to renew his own body so that he could have children. Likewise, there is nothing we can do to work our way to heaven. If Abraham was going to have children, it would have to be the work of God. If we are to be saved, it can only be by a work of God. Abraham believed that God had the power to do what he promised, and we must believe that God has the power to fulfill his promise of salvation through the work of Jesus on the cross. Like Abraham, we have no other hope. We are hopelessly lost in our sin apart from Jesus.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Sacrifice of Atonement

In the Old Testament a sacrifice of atonement was the killing of an animal to restore the broken relationship between God and man caused by man’s sin. Those who sin against God cannot

have fellowship with God because of their sinfulness and God’s need to judge and punish sin. A sacrifice of atonement was a symbolic way of transferring the guilt of the sinner onto the animal. When the animal was killed, the sin was atoned for, so the relationship between God and man could be restored.

Thousands of animals were slain for the sins of thousands. Ultimate atonement was never made through the shedding of an animal’s blood. All these sacrifices pointed forward to Christ, who was presented by God as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. The wrath of God for the sin of man was never poured out on the animals sacrificed. Instead, God stored up his wrath in a wonderful act of forbearance, leaving sin unpunished until his wrath was poured out upon Christ (Romans 3:24–25).

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

Paul directly ties Abraham’s trusting in God’s future redemption with our trusting in God’s past work on the cross and through the resurrection. Abraham’s faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” In the same way, “It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:22, 24–25).

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Romans 4:1–25 from the Scriptures or read story 137, “Abraham: Father to All by Faith,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Understanding the Word "Credit"

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ✓ a coin
- ✓ slips of paper with the numbers 1–10 written on them
- ✓ a bag to hold the slips of paper

Use this exercise to help the children understand what the word "credit" means. (The NIV uses the word "credit" in Romans 4. The ESV substitutes the word "count" for credit. The concept of credit is still a good one for the class to explore.)

First, have the children repeat the word "credit." Then ask the class if they know what the word means. Explain to them that it is kind of like the word "added." If you credit money to a person's bank account, you are adding to it.

Divide the class into two teams. Each time a team responds with the correct answer, say the following: "The answer is correct and five points are credited to that team."

Flip a coin to see which team goes first. Have a team member pick a number from the bag. Ask the corresponding question from the list below. They have thirty seconds to give the answer. If they get it correct, credit their account five points. If they get it wrong, they get no score and the opposing team can answer for three points.

Game questions:

- **What was Abraham's name before he was called Abraham?**
(Abram)
- **How did Abraham deceive the pharaoh?**
(He told his wife to tell the Egyptians she was his sister.)
- **What was Sarah's name before she was called Sarah?**
(Sarai)
- **What is the name of Hagar's son?**
(Ishmael)
- **What did Abraham sacrifice on the mountain?**
(He sacrificed a ram. God stopped him from sacrificing his son.)

- **Why is it amazing that Abraham had a son?**
(He and his wife were very old and beyond the age to have children.)
- **What was the name of Abraham’s nephew who traveled with him?**
(Lot)
- **What did Abraham send his servant out to bring back for Isaac?**
(a wife)
- **How many righteous people did Abraham settle on in his discussion with God over the destruction of Sodom? Was it thirty, fifty, ten, or five?**
(ten)
- **To what two things did God compare the number of Abraham’s future children?**
(stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore)

Ask the following questions before moving on to the remainder of the lesson:

- **What does the word “credited” mean?**
(The word “credited” means added.)
- **What did God credit to Abraham’s account when Abraham believed God by faith?**
(God credited righteousness to Abraham’s account.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Atonement

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two apples
- ✓ two helpers to act out the skit

Use this exercise to demonstrate atonement—a reconciling sacrifice (see “A Little Bit More”).

You will need two additional helpers. Place one apple on the top of a file cabinet or on top of some other piece of furniture that is out of the way. Once your class is settled and you have read through the passage in Romans, have one of your helpers get the apple and take a bite out of it. Have the other helper immediately object and start an argument, claiming that the apple was his.

Allow the argument to go on for a short time. Then ask them to stop arguing and explain the problem. After their explanation, have the offending party say, “OK, I’m sorry. You can have your apple back.” Of course the owner of the apple should object, saying that it is no longer any good and that the helper just can’t straighten things out by giving back an apple with a bite out of it.

That is when you jump in. Explain to the class that the two helpers are having an argument and need to be reconciled and that you think you have the answer. Tell them that you think you can make atonement for the eaten apple. Pull out the second apple and ask the helper who lost the apple if he would accept your apple as atonement for the apple that was eaten. Have them agree happily and shake hands.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **Why was the helper upset when his apple got eaten?**
(The other helper didn’t ask before taking the apple. He just took what didn’t belong to him.)
- **Did the helper have a good reason to be upset?**
(Yes. He was sinned against.)
- **What did that do to their relationship?**
(It caused a break in their relationship that needed to be fixed.)
- **Why couldn’t the relationship be reconciled by just giving the apple back?**
(The apple wasn’t whole anymore. It had been ruined by the bite taken out of it.)
- **Why did the second apple work to cover the loss of the first apple?**
(The second apple was perfect, like the first had been before being bitten into.)
- **Who paid the price and what sacrifice was offered to reconcile both parties?**
(The teacher paid the price in the cost of the apple. The teacher gave up his apple so the two parties could be reconciled.)

■ **How is this example like Christ's atoning, reconciling sacrifice for our sin?**

(An atoning sacrifice had to be perfect. A sinner, therefore, cannot atone for sin, just like the half-eaten apple was not a suitable replacement for the perfect apple. Being sinless, Jesus was a perfect sacrifice. His sacrifice atoned for our sin and restored our relationship with God.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Abraham's Descendants

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of Abraham and fill the sky around him with stars. Under each star write a name of a Christian that you know.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Faith Like Abraham Bible Discovery

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ questions (below) printed out
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Divide the class into three groups. Give each group a question and have them come up with the answer in writing and then present their question with their answer to the class. Pick one student from each group who will read the question and lead through the discussion. Each group should also pick a person to write out their answer and a spokesperson to present their findings.

Questions:

- **How is our faith like the faith of Abraham as described in Romans 4:18–21?**
(We are dead in our sins just like old, old Abraham was as good as dead when it came to his becoming a father. Yet we are both called to believe God can do what he promises.)

- **Why is Abraham called our father? See Romans 4:13–16.**
(Abraham is the father of all who live by faith in God's redeeming plan. Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteousness. Likewise, when we believe in Jesus and his death and resurrection it is also counted to us as righteousness. Abraham is called the father of us all.)

- **Why are the words "it was counted to him" from Genesis 15:6 important for us? See Romans 4:23–25.**
(These words apply to us because God counts us righteous because of our faith in the same way that he counted Abraham righteous because of his faith. Abraham looked forward to God's plan of salvation while we look back.)

Allow groups time to answer their question and present it to the class. Challenge the groups to look at the Bible passage and think for themselves, not simply ask you for answers. Help each of the three groups as they try to come up with answers.