



ABRAHAM AND THE AMAZING PROMISES

- *a story of God's plan for humanity*
- *a lesson for building faith and trust*
- *the assurance that God cannot lie and will bring to pass what He promises*

KEY VERSES

He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. —Romans 4:20-21

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. —Hebrews 11:6

PROLOGUE

When God created humans, He didn't do it because He was bored and just wanted something to do. He had a plan from the very beginning. First He designed human beings who looked like Him—the first ones were named Adam and Eve. He gave them minds so they could understand and learn to think like Him. He gave directions about how to live so they would act like Him. And He gave humanity the potential to participate in an awesome future in His very family. What they had to do was listen to God and believe, trust, and obey Him only. Abraham was a man who did just that.

STORY AND STUDY

Time to get out!

Abram looked around the city of Ur and saw a bustle of activity. It was a cultural center of Mesopotamia, and it showed. There were merchants with their own companies, accountants and architects, high-ranking military men, tutors and schools, servants and slaves, lavish homes and hovels, and sadly also pagan priests.

In fact, no matter where Abram went in that city, one thing dominated the scene: a huge ziggurat built to the god and goddess of the moon.

Factoid: *This structure still stands in the country of Iraq. A ziggurat is a pyramid-shaped tower with a square base, rising in stories of ever-decreasing size, with a terrace at each story and a temple at the very top. You can see the one in Ur on YouTube if you search for "ziggurat."*





Tradition says that his own father, Terah, was actually in the business of selling idols. But his ancestor Shem (Noah's son) worshipped the one true God, and at some point Abram did too. Something about Abram's attitude of heart caught the Lord's attention, and He told Abram to leave that idolatrous city, to "get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1).

"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."

Now Abram was not a young man—in fact he was 75 years old! He had spent his life in Ur. His family was there. He made his living there. All his friends were there. And now the Lord was telling him to pick up and move to places unknown. And what's more, the Lord made him a promise—an *amazing* promise: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (verses 2-3).

In faith he and his household began a journey to an unknown destination, never to return to his homeland again.



Abram believed the Lord and obeyed. In faith he and his household began a journey to an unknown destination, never to return to his homeland again.

Pause for thought: Do you know how many promises there are in the Bible? There are in fact so many that no one has settled on an exact number! A promise is a statement by a person that he or she will or will not do something, and it is a cause for hope. Suppose your friend promises he will give you a new soccer ball (which you really want) if you will take care of feeding his fish for a few days while he and his parents are on a trip. You say you'll do it. What does he expect when he returns? What if you don't keep your end of the bargain? What do you expect when he returns? If he doesn't follow through on his word, what will you think the next time he gives you his promise? Will you believe him? trust him? When God makes a promise, how can you know that He will do what He says? (Hint: Turn in your Bible to Deuteronomy 7:9 and Titus 1:2-3.) Believing that God will do what He says means having faith.



Fast-forward to some puzzling promises

It had been many years since Abram left Ur (24, to be exact), and he and his wife Sarai were where the Lord had wanted them to be: in the land of Canaan. From time to time the Lord made additional promises to Abram: promises about land ([Genesis 13:14-15](#)); promises about descendants ([Genesis 15:5](#)); and promises about becoming the father of many nations ([Genesis 17:4-6](#)).

She would soon learn that no matter what, He always keeps His word.

Often He used the phrase *your seed*, meaning “your children.” Abram was now 99, his wife Sarai 10 years younger, and they had no children. In fact they were long past the age for having children. What could the Lord possibly mean by “your seed”? Sarah had already tried to fill the emptiness in her life by giving her maid Hagar to Abram as a concubine in hopes there would be a child in their lives. A son was born (whose name was Ishmael), but it was still not like having one of her very own. She didn’t seem to know that one has to be patient, willing to trust and wait for God to fulfill His promises. But she would soon learn that no matter what, He always keeps His word.

Pause for thought: Have you ever been promised something that you had to wait for? Were you tempted to give up hope that you would ever get it? How did you feel when you finally got what you had been waiting for? How did you feel about the person who fulfilled his or her promise?

Miracle on the way

The Lord had just finished giving Abram astonishing details of the plans He had for him and Sarai. They were so astonishing that Abram fell on his face laughing. Surely the Lord must be joking. Had He really said, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah [which means “princess”] shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her” ([Genesis 17:15-16](#))? Really? At 90 years old?

The Lord continued, “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant [another word for “promise”] with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him” ([verse 19](#)).

Pause for thought: God also changed Abram’s name. He was now to be called Abraham, which means “father of a multitude.” You can find this in your Bible in [Genesis 17:5](#). Every time Abraham and Sarah heard their new names they were probably reminded of the promises the Lord had given them. Does your name have a special meaning? You can Google it to find out, or ask your parents why they chose that name for you.



Don't laugh! Nothing is too hard for the Lord

Sometime later, the Lord visited Abraham at his tent and delivered yet another amazing message: “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son” (Genesis 18:10).

This time it was Sarah, quietly listening at the doorway, who laughed to herself, “After I have grown old?” (verse 12).

“The LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, “Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?” Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son”’ (verses 13-14).

Sarah did what people sometimes do when they get caught doing something they shouldn't. She lied out of fear, denying that she had laughed, but the Lord insisted on the truth: “No, but you did laugh!” (verse 15).

Pause for thought: Why do you suppose Sarah was afraid? Why do you suppose people are tempted to lie when they are afraid? Do you think Sarah believed the Lord?

A son at last

Nine months later after years of longing and waiting, Isaac (which means “to laugh”), their miracle son of promise, was born. Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me. . . . Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age” (Genesis 21:6-7).

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Conclusion

Abraham is often referred to as “the father of the faithful.” Faith is believing and trusting God enough to obey His instructions, even when things look impossible. Abraham first acted according to his faith when he obeyed God and moved from Ur to the land of Canaan. Though he didn't know exactly how the Lord's promises would be fulfilled, he kept on trusting, believing and obeying.



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We learned in this study that what God promises, He can and will perform. God cannot lie. We also learned that it is important for us to keep our word so that people can trust us. And we learned that God knows when we lie; He can't be fooled.

(The fulfillment of God's long-range promises has only just begun. There is more to this fascinating story. Check out the study **"Isaac Finds a Wife."**)

?? QUESTIONS

1. Knowledge

What did people in Ur worship?

How old was Abram when he left Ur?

How old was Sarah when Isaac was born?

2. Comprehension

Why was moving from Ur considered an act of faith?

What did the birth of Isaac prove?

3. Connections

Can you think of other examples of God doing something for people that would otherwise have been impossible?

DISCUSSIONS

We know that God will keep His word. How important is it for us to keep our word? Can you give examples of when you have kept your word and how doing so was important to other people?

Sometimes lying happens when we are afraid of being embarrassed or of being punished when we are caught. What are some ways we can keep from lying? What should we do if we are caught lying? Which commandment has to do with lying and how can we remember it?



ACTIVITY: RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

To be done ahead of time:

Make a list of true and false statements taken from this story. Create a “Promise Treasure Chest” with a lid and fill it with small prizes or goodies.

To begin the game:

Have the children line up at the starting line as if to begin a race.

Read a statement from your list, and instruct the children to step forward one heel-to-toe step if the statement is **True** (green light) and to stay in place if it is **False** (red light). If they make a mistake, they must go back two steps. As each one reaches the designated finish line, he or she is rewarded with a trip to the Promise Treasure Chest. The child is to reach in without looking to retrieve his or her prize. Perhaps the first one to finish could retrieve two.

