



God chooses Abraham

MEETING AIM

To discover the joy of spending time in Jesus' presence.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 11:26-12:9; 13:14-18

BACKGROUND

Abraham and his family lived in the Middle East around 4,000 years ago, at a time when people believed in many different gods. Sometimes they settled for a while and farmed; at other times they travelled with their animals to find new grazing land. Abraham was originally called Abram: God gave him his new name as part of his promise to him. To avoid confusion these sessions will refer to him as Abraham.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting recently. You might like to talk more generally about how we choose our friends.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: a chess set

Invite everyone to choose a chess piece and explain their choice. Children who know nothing about chess may prefer the look, feel or colour of one piece; encourage any children who are chess players to talk about what their chosen piece can do and what its special powers are.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a simple crossroads on the floor, marked with masking tape or chalk; a card with God's words (see 'Speaking activity' below); art materials
Gather the children together for this story:

Back at the beginning of the world, people chose gods to worship rather like we chose chess pieces. Some people worshiped statues, some worshiped animals, some worshiped kings or goddesses. We're going to tell the story of how one man chose to believe in the one and only real God. His name was Abraham.

Invite volunteers to pose as if for a family photograph. Abraham (age 75); his wife, Sarah (age 66); Abraham's dad, Terah (a very old man); Abraham's nephew, Lot.

Here's Abraham's family photo! Abraham and Sarah haven't got any children of their own. They live in a place called Haran, which means 'crossroads'.

Ask children to choose an activity.

Speaking activity: Give children a card with God's words, and ask them to practise saying the words together. What might God sound like? Can they recreate the sound?

"Leave your home and family and go to a land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation! I will always be on your side. I will bless you and through you I will bless everyone in the whole world!"

Drawing activity: Explain that God appeared and said: "I will give your children this land!" Invite children to draw God saying these words. What does God look like? How did God appear?

Building activity: Children build a special altar to help them worship God, using whatever they can find around them (chairs, books, cushions etc).

After a few minutes, gather everyone together at the crossroads.

Our story started with Abraham's family, who lived at the crossroads in Haran. One day, the one and only God spoke to Abraham!

Listen to God's words from the speaking activity.

Abraham's at the crossroads, so he has to make a choice. Is he going to go follow God or stay at home? Stay or go – what would you do?

Indicate 'stay' at the crossroads and 'go' in one direction, and ask children to vote with their feet.

Abraham chose to go with God. He and his family travelled to Canaan, where the one and only God appeared to Abraham!

Look at the pictures from the drawing activity. Say the words: "I will give your children this land!"

What would you think if you were Abraham? What would you do?

Invite suggestions.

Abraham built an altar, so he could worship God in Canaan.

Visit the altar from the building activity.

Then Abraham and his family kept on travelling. After lots of adventures, which

made Abraham a rich man, he came back to Canaan and settled there. God spoke to him again!

This time God promised that Abraham would have more children than there are specks of dust on earth, and that all the land he could see would belong to them! What did Abraham do? He built another altar, like this one, so he could worship God in Canaan.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Encourage discussion with these questions:

- Which part of the story do you like?
- Why did Abraham believe in God?
- Why did God choose Abraham and his family?
- What questions would you ask God?
- What helps us to believe in God?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: a jar of hundreds and thousands; small plates

Remind the children that God promised Abraham that he would have more children than there are specks of dust on earth. Even if he could count all the specks of dust, it would take him longer to count all his relatives. Ask children to guess the number of hundreds and thousands in the jar. Then give them each a small heap on a plate and invite them to count them. As you all try to do so, wonder together about God's big promises and how we believe in them. If God said he'd give the children as many blessings as there are hundreds and thousands, would they try to count them? Or just eat them? Chat about what this promise would make you think about God..

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: the crossroads from 'Bible story'

Explain that Abraham chose to believe God's promise; he chose to go where God sent him. Everyone has choices to make, some big and some little, and they're not always easy.

Invite children to stand at the crossroads in turn and pray (silently or out loud) for help with a choice they have to make.

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God's promise

MEETING AIM

To learn about God's promise to Abraham, and Abraham's faith in God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 15:1-6

BACKGROUND

In this story, God confirms his promise to Abraham and Abraham responds with complete faith in God – even though the prospect of becoming the father of a large family at 76 seems unlikely. After this story, God solemnises the promise with a ritual that marks the beginning of his covenant with Abraham's family. Although the details of this story (nomadic desert life, old age, the desire for children) may be remote from children's own experience, the focus here is on Abraham's belief in God, which connects all Christians to him.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Talk together about who is in your family

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: small jars with lids; water coloured blue or black; baby oil; silver or gold glitter (make sure it's environmentally friendly); sticky tape; silver or gold sequins (optional)

Invite the children to fill half their jar with coloured water, then add some pinches of glitter and sequins. Top up each jar with baby oil and secure the lid. Give the jar a good shake and watch the glitter swirl like stars in the darkness. You could enhance the effect by holding the jars in direct sunlight or shining a torch on the side. Wonder together about how many 'stars' there might be in each jar.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: a walking stick; a stool or chair; glitter jars from 'Intro activity'

Show your family Abraham's props: a walking stick and a seat to sit on (because he's an old man). Remind them that he's very old and has an elderly wife, Sarah, but no children. Ask for a volunteer to take a turn as Abraham by holding the stick and sitting in the seat. Then tell this story:

Here is Abraham is in his tent in the desert, having a rest – but not for long! God himself is about to speak to him!

"Don't be scared, Abraham!" said God. "I am looking after you. I will give you a wonderful reward!"

Invite everyone to think about what questions Abraham might ask. Encourage them to take turns being Abraham, asking God a question.

What Abraham asked God was: "What will you give me?"

Invite everyone to think about what Abraham might want. Again, they take turns being Abraham and telling God what they'd like.

What Abraham said was: "I haven't got a family of my own, and now I'm old."

What God did was: he took Abraham outside and showed him all the stars in the sky.

Encourage everyone to shake their stars-in-a-jar and watch the glitter swirl.

God said: "Look at all those stars! Can you count them? They are like your descendants will be. You'll have more children, grandchildren and great-great-great grandchildren than you can ever count!"

What do you think Abraham thought about that promise?

Invite children to take turns responding as Abraham. If you were him, what would you think about God's promise of all those children?

What Abraham did was: he believed God. And God saw that he was very good.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about the story and the children's response using these questions:

- How did it feel to play the part of Abraham today?
- What does this story make you think about God?

- I wonder why God promised Abraham an enormous family.
- Do you know anyone with a strong faith like Abraham?
- What promises does God give to us?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: two mirrors – the bigger the better – facing each other

Invite children to stand, in twos, threes or as a whole group, in between the two mirrors. What reflections can they see? What do they notice? Chat about the strangeness of this infinitely vanishing perspective and about what their reflection-of-a-reflection-of-a-reflection (and so on) looks like or makes them think about. Invite them to think and chat about how Abraham felt, when God promised him a family which would extend further into the future than he could see or imagine. They can also try the same thing with two mobile phones facing each other on 'selfie' mode – can they take a photograph of this infinite image?

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: felt-tip pens, strips of paper; sticky tape

Explain that Abraham's enormous family was special to God, and everyone in it traced their family trees back to Abraham. The Bible says that we are part of this family, too, if we believe in God as Abraham did: "Those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed" (Galatians 3:9). We're all connected by faith.

Write 'ABRAHAM' on a strip of paper and tape it into a loop. Ask the children to write their own names on strips and join them to each other. Join the whole string to Abraham's loop. Make the chain as long as you can by writing the names of other people in your church. Then stand in a circle and thank God for the faith that connects us all. Acknowledge that believing in God isn't always easy, and in a moment of quiet, invite everyone to ask for God's help with their faith.

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A son for Abraham

MEETING AIM

To learn that nothing is too difficult for God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 18:1-15

BACKGROUND

When discussing 'Nothing will be impossible with God', be aware that some children may question why God didn't cure a grandparent's cancer, for example. There isn't an easy answer, so don't attempt to give one: the prayer response lets children offer hard things up to God.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Tell each other jokes or funny things that have happened to you this week.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

Introduce your family to an imaginary Museum of Impossible Things. What exhibits would they suggest? Start them off with some examples (a self-tidying bedroom, a money tree) then gather their suggestions. Do you agree that these are impossible? There may be some debate!

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: numbers on five cards: '90'; '99'; 'Nine months'; 'The biggest number you can count to'; '4,000-ish'

Invite children to choose a number card and explain why they have chosen it: what does the number make them think of? Ask those who have chosen the biggest number to say what it is. Then tell this story:

Each of your numbers is important in today's story: remember it as you listen and see what part it plays. If you like, you can wave it when you hear it!

This story goes back long, long before even your great, great grandparents were born. This story goes so far back in time that we don't know exactly when it

happened, so we'll say it happened around 4,000 years ago or thereabouts. This story starts with Abraham – you remember him! He's the man God chose, and God promised him that his family would be so big that he wouldn't be able to count everyone in it!

Abraham's family would be bigger than that! But so far, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had no children of their own, and they were getting very old.

So 4,000-ish years ago, Abraham was at home in his tent in the desert when three strangers stopped by. It was the hottest part of the day, and everyone was dozing, including Abraham – well, he was 99 years old! When Abraham saw he had guests, he leapt to his feet and said to the strangers: "Welcome! Come in, rest and let's give you some refreshments!" So the strangers thanked Abraham and sat down in the shade.

Abraham called for water to wash the strangers' feet. He called his wife, Sarah, who was also having a nap – well, she was 90 years old! Sarah set to work making some bread rolls, while Abraham chose a calf to roast. They served up a delicious feast for their special guests.

The special guests ate the feast and said: "When I come back, your wife Sarah will have a son."

Inside the tent, Sarah overheard and she chuckled quietly to herself. "Me? A mum? At my age?! Hah ha ha! Impossible! That's a good one!"

Then the Lord said to Abraham: "Why is Sarah laughing? Is anything impossible for God? When I come back, she will have a son."

Sarah said loudly: "I wasn't laughing!" and he said: "Oh yes, you were."

And so the three guests went on their way, and sure enough, Sarah found that she was going to have a baby. When he was born, nine months later, she called him Isaac, which means 'laughter'.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about this story using these questions:

- How was your number important in the story?
- What questions would you like to ask Abraham or Sarah?
- Who do you think visited Abraham and Sarah that day?

- Does this story remind you of any others in the Bible?
- Is anything impossible for God?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: a long strip of paper marked like a sliding scale: EASY-HARD-IMPOSSIBLE (colour-coded green-orange-red); felt-tip pens; plain wooden lolly sticks or small strips of paper

Display the sliding scale and write two events from the story on two lolly sticks. Invite children to place the sticks somewhere along the scale: are these things easy, hard or impossible for us to do?

Children take lolly sticks and write or draw on them some more things that are hard or impossible for them, or for human beings generally, eg maths, dealing with bullies, curing certain diseases. Place these sticks along the scale.

Invite children to suggest some hard or impossible things that the Bible says God did (eg turning water into wine, raise someone from the dead). What does this activity make them think about God?

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: lolly sticks and pens from 'Creative time'

In the Christmas story, when God told Mary that she was going to have an impossible baby called Jesus, his angel said: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). Say that for your prayers you're going to take the things that are too hard for you and offer them to God.

Invite everyone to take the lolly sticks they wrote their hard things on earlier, and to write some more if they would like to. Lie the lolly sticks down together in the shape of a cross.

Pray together: "God, we offer you the things that are too difficult for us, and leave them in your hands. Amen."

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A wife for Isaac

MEETING AIM

To learn how Isaac and Rebekah trusted God, and how we can, too.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 24

BACKGROUND

Desert customs and traditional arranged marriages will be alien to most children. The task here is to set the scene, enjoy the strangeness (how many other love stories feature camels?!) and then help children explore common ground with Isaac, Rebekah and their families.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Chat about weddings: what usually happens?

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: 'My own home' from *The Jungle Book* (either audio or video)

If anyone hasn't seen the film, recap briefly that Mowgli has been brought up in the jungle by animals. Watch or listen to the song, and afterwards ask: "What happens in the song? What do you think Mowgli's life will be like from now on?"

Explain that your story is about a beautiful young woman called Rebekah, who went to fetch water from a spring like this. She met a man called Isaac, who – a bit like Mowgli – was brought up amongst strangers and wanted to make a home with his own kind.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: loose coins; bottle(s) of water with lid(s); choir sound effect (search online for a suitable clip)

Use your resources to create the sound effects for these cue words: GOLD – shake the coins; WATER – shake the water bottle (lid on); DESERT – blow across the top of the water bottle (lid off); TRUSTED IN GOD – a second or two of the choir; CAMELS – everyone snorts! Practise each one a few times and then tell the story:

God promised Abraham that he would have a huge family and a land of his own. Abraham TRUSTED IN GOD – but he was old, he lived in a land of strangers and his only son, Isaac, wasn't married.

Abraham called his servant and said: "Promise me that you'll find Isaac a wife! But I don't want him to marry a stranger – go back to where I came from and find him a wife of his own kind."

The servant said: "What if she won't come back here with me?"

Abraham TRUSTED IN GOD. He said to the servant: "God will find my son Isaac a wife from my own family and she will come back here with you."

The servant set off on the long journey across the DESERT. He took lots of GOLD with him and ten CAMELS. Then he reached a spring bubbling with fresh WATER. Lots of women were filling their water jars. The servant TRUSTED IN GOD and he prayed: "O Lord! Find me a wife for my master's son here! Whoever offers me and my CAMELS a drink – let her be the one!"

Before the servant had finished speaking, he saw a beautiful young woman called Rebekah. The servant said: "Please may I have a drink?" Rebekah said: "Of course!" She gave him some WATER. Then she said: "Let me give some to your CAMELS!"

The servant asked: "Who is your family?" She answered: "My granddad is Abraham's brother." The servant cheered: "God has found Abraham's son Isaac a wife from his own family!" He TRUSTED IN GOD even more.

He gave Rebekah lots of bracelets made of GOLD. She invited him and his CAMELS to stay the night with her family.

The servant told his story to Rebekah's dad and brother. He asked: "Can I take Rebekah home with me to marry Isaac?"

Rebekah's dad and brother TRUSTED IN GOD. "Yes!" they said. "God has chosen her!" Then they asked Rebekah: "Will you go?"

Rebekah TRUSTED IN GOD and she said: "Yes!"

So the servant and Rebekah set off across the DESERT with all the CAMELS. When they got home, the servant said to Isaac: "God has found you a wife from your own family and she has come back here with me!" Isaac TRUSTED IN GOD.

He fell in love with Rebekah and they got married immediately!

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Discuss your family's reaction to the story by using these questions:

- In this story, who are you most interested in and why?
- If you were Rebekah, what would you think about marrying Isaac?
- If you were Isaac, what would you think about marrying Rebekah?
- I wonder what helped the people in this story to trust God?
- What questions would you like to ask God about this story?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: sand or beige fabric for the desert; a pot of water; three to six human figures, eg Playmobil, Lego, Nativity or Godly Play sets

Invite children to reflect on the story and think 'What if?' Use the figures, sand and water to play out alternative scenarios. Wonder together, for example: "What if the servant had got lost in the desert?" "What if Rebekah had said no?" "Where is God in this story?"

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: choir sound effect'

Say to the group that lots of people in today's story trusted in God.

Play a long version of the sound effect and invite children to talk to God about trusting him. In a short time of quiet, take it in turns to pray silently or aloud: "Please God, help me to trust you when..." Say: "Amen" together at the end.

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