

LESSON 9

God Makes a Covenant with Abram

GENESIS 15



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD'S GRACE TO US IS REVEALED IN THE CALLING OF ABRAM

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 Genesis 15:1–6 from the Scriptures or read story 9, “God Makes a Covenant with Abram,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
- 3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN**
A Look into the Future
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN**
A Contract with God
SUPPLIES:
✓ a copy of your mortgage or lease agreement (sanitized of critical information)
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME 20 MIN**
From Every Nation
SUPPLIES:
✓ magazines and catalogs
✓ glue sticks
✓ scissors
✓ one large sheet of poster board
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN**
Compare the Texts
SUPPLIES:
✓ paper and pencils

TOTAL 90 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

God took initiative with Abram—After rescuing Lot, Abram was visited by a king named Melchizedek. The Bible calls Melchizedek both the king and the priest of Salem, which was an ancient name for Jerusalem. Melchizedek praised God and brought out bread and wine for a dinner.

In Melchizedek, we see a dramatic foreshadowing (a picture) of Jesus, who was also a king and priest in Jerusalem. One day, Jesus would himself bring out bread and wine and provide a supper we would all remember—the Last Supper.

After the visit with Melchizedek, God again spoke to Abram. So in this passage we see God continuing to take initiative with sinful man as he unfolds the plan of salvation. God was continually faithful to keep watch over Abram.

God made a covenant with Abram—God promised to give Abram a son and told him his descendants would be as numerous as the stars—more than he could count! He also promised that his descendants would possess the entire land of Canaan. Abram believed God, and God counted Abram's faith as righteousness (without guilt or sin).

To show how important this promise was, God made a covenant with Abram, just as he had earlier made a covenant with Noah. In those days, the tradition for making a covenant was to sacrifice animals and have both people in the covenant walk between the separated halves of the animals (see Jeremiah 34:18). In effect, the parties in the covenant were promising to keep the terms of the covenant or suffer the same fate as the animals. In God's covenant with Abram, God alone went between the animal parts. This showed that God was taking all the responsibility of fulfilling the promise of the covenant. God's promise to Abram was based on grace alone.

Abram's (Abraham's) faith was credited to him as righteousness—In his letter to the Romans, Paul helps us understand the faith that was counted to Abram as righteousness. (Paul uses the name Abraham because later God changes Abram's name.) Paul says, "No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised" (Romans 4:20–21).

Faith that is counted as righteousness is a gift of God, not a work of man. In Ephesians 2:8 we read, "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Counted to him as righteousness

This phrase is found both in application to Abram but also in application to all those who trust in Christ's work on the cross (Romans 4:22–24).

God can count our faith as righteousness because our faith is in the redemptive plan of God in Christ. A debt paid on your account by another person would be credited and counted to you. If someone pays your bill, your bill is paid. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sin. When Abram believed in God's redemptive plan, he was believing in the redemptive plan of Christ not in his own works. In God's mercy he accepts this faith and counts it good to Abram's debt as a sinner. When we believe in Jesus and his finished work on the cross, God counts it to us as righteousness in the very same way. Ultimately, it is Christ's righteousness that fills our accounts with good—not our good works but his.

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

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

Read John 15:15–17.

This passage in John's Gospel tells us that we were chosen by God, just as Abram was. God took initiative in calling Abram, and then in making a covenant with him. In the same way, God took initiative in calling us and making a covenant with us in Jesus.

God's covenant with Abram was about the future. It pointed forward to the new covenant of salvation in Jesus. Our covenant with Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram. We are part of the many nations God would bless through Jesus, the offspring of Abram.

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 Genesis 15:1–6 from the Scriptures or read story 9, “God Makes a Covenant with Abram,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

A Look into the Future

Read Genesis 15:12–14 and ask the class what the following phrases refer to:

- **“Your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs” (verse 13)**
(The Israelites live in Egypt after famine forces them to take refuge there.)
- **“And will be servants there” (13)**
(Egypt eventually enslaves the Israelites.)
- **“I will bring judgment on the nation” (14)**
(God sends multiple plagues on Egypt.)
- **“They shall come out with great possessions” (14)**
(The Egyptians give the Israelites their gold and other precious articles as they leave.)

Remind the children that God’s deliverance of Israel is a picture of God’s deliverance of us from our sin. God was very aware of how these events connected to Jesus and how he would lead his people out of bondage. We are all sojourners in this earthly kingdom awaiting our deliverance into God’s heavenly kingdom.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

A Contract with God

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a copy of your mortgage or lease agreement (sanitized of critical information)

Tell the story behind your contract, and read a portion of the responsibilities imposed on you in the contract. For instance, in a mortgage or lease agreement you are required to make payments on time. If you don't keep up your part of the contract, the bank or landlord doesn't need to keep up their part of the bargain. In the case of a home, the bank could take it back. In the case of an apartment they could evict you to the street. Usually there are requirements that must be met by the two parties to keep the contract or covenant.

In the case of God's covenant with Abram, all of the responsibility belongs to God. God promises Abram that he will give him the land of promise, a son to be an heir to that land, and that he will make his descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky. He even promises Abram peace and that he would live to be a good old age. In those days the covenant commitment was expressed by a sacrifice. Abram does bring the animals the Lord requests, but they are similar to the paper of your lease agreement.

Even though Abram does not see logically how God's promise can be fulfilled, he believes that the God who created the stars can do what he promises. We are now descendants of Abram. In many ways the promise to Abram was a promise to us. Each of us is represented by a star in the sky! (We are not assigned a particular star as though we each have our own, but in God's illustration, there is at least one star for each of us.)

At night when we look up at the stars and see God's amazing majesty, we can be sure that he knows each of us by name. His promise through Jesus, a descendant of Abram, applies to us as well as to Abram's more direct descendants.

WORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

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

ACTIVITY TIME 20 MIN

From Every Nation

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ magazines and catalogs
- ✓ glue sticks
- ✓ scissors
- ✓ one large sheet of poster board

Have the children use the magazines to cut out people of every tribe and race and glue them in a collage on a piece of poster board. Make sure the magazines and catalogs show diverse races and dress. (Preview the images for modesty.)

Read Revelation 7:9–12, explaining to the children that the people worshipping around the throne are the result of the fulfilled promise given by God to Abram. It was Jesus' death on the cross that made a way for all of them to enter heaven.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

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

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Compare the Texts

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils

Have the children read both Genesis 15 and Romans 4:13–25, comparing the two passages. Have them list what we learn from Romans that is not included in the Genesis account. The most important thing that is added in Romans appears in verses 23 and 24. Paul tells us that these words were not written just for Abraham but for us as well. We also can have faith in Christ credited to us as righteousness just as Abram did.

As a class, talk about what they discovered in comparing the two passages.