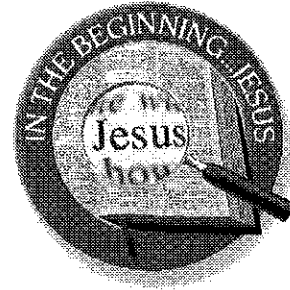


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 11

God's Providence and His Choice of Jacob

Themes:

- God promised to make Abraham into a great nation through which to bless the world.
- After the death of Abraham, God continued His covenant promise through Isaac.
- God directs people and events to bring about His purposes.
- God chose to continue His covenant through Jacob.

Scripture:

Portions of Genesis 23-25; Genesis 17:19; 22:15-18

Memory Verse:

Isaiah 53:8b (and review verses 3-8a)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - GOD'S PLAN (from previous lessons).
 - JESUS IS THE KEY visual (from previous lessons).
 - ISHMAEL and ISAAC.
 - GOD'S PROMISE (from Lesson 10).
 - CLUE CARD 1-6.
 - FINGERPRINTS—Make six copies of this sheet and then see this page in Resource Packet for further instructions.
 - Bible Clue Card #14.
 - FINGERPRINT CLUE 1-6.
 - JUST HAPPEN?
 - ISAAC'S YOUNGER SON, ESAU, and JACOB.
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue card).
- Optional: five additional magnifying glasses.
- Bowl (or plate) with one cookie in it.
- Cookies for whole class.
- Locked container (from Lesson 10).
- Six small paper bags—Take the six copies you have made of FINGERPRINTS (mentioned above) and cut out the pieces of each page,

placing the pieces from one page into one bag, the pieces from another page into the next bag, and so on until you have pieces from each page cut out and placed into separate bags.

- 6 tape dispensers with tape (or 6 glue sticks).

Pre-Class Preparation:

- This lesson has a small group activity included during the lesson presentation. Plan ahead and allow for some extra time to do this during the lesson.
- **Display GOD'S PLAN** in a place that will allow you to tape additional visuals to the right of it during the lesson.

Lesson

Display GOD'S PLAN and *quickly* review God's promise and plan in the life of Abraham. Explain that this plan was a covenant—a special agreement God made between Himself and Abraham. In this plan God made special promises to Abraham and then to his offspring.

Display ISAAC and **ISHMAEL** and ask: *Abraham had two offspring. Were both offspring going to inherit God's special promises? (Point to the AND I WILL portion of GOD'S PLAN.)* [No, just Isaac.]

Quickly read **Genesis 17:19**:

God said, . . . "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him."

(Tape **ISAAC** to the right of **AND I WILL**.)

Display GOD'S PROMISE and comment: *Isaac, not Ishmael, was the child of God's promise. Isaac was the miracle baby God gave to Abraham and Sarah when they were too old to have a baby. Isaac was the son through which God chose to continue His covenant promises.*

Remind the children that after Isaac was born and had grown into a young man, God had a strange command for Abraham. What was it? [God commanded Abraham to kill Isaac as an offering.] Did Abraham fully trust God and intend to obey this command? [Yes.] How did God act to save Isaac? [He stopped Abraham as he was about to kill Isaac and provided a ram to be killed instead.]

Point out that Abraham fully believed God could be depended upon to keep His promise concerning Isaac (**display GOD'S PROMISE** again). God is faithful—He

always does what He says He will do.

What happened next in the story?

Have the children turn to **Genesis 22:15-18** and follow along as you read:

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Point to **GOD'S PLAN** again and ask:

*Does anything in these verses sound familiar? (Point to the **AND I WILL** and the **SO THAT** portions of **GOD'S PLAN**.) According to these verses, how many offspring will Abraham eventually have? [Many!] What words does the Bible use to compare the number of Abraham's offspring to? [The number of stars and grains of sand.] Did Abraham see God fulfill this promise through Isaac?*

Illustration: Tell the children that after today's lesson you will pass around a bowl full of cookies. Show them the small bowl with one cookie. Is this what they would expect your promise to look like? Why not? [One cookie would not be considered a "bowl full."]

Abraham had seen how God had fulfilled His promise by giving him the one promised son, Isaac. But is one son a great nation? Is one son as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore? Did God tell Abraham how this would happen? Did Abraham SEE God do this?

Explain that there is another thing special about these words that you read from **Genesis 22:15-18**. They are the last words recorded of God actually speaking to Abraham. After this, it is as if God suddenly went "silent."

What happened next? Did God forget about Abraham? Did God forget about finishing His plan? What happened next?

Display Bible Clue Card #14. Choose a child to come up front and insert the clue card under the red paper in the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual. Are there words on the card? What appears on the card? [A fingerprint.]

Why would there be a fingerprint on the card instead of words? What kind of clue is a fingerprint? [Allow the children to give a few responses.]

Explain that a fingerprint is a type of evidence—something left behind that shows someone has been at a certain place. Display the locked container used in Lesson 10. Whose fingerprints would be found on the container? [The teacher, and the child and adult who participated in the contest.] Those fingerprints would be evidence that each of these people had touched the container.

Do you think that as we read through the next part in the story of the Bible, God would leave “evidence” that He had been busy acting and doing things even though it seemed He was silent?

Activity: Divide the children into six groups. Hand each group a **CLUE CARD**, a closed bag with fingerprint pieces inside, a roll of tape or a glue stick, and a magnifying glass (if you have six magnifying glasses for the class). [Note: this activity is best done with the children seated at their small group tables.] Tell the children that in the bags are six special fingerprints that will help them to complete their **CLUE CARD**. Not only must they find the special fingerprints (which will have writing on them), they must guess the correct order in which each event happened and then tape the fingerprint on the clue card in the proper order. Give the signal to begin. This activity should be done as quickly as possible (less than five minutes). Also, each **CLUE CARD** has a verse printed on the bottom. Choose one child from each group to be ready to read it when the class gathers together again.

After the children are gathered together again, display the large set of **FINGERPRINT CLUES**. Explain that you are going to have children read some verses. After each child reads his verse, make the brief comment that follows and then have the class choose the correct clue that corresponds with the verse. Have the children begin reading the verses in the following order:

Verse 1: ***Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field...in the land of Canaan. (Genesis 23:1, 19)***

Ask: *What’s unusual about WHERE Sarah was buried? [It’s in the land of Canaan, the land that God had promised to Abraham.] Now Abraham owns a part of the land God had shown to him. Did that just happen by accident? (Display JUST HAPPEN?)*

Display FINGERPRINT CLUE 1: Sarah dies and is buried in Canaan.

Verse 2: ***Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, “...go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” (Genesis 24:1-2a, 4b)***

Display FINGERPRINT CLUE 2: Abraham sends out his servant to find a wife for Isaac.

Ask: *What if the servant gets lost? What if he gets hurt? What if he gets there, but no woman is willing to leave her home and marry a man she has never seen? So many things could go wrong!*

Verse 3: **[The servant said,] Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His steadfast love and His faithfulness toward my master. As for me the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen. (Genesis 24:27)**

Explain that the term "kinsmen" means "relatives" or "family members."

Ask: *Did the servant just happen (display JUST HAPPEN?) finds Abraham's family? Who acted? God did. And God also led the servant to just the right woman—Rebekah—a relative of Abraham.*

Display FINGERPRINT CLUE 3: God leads Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac.

But what if she doesn't want to leave her home and marry a man she's never met? What if she says, "No"?

Verse 4: **And they called to Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." (Genesis 24:58)**

Did it just happen (display JUST HAPPEN?) that Rebekah was willing to leave her family and go with a stranger to marry a man that she had never met? Who must have acted in Rebekah's heart to make sure she would go?

Display FINGERPRINT CLUE 4: Isaac marries Rebekah.

Verse 5: **Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years. Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him... Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife. (Genesis 25:8, 9-10b)**

Display FINGERPRINT CLUE 5: Abraham dies and is buried in Canaan.

Where was Abraham buried? Alongside Sarah, in the land of Canaan—the land that God had promised would be his in the future! Did it just happen (display JUST HAPPEN?) that he was buried there? And what happens to God's plan now that Abraham is dead? Will God keep His promise and continue His plan through Isaac and his offspring?

Verse 6: **And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife**

conceived. (Genesis 25:21)

*How did God act toward Isaac? [He blessed him.] But what was wrong with Isaac's wife? What does it mean to be "barren"? [She could not have children.] Did Rebekah just happen (**display JUST HAPPEN?**) to become "unbarren"? Who acted?*

Display FINGERPRINT CLUE 6: Rebekah becomes pregnant.

Point to all the **FINGERPRINT CLUES** now placed in correct order. Did all of these events **JUST HAPPEN?** Even though the Bible doesn't record God directly speaking to Abraham or others during these years, does the Bible show us any evidence that God was still acting in order to complete His plan? Yes. But is God's plan finished yet?

Have the children turn to **Genesis 25:21-22**. Read verse 21 again and then choose a child to read verse 22:

And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

*According to verse 22, what two things do we learn about Rebekah's pregnancy? [There is more than one baby. The babies were struggling inside her.] Did it just happen (**display JUST HAPPEN?**) that the babies were struggling, or was there a reason for it?*

Choose a child to read verse 23:

And the LORD said, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

*Did God speak? Was there a reason the children were struggling? What was it? [Allow the children to respond.] Will the two nations that the children become be equal in strength? Which one will be stronger, the older or younger? [The older child will serve the younger child.] Did it just happen (**display JUST HAPPEN?**) that the older would serve the younger?*

Point out that God had decided that only one of Isaac's offspring would inherit God's special promise. God would continue to complete His plan through just one son—the younger son. **Display ISAAC'S YOUNGER SON** and tape it to the right of **ISAAC** on **GOD'S PLAN**. Through the one younger son, God would make a great nation through which to bless the world.

Read **Genesis 25:24-26**:

When her days to give birth were completed, behold there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob.

Display ESAU and JACOB. Ask the children which brother was older? [Esau.] According to what God told Rebekah, which brother will become the stronger nation? [Jacob.] Tape **JACOB** over **ISAAC'S YOUNGER SON**.

*We have seen from the Bible how God spoke to Abraham and made a special covenant with him. God had a plan to bless the whole world through Abraham. Even when God seemed to be silent, the story is filled with God's fingerprints—evidence that God was keeping His promise. After Abraham died, God continued to keep His plan through the life of Isaac. God didn't leave anything to chance. It didn't "just happen." (**Display JUST HAPPEN?** and tear it up.) And God decided to continue that plan through Jacob.*

Application

- Remind the children of the fingerprint clues in today's lesson. How did God leave His "fingerprints" in the events we learned about? Could those things have happened the way they did if it were left up to chance? Read and talk about one or more of the following verses: **Proverbs 16:9; 19:21; Psalm 33:11; Romans 8:28**. What hope can these verses give us? Do we always understand how God may choose to direct people and events? Can He always be trusted to do what is best for His people?
- Is God still active in the world today? Even though He may not speak directly to people today the way He did to Abraham, do you see evidence of God's fingerprints? Give the children some concrete examples as well as encouraging them to think of their own examples. Think in terms of personal ways in which God has moved and directed events in your own life that may have been surprising to you.
- How was Isaac's wife like Sarah? [She was barren also.] Did God's plan fail because of this? Why not? Why do you think that God chose to have the offspring of His promise born to women who couldn't have children? What does this show us about who God is and what God is like? How should we respond to God when we see His greatness displayed? How should we respond to God when we see how He directs people and events in order to make His plans happen? Read **Genesis 24:26-27**. Ask:

What is worship? [Worship is recognizing true things about God and then responding to Him with heart-felt adoration.] *Do you worship God? In what ways? What kinds of things about God make you want to respond to God with heart-felt joy, amazement, wonder, etc.?*

- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 11 in their workbooks. Why wasn't there a "clue" to open on the poster today? What was in place of the clue? [A fingerprint.] How does God show that He is constantly directing people and events in order to accomplish His plans? Read the verse written in the notebook (**Joshua 23:14b**). What does this verse tell us about God's promises? Did Abraham have proof of God keeping His promises? What was this proof? When Abraham died, had he SEEN God completely fulfill His promises? [See **Hebrews 11:39-40a**.] But did he die fully convinced that God would keep His promises? Are there promises that you have not SEEN God complete yet? What are they? Can God be trusted to keep these promises? What makes it hard for us to sometimes believe that God is faithful to keep all of His promises?
- Point out that in Bible times, it was customary for the oldest son to inherit his father's land, money, authority, and blessing. By tradition, it would be assumed that Esau should receive the inheritance from Isaac—including the promise that had been made to Abraham (review this promise from the workbook page from Lesson 8). According to **Genesis 25:23**, which brother would inherit the promise? Who decided this? Remind the children that Abraham also had a son before the birth of Isaac. Ishmael was the older son. But who did God choose to inherit the promise? Does God necessarily do things according to the way we think they should be done? Whose way is always right? Ask: *Are you sometimes surprised by the way God has responded to a prayer request? Did you want and expect Him to answer your prayer in a certain way? For example, maybe you have been praying to get a puppy. And maybe God has not acted to give you a puppy. Is God still faithful to His promises? Is He still good in everything He does even if you don't understand why He hasn't acted as you would have wanted? Can you think of a verse that will help you to love and trust God as He acts in your life (e.g., **Romans 8:28**)?*

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