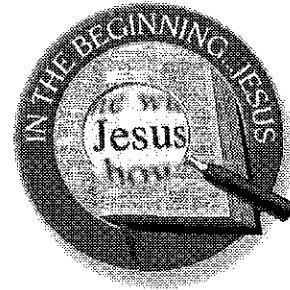


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 9

God Gives Abraham and Sarah a Child of Promise

Themes:

- God chose to make Abraham into a great nation through which He would bless the world.
- God promised Abraham a multitude of offspring.
- God's promises are received through faith in God.
- God is completely trustworthy—He gave Sarah a son in her old age.

Scripture:

Hebrews 11:8; Genesis 12:7; 13:16; 15:1-5; 17:1-5, 15, 19; 21:1-3

Memory Verse:

Isaiah 53:7b (and review verses 3-7a)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - GOD'S PLAN (from lesson 8).
 - COVENANT ARROW.
 - ROAD BLOCK 1-4 (from lesson 8).
 - PROMISE CARDS 1-5 and PROMISE LABELS 1-5—Place each numbered PROMISE CARD in an envelope and tape or glue the corresponding PROMISE LABEL to the outside of the envelope. Seal each envelope.
 - PROMISE—Place this sign on the outside of a lockable box or container, and lock the box or container with a padlock, and then hide the key where it can be found by a child in the class.
 - Bible Clue Cards #10 and #11—Place these cards inside the lockable box or container mentioned above.
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue cards).
- Several different keys (other than the one that opens the above mentioned padlock)—Place these keys on a table near where you will be placing the locked PROMISE box.
- 2 blindfolds.
- A sign stating where you have hidden the key to the padlock.

Visuals for Pre-Lesson Activity:

- MAZE Activity Sheet—1 or 2 copies for each small group (see Resource Packet).
- A blindfold and a pencil for each small group.
- ISAAC (see Resource Packet).

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Prepare an adult leader for the role they will play in the lesson illustration for finding the key to the PROMISE box.
- Pass out the five PROMISE envelopes to five children. Tell them they must not open the envelopes until you call on them to do so during the lesson.

Pre-Lesson Activity:

Give one or two copies of the MAZE Activity Sheet to each small group leader. Have the leader blindfold one of the children in his group. Give the child a pencil and place his hand at the entrance to the maze. Have the other children in the group use verbal instructions to guide the blindfolded child through the maze to the exit. If time permits, allow another child to do this, reorienting the sheet so that the maze is facing a different direction.

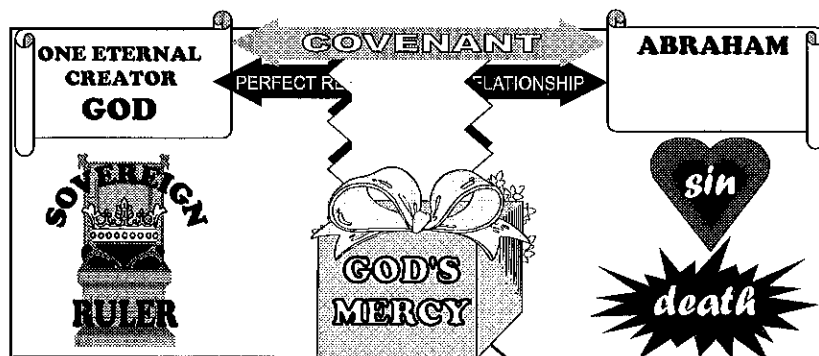
Lesson

Illustration: Display the **MAZE Activity Sheet** and the blindfold. Ask the children who wore blindfolds during the Pre-Lesson Activity if they were able to complete the maze by themselves. Why not? Who did they need to depend on to reach the end of the maze? [The other children.] Why? [Because the other children were able to see the right path.] Explain that this activity can help us to better understand what it means to have faith in someone—we are depending on them and their word because we are helpless to do a thing by ourselves. But something else is very important in understanding what faith is.

Illustration: Chose a child to come up to the front. Blindfold the child, and tape the maze to the wall. (**Note:** You might want to tape another, larger piece of paper to the wall first so that the child will not get marker on the wall.) Give the child a marker and place his hand at the starting point. Tell him you will give him instructions to complete the maze, but then begin to give him wrong instructions to purposely lead him in the wrong direction. (Do this quickly as the illustration should take no more than a minute. Instruct the class to be quiet during this time.) Take off the blindfold and have the children in the class explain to the child why he was not able to complete the maze successfully.

What else is important about faith? [The person you are trusting in must be trustworthy and dependable.]

Display **GOD'S PLAN** from the previous lesson. Quickly review the **GO FROM, TO, AND I WILL**, and **SO THAT** portions of the visual. Explain that this plan God had for Abram is called a "covenant" in the Bible. **Display** the **COVENANT ARROW** and tape it so that it joins **GOD** and **ABRAHAM** on the **GOD—MAN** visual. This covenant was a special plan and agreement God made between Himself and Abraham.



Note: The term "covenant" will be explained more fully in the Application section and in future lessons.

Did Abram really believe God could be trusted to keep the promises He had made in this plan? How did Abram first show he was trusting in God even when he couldn't see how God would keep His promise?

Quickly read **Hebrews 11:8**:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

To Abram, faith in God was something like being blindfolded. He had to depend on God for what he couldn't see. The proof that Abram really had faith in God was that he obeyed Him and went from his home to the land that God would show him. However, as time went on, some things happened that seemed like roadblocks to God keeping His promise.

Display the four **ROAD BLOCK** signs. Ask the children if they remember what the biggest roadblock seemed to be for God keeping His promise. [Abram and Sarai did not have a child, and now she was too old to ever have a child.] Remind the children of the illustration of the maze again. Remind them that there is another important thing that we must understand about faith: The person that you are trusting in must be trustworthy.

If Abram is to trust God—even with this huge roadblock—God must show that He is trustworthy and able to keep every promise He has made no matter how impossible it seems. Is God able to do whatever He has promised? Will He do whatever He has promised?

Quickly, one by one, turn over the **ROAD BLOCK** signs in order and read:

God says, "I will accomplish all My purpose...I will bring it to pass; I have purposed and I will do it."

(Isaiah 46:10b, 11b)

Are these just words? Did God prove to Abram that He is trustworthy by doing what He said He would do?

Have the children with the **PROMISE** envelopes hold them up. Tell the children who have **PROMISE #1** and **#2** that they may now open these envelopes and read each passage aloud to the class:

Promise #1: **Genesis 12:7**

Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."

Is there a promise of a child for Abram in this verse? Yes, offspring is another word for child or children.

Promise #2: **Genesis 13:16**

I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

Is there a promise of a child in this verse? What will be true of Abram's offspring? Will they be few or very, very numerous?

Display the locked **PROMISE** box. Remind the children that in **Genesis 12:1-2** God had promised to make Abram a great nation. Abram hadn't yet seen how God was going to do this, since he had no children, and Sarai was now too old to have any offspring. But God made it clear, through these promises, that Abram was going to have a child—it was a promise from God. But years and years went by, and still there was no child.

Do you think that it was hard for Abram to wait and depend on God? Is it hard for you to sometimes wait for good things? For example, if your mom bakes a cake and sets it on the table, does she sometimes say, "You have to wait until after dinner tonight; then you can have a piece of cake"? How much harder for Abram to have to wait for a promise he could only imagine—a child of his very own! But Abram waited and waited, year after year, and still no baby. But here is what happened next.

Quickly read **Genesis 15:1-3** to the children:

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, You have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."

Ask: Does it sound as if Abram is beginning to wonder if God is really trustworthy? What is Abram starting to think about? [That he will never have a child.] Is this faith at work? Why not? How did God respond? Did God prove to Abram that He is trustworthy by giving him a promised child?

Have the children with the remaining **PROMISE** envelopes hold them up. Tell the children holding **PROMISE #3** and **#4** that they now may open their envelopes and read the passages inside:

Promise # 3: **Genesis 15:4**

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."

Does Abram need to worry about his servant, Eliezer, being his heir instead of a child of his own? But where is this promised child?

Promise # 4: **Genesis 15:5**

And [God] brought [Abram] outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Did God finally give him the child that He had promised? No. God just repeated His promise again. "You will have a child, and your offspring will be too numerous to even count." Do you think Abram was beginning to wonder if he would ever get this promised child? Is God just making a promise that He can't keep?

Point out that in the very next verse, the Bible says that Abram believed God. He continued to depend on God for keeping His promise, believing God to be trustworthy. But as time went on, there was still no child, and Sarai and Abram got older and older. Maybe there was another way to receive God's promise? Maybe Abram and Sarai needed to do something to help God keep His promise?

Abram and Sarai finally reached the point where they decided to do things a different way. They thought that they had a solution to their problem. They had a plan to make sure that Abram would have a child. Sarai had a

servant named Hagar. She thought that if Abram took Hagar as his wife and she had a baby, then that baby would be as if it were Abram and Sarai's. Would this plan work? Is this plan showing faith in God? Could they receive God's promise this way?

Illustration: Place the **PROMISE** box on a table. Tell the children that somewhere in the room there is a key that will open the box so that we can finally see what is hidden inside. Choose one child and one adult (who has been previously prepared) to come up to the front. Blindfold each. Divide the class into two groups (e.g., girls and boys). Explain to the blindfolded child and adult that you are going to show the class where the right key has been hidden. When you give the signal to go, each team, through verbal instructions, will try to lead their team member to the key. [**Note:** For safety reasons, have an adult accompany the blindfolded child. Also, do this illustration as quickly as possible.] Show the children who aren't blindfolded where the key is and then give the signal to begin.

The adult should comment and do as follows:

This is dumb! I have a better way to get the box unlocked. [Have him take off the blindfold and look at all of the keys on the table.] Look! Here are the keys. I can unlock the box all by myself. [He should begin trying each key in the lock, becoming frustrated that none of them work.]

As soon as the blindfolded child has found the key, take off his blindfold and have him return to his seat with it. Which person was depending on someone else in order to lead him to the right key? [The child.] Which person thought he had a better way to unlock the box? [The adult.] Was the adult successful. Why not? [He tried to do things his own way, while ignoring the right way.] Explain that this illustration can help us to understand why Abram and Sarai's plan did not work. Hagar did have a son, Ishmael, but he was not the child that God had promised to Abram. They could not receive God's promise by trying to do things their own way. The promised child must be received by having faith in the trustworthiness of God.

Did Abram and Sarai's action ruin God's plan? Because Abram and Sarai had sinned, would God now be untrustworthy and not keep His promise?

Read **Genesis 17:1-5, 15:**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty, walk before Me, and be blameless, that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."

And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name."

Have the child who is holding the remaining PROMISE envelope open it and read the passage from the Bible that comes next:

PROMISE #5: Genesis 17:19a

God said, . . . "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac."

Explain that God wanted Abraham and Sarah to understand that God's plan would not be accomplished by any other way than God's way. The child God had promised to them was not the child born through their own ideas and actions, just as the adult could not open the locked **PROMISE** box through trying to do it his own way. The child God promised was a child impossible to be born by human plans—Sarah was too old! And the only way for Abraham and Sarah to receive that promise was through faith—depending on God to do the impossible! What happened in the end? Did God keep His promise? (Hold up the locked **PROMISE** box.)

Have the child who has been holding the key come up and unlock the box and remove the two Bible Clue Cards that are inside. Choose two children to insert **Bible Clue Card #10** and **Bible Clue Card #11** under the red paper of the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

*Scripture: Genesis 21:1-3
Clue under Window # 5*

*Scripture: Genesis 17:19b
Clue under Window # 19*

Read **Genesis 21:1-3** and **17:19b**:

The LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as He had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.

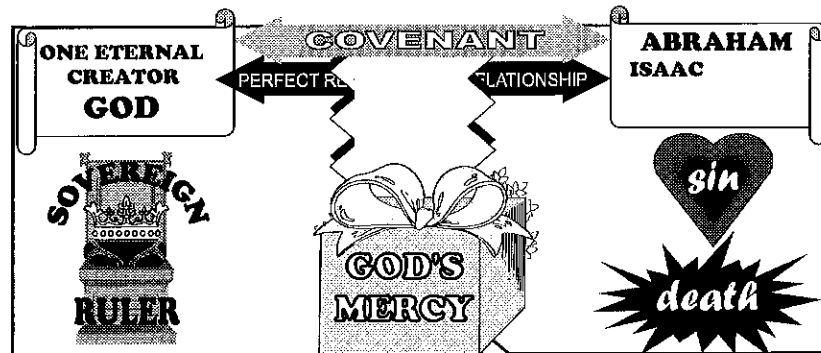
Open Window #5 on the poster to reveal: **CHILD OF PROMISE**. Point to **GOD'S PLAN**. Emphasize that God always does what He says He will do. God planned to give Abraham and Sarah a child of promise—a child impossible for them to have except through faith—depending on God to do the impossible.

And not only did God prove to be trustworthy by giving Abraham and Sarah this child of promise, God also made a special promise about Isaac's future.

[And God said...] I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. (Genesis 17:19)

Open Window #19 to reveal: **EVERLASTING COVENANT**.

Lightly tape the **ISAAC** sign within the outline of the **ABRAHAM** sign on the **GOD—MAN** visual. It should now look like this:



Note: Before the next lesson, remove the tape from the **COVENANT ARROW** and **ISAAC** sign and glue them in place.

Application

- ❑ Remind the children that there were several things they had to wait for in today's lesson. What were they? [E.g., the children had to wait to open the **PROMISE** envelopes. The child who found the key had to wait to open the lock.] Is it hard to wait for things? Why? Recall the example of your mom making a cake that you couldn't eat until after dinner. Ask the children if they have ever been tempted in a situation like that to take the treat before the promised time. Did they even make a plan to do it? Recall that Abraham and Sarah also got tired of waiting for God's promise. What plan did they come up with? Were they trusting God? Why not? Is God completely trustworthy? When you decide not to trust someone, especially God, what are you showing about who God is and what He is like? Are there things you have a hard time trusting God for? Do you forget who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do? Can you think of specific promises God has for His children? Have you experienced God fulfilling His promise to you, just like He fulfilled His promise to Abraham and Sarah?
- ❑ **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 9 in their workbooks. Have them write today's clues in the notebook: **CHILD OF PROMISE** and

EVERLASTING COVENANT. Ask them why Isaac is referred to as a child of promise. Was his birth humanly possible? Why not? Read **Genesis 18:10-14**. Was Isaac's birth possible with God? Why? How did Sarah respond to the news that she would have a baby? How did Isaac get his name? Read **Genesis 21:5-6**. Have the children fill in the birth announcement for Isaac on the workbook page.

- Ask the children if they remember what the word "covenant" means. A covenant is a very special agreement God makes with a person or a group of people. In it God tells what He promises to do and what He expects in response. Remind the children of the second Bible clue: **EVERLASTING COVENANT**. What does that mean? Review **Genesis 17:19**. Will God change His mind and some day choose to end His covenant with Abraham and Isaac? Why not? Explain that an everlasting covenant is an eternal covenant that will never end. You can depend on it forever! Ask: *Can you think of how this clue might have something to do with our poster and Jesus' death on the cross? When Jesus died on the cross, do you think that it in any way demonstrates some type of agreement that God made? With whom?* [At this point, don't try to explain this. Just have the children begin to think about it.]
- Read **Hebrews 11:8-12**. Of what are these verses trying to remind us? [The importance of faith.] Remind the children about the illustration in which the child and the adult were both looking for the key to open the locked box. Who was acting with faith? Why did the child have to find the key by faith? What couldn't he depend upon? [Himself.] Why? [Because he couldn't read where the key was hidden and couldn't see where he was going.] Point out that faith is like that. It feels as if you are being led by a voice you cannot hear (God's) and by hands you cannot hold (God's) to a place you cannot see. You must totally depend on God. Ask: *Is there anything special that you are depending on God to do for you? For example, are you a sinner just like Abraham and Sarah? Can you take care of your sin problem by trying to work at being a better person? Or by doing enough good things to cancel out the bad things? Would that be faith? Why not? Whom must you depend on to help you? What has He promised to do?*

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