Use Week of:

God's Covenant with Abraham

1

BIBLE PASSAGE: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9

MAIN POINT: God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.

UNIT KEY PASSAGE: Romans 4:3

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did God promise? God made a covenant to bless His people.

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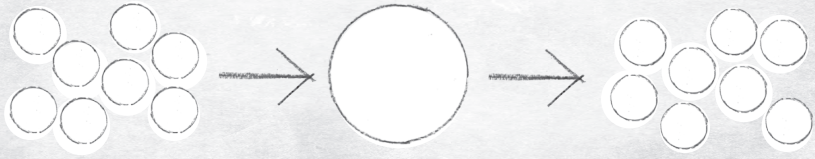

Leader BIBLE STUDY

God is a covenant-making God. After the great flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his family and all the living creatures. God promised to never again flood the entire earth. He put a rainbow in the sky to confirm His covenant. (See Gen. 9:8-17.) God's covenant with Noah was unconditional; it did not depend on Noah in any way.

Years passed, and Noah's family grew. His son Shem had a family. Shem's seventh-great grandson was named Abram. (See Gen. 11:10-26.) Abram traveled toward the land of Canaan with his wife, Sarai; his father, Terah; and his nephew, Lot. But they stopped in Haran and settled there.

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When Abram was 75 years old, God spoke to him. God called Abram to leave behind his family and his lands to go to a place God would show him. God made a covenant with Abram, promising to bless all the world through one of his descendants. (Gen 12:1-3) By faith, Abram obeyed.

God's covenant with Abram was unconditional. In Abram's time, when a covenant was made between two people, the animals would be split and both parties would walk through them as to say, "If I do not hold up my end of the covenant, may I be like these dead animals." (See Gen. 15.) This time, only the smoking fire pot and flaming torch passed through the animals, symbolizing that God alone would be responsible for upholding the covenant.

When Abram was 99 years old, he was still childless. How would God keep His promise to make Abram's offspring as numerous as the stars if Abram didn't have any children? But God was serious about the covenant; He always keeps His promises. God even changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "Father of a Multitude."

God promised to bless all the earth through Abraham. At just the right time, Jesus was born into Abraham's family. (Gal. 4:4-5) Jesus fulfilled God's promise to Abraham. (See Gal. 3:8.) Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Through Him, all the nations of the earth are blessed.



Additional resources for each session are available at *gospelproject.com.* For free training and session-by-session help, visit *www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.*

God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9

Abram lived with his wife, Sarai (SEHR igh). **God chose Abram and told him to move to a place he had never been. God promised Abram three things: a large family, land for his family, and blessing.** God visited Abram in a vision and said, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great."

This was a good promise, but Abram was sad. He didn't have any children to inherit his blessing. "One of my slaves will be my heir," Abram said. But **God** had a better plan. He **took Abram outside to remind him of His promise. "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you can," God said.** Abram couldn't count the stars. There were too many! **"Your family will be that numerous,"** God promised. **Abram believed God, and God was pleased.**

God also promised that Abram's family would keep the land they were living in. Abram asked, "How can I be sure?" So God confirmed His covenant with Abram.

God told Abram to bring five animals: a cow, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. Abram did as God said, and he divided the animals. Then, when the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over him.

While Abram slept, God told him what would happen in the future. He said that Abram's family would be slaves in another country for 400 years. Then God would judge the nation and bless Abram's family. Even though these things would happen, Abram would live a long, peaceful life.

When it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch representing God passed between the divided

animals. This showed that God would be responsible for keeping His promise.

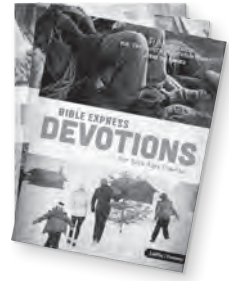
Many years passed and Abram still didn't have the promised son. God hadn't forgotten, though. He appeared to Abram again and reminded him, "I am God Almighty. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you greatly."

God was so serious about His promise that He changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "Father of a Great Multitude." God told Abraham that he would be the father of nations—even kings!

"I will keep My promise to you, God said, "and it will last forever. I will be your God, and I will be the God of your family—of everyone who comes after you."

God also promised to give Abraham and his offspring all of the land of Canaan where they were living. "You will own this land forever," He said.

Christ Connection: God called Abraham to leave his country and family to go to another land. God promised to bless all the world through Abraham. God sent Jesus from His home in heaven to be born on earth into Abraham's family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed.



WANT TO DISCOVER GOD'S WORD? GET *BIBLE EXPRESS!*

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God promised to make Abraham's name great and make him a blessing. Jesus came to earth as a man through Abraham's family. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out *www.lifeway.com/devotionals.*

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: God's Covenant with Abraham
BIBLE PASSAGE: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9
MAIN POINT: God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.
UNIT KEY PASSAGE: Genesis 15:6
BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did God promise? God made a covenant to bless His people.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Invite kids to share about the oldest person they know. Can kids imagine being that age?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Count the Stars" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Distribute activity pages and challenge kids to count the stars on the page. How many stars did kids find?

SAY • Today we are going to hear a story from the Bible about a man named Abram. God told Abram, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them. Your offspring will be that numerous."



- music
- chairs, 1 per kid

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Senior shuffle

Arrange chairs back-to-back in a circle in the center of the room. Remove a chair to allow one fewer chair than the number of players.

Instruct kids to move around the circle while the music plays. Tell them that they must walk as though they are 100 years old (slowly, shuffling). When the music stops, kids must find a seat. The player without a chair is out.

SAY • What things might be difficult for you if you were 100 years old? In today's Bible story, Abram and Sarai were old; Abram was 75 years old when God first told him he and his wife would have children. That sounds impossible! But nothing is impossible with God.

OPTION 2: Paper people chains

- paper
- scissors
- markers

Follow these steps to make paper people chains:

1. Cut pieces of paper in half lengthwise so every kid has one strip.
2. Demonstrate how to fold the paper accordion style to create at least four panels.
3. On one end panel, draw the outline of a person. Make sure the hands and feet touch the outer edges of the panel.
4. Cut out the person, leaving the folds intact at the hands and feet so the chain does not break.
5. Unfold the paper and decorate as desired.

As kids work, invite them to talk about their families. How many brothers and sisters do they have? How many cousins?

Explain that a person's *descendants* include everyone born into the family after them. For example, a grandparent's descendants include their children and grandchildren.

SAY • Today's Bible story is about a promise that God made to Abram. God promised Abram three things. One thing God promised was that Abram would have many descendants.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: God's Covenant with Abraham
BIBLE PASSAGE: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9
MAIN POINT: God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.
UNIT KEY PASSAGE: Romans 4:3
BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did God promise? God made a covenant to bless His people.

- room decorations
- theme background slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate a colorful or wacky wedding venue. Arrange a few chairs at the front of the room. Use ribbon or streamers to tie bows onto the backs. Hang streamers from the ceiling and position artificial shrubs or flowers to the side. Consider displaying a tall candelabra and projecting the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- envelopes
- clipboard
- wedding magazines

[Large Group Leader enters carrying a large stack of wedding magazines on a clipboard. Leader struggles to balance a stack of envelopes in one arm. As he or she reaches the front of the room, the envelopes fall to the floor.]

LEADER • Oh, dear! Oh, no. Can anybody help me pick up these envelopes? Thank you so much. [*Collect yourself.*] Well, I am certainly glad to see you. I could use a few extra hands around here. You see, I am trying to prepare for a wedding! It is a lot of work! There's the invitations, the decorations, the music, the guests, the reception, the cake … And this isn't even *my* wedding. I'm helping out two good friends

whom I've known since we were little. I am so excited to see them promise to spend the rest of their lives together! Oh, it's going to be beautiful!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • You are all too young to be married, but I bet you've made some promises. [*Invite kids to share promises they've made.*] Today's Bible story is about something God promised. Listen closely to see if you can figure out the answer to our big picture question: ***What did God promise?***

Giant timeline (2 minutes)

- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

LEADER • Before we begin, let's take a look at our giant timeline. Remember, the Bible contains many smaller stories, but all together it tells one big story—the story of how God created everything and how, when we turned away from Him, He brought us back to Himself by sending His Son, Jesus, to save us from sin.

After sin entered the world, sin spread and affected everything. God told Noah's family to spread out, but they built a city instead. So God confused their language and scattered them. Here is today's story, "God's Covenant with Abraham." Abraham was a descendant of Noah, and God made him a promise.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "God's Covenant with Abraham" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Open your Bible to Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "God's Covenant with Abraham."

LEADER • Have any of you ever moved to a new town? Did you have to leave your old friends behind? When God called Abraham, He told Abraham to move away from his family and friends. God didn't even tell Abraham where he was going! Abraham just had to trust God.

God made a promise to Abraham. ***What did God promise? God made a covenant to bless His people.*** A *covenant* is a special promise that one person makes with another. God promised Abraham three things: a large family, land for his family, and blessing.

God confirmed, or strengthened, His covenant with a special ceremony. A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch representing God passed between the divided animals. This showed that God would be responsible for keeping His promise. The promise did not depend on Abraham doing something to hold up his end of the agreement. God would keep His promise no matter what. And God was so serious about His promise, that He changed Abraham's name. He had been called Abram, but *Abraham* means "Father of a great multitude."

God promised to bless all the world through Abraham. He was going to send someone to be born into Abraham's family. Do you know who? Jesus! Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign

individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Key passage (4 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- "Abraham" song

Show the slide or poster of the key passage, Romans 4:3. Lead the boys and girls to read the verse.

LEADER • *Faith* is being sure of what we hope for. Abraham believed God; he trusted in God's promises. God accepted Abraham because of his faith.

Sing together the key passage song "Abraham."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

- "Unit 2, Session 1" discussion starter video

LEADER • After God made a covenant with Abraham, Abraham fell asleep. While he slept, God told Abraham what would happen in the future. He said Abraham's family would be slaves in another country for 400 years. But He also promised many blessings. Do you think it would be cool to know the future? Check this out.

Show the "Unit 2, Session 1" discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss some things they think might happen in the future. Encourage them to consider future inventions, ways of living, modes of transportation, and so forth.

LEADER • It is fun to imagine things that might happen in the future, but we do not know for certain whether or not they will happen. When God makes a promise about something, He makes sure it happens. God is in control of all things, and He always keeps His promises. ***What did God promise? God made a covenant to bless His people.***

Sing (4 minutes)

- "Always Faithful" song

LEADER • God's covenant with Abraham was *unconditional*, meaning Abraham did not have to do anything for God to keep the promise. That's great! People are not always faithful, but God is always faithful. Let's sing.

Sing together "Always Faithful."

Prayer (2 minutes)

- world map

Option: Pray specifically for missionaries your church supports.

Display a world map and tell kids that about 7 billion people live in the world today. Explain that more than 6,800 groups of people are unreached. That means less than 2 percent of its population is Evangelical Christians. Let's pray that God would send missionaries to the unreached people groups so they can hear the good news about Jesus.

Remind boys and girls that **God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.** Close in prayer before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Lord God, You are always faithful! Thank You for giving us the Bible so we can know about You and the wonderful things You have done. Help us to trust You and the promises in Your Word. Lord, we ask that You would bless people from all the countries in the world—from every corner of the earth—by helping them understand and accept the gospel. Make them open to receive Jesus, the greatest blessing of all. We love You, Lord. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

 **God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

 **We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

 **God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

 **Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.

 **We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: God's Covenant with Abraham
BIBLE PASSAGE: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9
MAIN POINT: God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.
UNIT KEY PASSAGE: Romans 4:3
BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did God promise? God made a covenant to bless His people.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- numbered cube

Tip: Choose team representatives to take steps if your classroom is small.

Form two or three teams of kids to play a review game. Guide teams to stand against one wall. Teams will take turns answering general Bible questions or specific questions about today's Bible story.

When a team answers correctly, that team's players will take one step forward. If they answer incorrectly, direct them to remain in place or take a step backward.

The team to advance the farthest across the room wins.

1. What did Abraham want that he did not have? (*a child, an heir; Gen. 15:2-3*)
2. What did God tell Abraham to look at? (*the sky, the stars; Gen. 15:5*)
3. How many chapters are in the Book of Genesis? (*50*)
4. Did Abraham doubt the Lord or believe Him? (*Abraham believed the Lord, Gen. 15:6*)
5. How did God confirm His covenant? (*a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch representing God passed between divided animals to show that God would be responsible for keeping His promise, Gen. 15:17*)
6. God said Abraham's family would be slaves in another country for how many years? (*400 years, Gen. 15:13*)

7. What does the name Abraham mean? (*"Father of a Multitude," Gen. 17:5*)
8. What was Abraham's name before God changed it? (*Abram, Gen. 17:5*)
9. Who wrote the Book of Genesis? (*Moses*)
10. What do we call the first five books of the Bible? (*the Pentateuch or books of the Law*)

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- chalkboard or dry erase board
- marker
- eraser

Write the key passage or a chalkboard or dry erase board. Form two groups: boys and girls. Lead the kids to say the key passage together. Then invite a boy to erase one word. Challenge the girls to say the key passage, supplying the missing word. Then a girl may erase one word. Challenge the boys to say the passage, supplying the missing words.

Continue taking turns to erase words, challenging the other group to say the passage. Invite boys and girls to say the passage together when they have erased all the words.

SAY • Our key passage says that when Abraham believed God, it was credited to him as righteousness. We know that someone is righteous if he never sins (like Jesus), so how could Abraham be righteous? A person is also righteous if God takes away his sin and trades it for Jesus' righteousness.

Abraham did not know that God was going to send His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sin, but he trusted that God would keep His promise to bless the whole world through him. Abraham did not know how God would do it, but because he had faith, God counted his faith as righteousness.

When we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, He takes away our sin and gives us His righteousness.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Unconditional "Simon Says"

Lead kids to play a game of "Simon Says" but instruct them to follow your commands whether or not you say "Simon says … " Kids should do what you say every time.

Suggested commands: stand up, sit down, clap your hands, stomp your feet, turn around, look up, and so on. Play several rounds and consider allowing volunteers to be the leader.

Remind kids that in a traditional game of "Simon Says," the rules are conditional—kids will only obey if the leader announces, "Simon says … " but in this game, the rules were unconditional. Kids' obedience did not depend on what the leader said first. They obeyed no matter what.

Emphasize that God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional. God did not ask Abraham to do anything for the promise to happen. God would keep His promise no matter what.

SAY • Who can tell me what a covenant is? A *covenant* is a special promise that one person makes with another. God promised Abraham three things: a large family, land for his family, and blessing. **God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.**

God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional—it did not depend on Abraham. God was going to keep His promise no matter what.

OPTION 2: Tissue paper torches

- orange, red, and yellow tissue paper
- heavyweight paper
- clear tape
- glue

Invite kids to make tissue paper torches. Demonstrate how to make a torch, and then help kids make their own.

1. Roll a piece of heavyweight paper into a cone shape. Use tape to secure the cone.

2. Layer pieces of tissue paper—red on bottom, orange in the middle, and yellow on top.
3. Pinch the sheets of tissue paper in the center, and gently stuff them into the cone.
4. Use glue to secure the tissue paper plumes.
5. Add more tissue paper "flames" until they fill the torch.

SAY • In Bible times, when two people made a covenant, they usually divided an animal and walked between the halves. But after God made His covenant with Abraham, only a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch—which represented God—passed between the divided animals. Abram did not pass between the animals.

This showed that God would be responsible for keeping His promise. God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional. Abram did not have to keep any promises; he only had to trust God.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

- Journal Page
- pencils
- "Constellation Search" activity page, 1 per kid

Give each kid a pencil and the journal page. Encourage kids to spend a couple of minutes listing blessings—things for which they are thankful. Remind kids that every good gift comes from God. (See James 1:17.)

SAY • **God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.** God sent Jesus from His home in heaven to be born on earth into Abraham's family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed.

If time remains, instruct kids to complete the constellation search on the activity page. Kids should color in the four-pointed stars to reveal a special word. (*bless*)

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Journal Page

God the Covenant-Maker

Key Passage: Romans 4:3

Big Picture Question: What did God promise?
God made a covenant to bless His people.

Session 1: God's Covenant with Abraham
Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9
God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.

Session 2: God Tested Abraham
Genesis 22:1-19
Abraham trusted God even when he didn't understand God's plan.

Session 3: The Promise Reaffirmed
Genesis 25:19-26; 26:1-6; 28:10-22
God reminded Abraham's family that He always keeps His promises.



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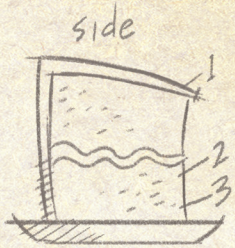
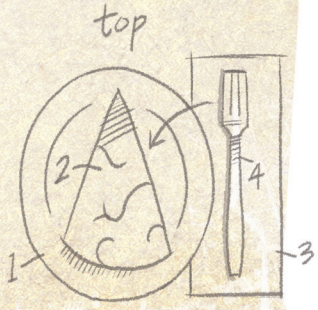
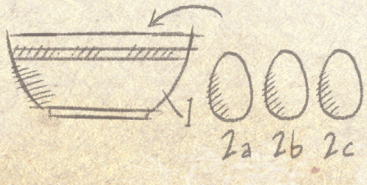
Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.

Romans 4:3









Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Romans 4:3



"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3

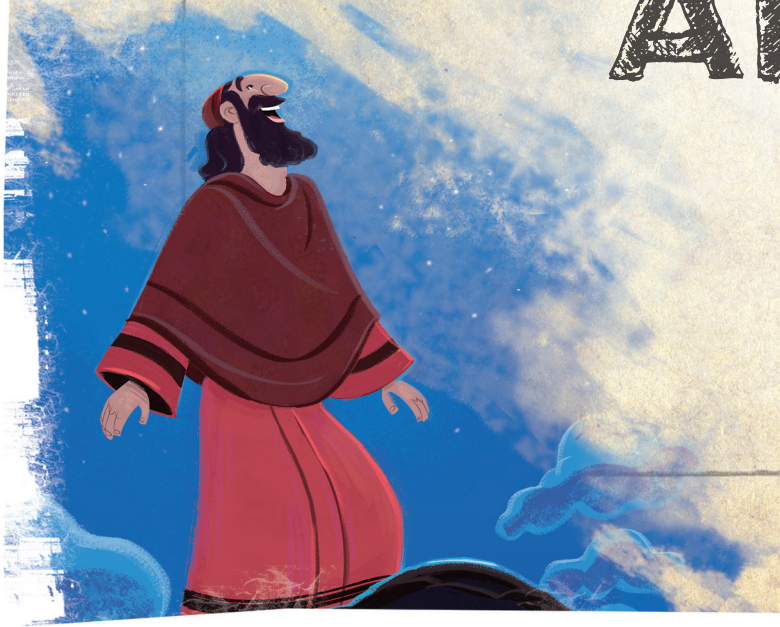


"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:3



God promised to bless all the world through Abraham.





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Journal Page

Make a list of blessings—things for which you are thankful. Every good gift comes from God. (See James 1:17.)



FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What promises have you made? Did you keep them? Why or why not?
- Abraham had faith in God's promise. What is faith? (See Hebrews 11:1.)
- How has Jesus blessed your family?

FOLD



God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-9

MAIN POINT: GOD PROMISED TO BLESS ALL THE WORLD THROUGH ABRAHAM.

God chose Abram and told him to move to a place he had never been. God promised Abram three things: a large family, land for his family, and blessing.

This was a good promise, but Abram was sad. He didn't have any children to inherit his blessing. God took Abram outside to remind him of His promise. "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you can," God said. "Your family will be that numerous." Abram believed God, and God was pleased.

God also promised that Abram's family would keep the land they were in. Abram asked, "How can I be sure?" So God confirmed His covenant with Abram.

God told Abram to bring five animals: a cow, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. Abram did as God said, and he divided the animals. Then, when the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over him.

While Abram slept, God told him what would happen in the future. When it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch representing God passed between the animals. This showed that God would be responsible for keeping His promise.

Many years passed and Abram still didn't have the promised son. God hadn't forgotten, though. He reminded Abram, "I am God Almighty. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you greatly."

God was so serious about His promise that He changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "Father of a Great Multitude."

"I will keep My promise to you, God said, "and it will last forever. I will be your God, and I will be the God of your family—of all your descendants."

Christ Connection: God called Abraham to leave his country and family to go to another land. God promised to bless all the world through Abraham. God sent Jesus from His home in heaven to be born on earth into Abraham's family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed.

COUNT the STARS

Can you count all the stars on this page? How many did you find? _____



CONSTELLATION SEARCH

Search for the 4-pointed stars. Color them in to reveal a special word.

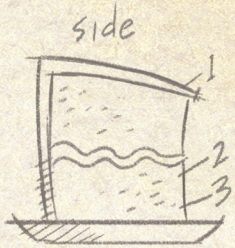
God made a covenant to

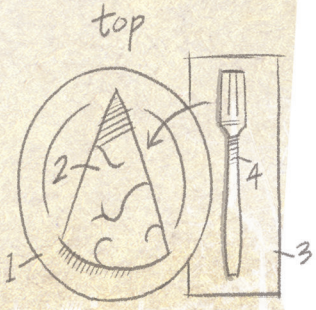
___ ___ ___ ___ ___

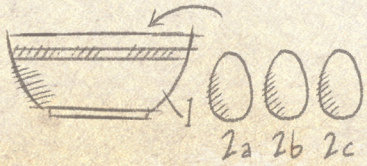
His people. God sent Jesus to be born on earth into Abraham's family. Through Jesus, all the nations of the earth are blessed.

What did God promise?









What did God promise?

God made a covenant to bless His people.



