Abraham and Sarah

Grades 3-4

COVENANT

GENESIS 15:1-12, 17-18; 17:1-7, 15-16; 18:1-15; 21:1-7

What's happening in this story?

Abram and Sarai have been through a pretty incredible journey already, and the saga continues with this story of revelation and covenant. Abram has been faithful to God through so much, and in this passage Abram must again step out in faith in God's promise to give Abram an heir. Despite Abram and Sarai's old age, God promises Abram an heir, and further promises that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars.

What does this story mean for kids?

Kids have trouble waiting for things, especially celebrations like birthdays and Christmas. Thinking of these experiences can get kids to sympathize with Abram. Abram trusted God, but that didn't make waiting easier. Kids can also explore the concept of covenant by thinking of things that seem impossible. Many of kids' impossible goals are within their vision but just out of reach. Thinking of these "impossible" tasks helps kids imagine how Abram felt about God's covenantal promise of an heir.

Why this theme?

A covenant is a holy agreement, in this case between God and Abraham. While God makes promises and gives us commandments, a covenant is an active relationship in which God's people are asked to participate in the work of building God's kingdom in the world.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Kids this age may need help to get their heads around the idea that God loves *everybody*. Invite them to consider their relationships with people *outside* our faith as opportunities to include others in God's love—not exclude them.

GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Clear tape
- White paper
- Pens
- White crayons or chalk

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Star stickers

WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL KIDS STUDY BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART • LEAFLETS

WELCOME 15

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

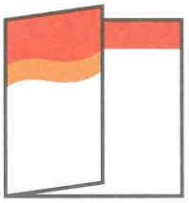
Provide paper and star stickers. Invite kids to create constellations with the star stickers.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

A *covenant* is a serious promise. We don't use the word covenant very often in our everyday lives, but we do make promises. Why are covenants, or promises, important? Allow time for kids to respond. **In our story today, God makes a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, but it a takes a long time for the covenant to be realized.**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for your never-ending promise to love us and include us as part of Abraham's family. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pens.



When have you heard someone make a promise that you had a hard time believing they would keep? Write that promise, but not the person who made it, in the speech bubble on the front flap. Preview the promises they write and choose a couple to read aloud. **What makes you believe someone when they make a promise?**

Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

I'm sure we've all felt like we were completely alone at some time. Today Gabe is going to experience that a little.

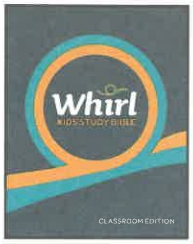
View Episode 3, "Swab Problems," on the Year Gold Fall Grades 3-6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **Why did Gabe want to be related to Abraham?**
- **When have you felt like you didn't fit in?**
- **How does God include us in the covenant we read about in Genesis?**
- **How does your faith connect you to God? To others?**
- **How does Gabe's real-life adoption relate to our connection to this covenant?**

HEAR 15

Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.



Today's passage is from the book of Genesis. It's in the Old Testament in the Pentateuch section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from Genesis, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 4.

When we first encounter Abraham and Sarah in this story, they have different names: Abram and Sarai. God has made a covenant with Abram and Sarai that they will have a child. As they get older and older, they wonder if God's promise will ever be fulfilled, but it does! God's promises are guaranteed.

Help kids find Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-7, 15-16; 21:1-7 and read it in this creative way together: Engage kids' imaginations! **I'll be the reader today. While I read, your job is to listen carefully while you look up into the sky—straight through our roof! Stare far, far away—all the way past the blue and into the darkness of space. Let your imagination adjust to the darkness and picture the uncountable number of stars.** Give kids a few moment to relax. Closing their eyes or turning down the lights may help them listen and imagine.

Invite kids to check out what Ruby says about Genesis 21:6-7.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **Why was Abram so concerned about having children?**
- **Reread chapter 15:5-6. What did God promise Abram?**
- **Why did God change Abram and Sarai's names?**
- **Why did Sarah laugh?**
- **What does it mean to be in covenant with God?**

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Covenant*. Then ask them to write "God" on a small slip of paper and "us" on another slip. Join the two pieces with tape and then attach them to the box by *Covenant*. **Promises connect us to God.**

BIBLE BIT

An *heir* is the person who receives either a position or property that belonged to someone else, usually at the time of their death.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, watch for where Gabe finds assurance of God's acceptance.

OUR CHURCH

Find out what promises are made when someone in your congregation is baptized. Who makes the promise? Who keeps the promise?

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out chalk or white crayons.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **We're included in God's family! Draw an arrow to a few of the stars and label them with the names of your immediate family.**
2. **By including everyone—even those outside of Abraham's direct descendants—God has made us all part of the same family! Label a few more stars with the names of friends who aren't in your immediate family.**
3. Note: The next step might be the hardest for kids to get their heads around; don't let it turn into a discussion about people they don't like! The goal is personal reflection about what it means for God's love to be truly offered to *everyone*.
4. **Finally, it's important to remember that God has really included *everybody* in this family—even people we don't get along with or who believe different things than we do. Don't label with names this time, but circle two stars that represent people you don't consider your friends. What does it mean that God accepts people who are hard for *us* to accept?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

How has your understanding of the "family of God" changed today? Take time to hear kids' responses. **The stars are a great image of how we're included in God's covenant—alongside so many people that we can't count them all! Every day is a fresh opportunity to share God's love.**

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

Stories like this one help us remember we are connected to God in covenant. On one puzzle piece, write something you love about your family at home. On another, write something you love about your church family. We are ALL part of Abraham's family!

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest)**. And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.

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