

united kingdom

ABRAHAM

the Kingdom story from creation to revelation

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Introduction

The man and woman had to leave the garden, and their relationship with God was broken. They had children, and their children had children and their children had children. Soon all the earth was filled people, but the people's relationship with God was also broken. But God had a plan to restore people to relationship with Himself.

Genesis 12:1-3

Many years later, God ... said to Abraham, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation – a great kingdom. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ... In fact, all the nations on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:4-7

So Abraham left as God had instructed. ... He was seventy-five years old when he left. ... He took his wife ... his nephew ... all his wealth ... and headed for the land. There he set up camp beside a huge tree. Then God appeared to Abraham and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abraham worshipped and thanked God there.

Transition (Genesis 12-14)

Life wasn't always easy in the land where God sent Abraham. Once he had to go to Egypt because of a famine, and once he even had to rescue his nephew who had been kidnapped! But God kept His promise, and Abraham grew in wealth and fame.

Genesis 15:1-2

Some time later, God spoke to Abraham in a dream and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abraham, because I will protect you, and give you a great reward."

But Abraham replied, "O God, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children ... a servant in my household will inherit all my wealth. ..."

Genesis 15:4-6

Then God said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, because you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." Then God took Abraham outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!"

Abraham continued believing God, and because of his belief, God said that Abraham had a right relationship with God and considered him His friend.

TELLING THE STORY

Why this story?

Adam and Eve had a broken relationship with God, and so did all of their descendants who filled the earth. God never forgot His creation though, and He chooses one man – Abraham – through whom He can bless the whole world. God gives Abraham several promises, and Abraham believes God even when the promises seem impossible. His ultimate reward? He is considered God's friend.

God has a plan to get His people back, and it rests on Abraham – from whom He will create a kingdom of people just for Himself. It is through this people that God will save the entire world. There is a kingdom plan – one to save the world – and an individual plan – one to grow Abraham into the fulfillment of God's plan for him. Thankfully, Abraham believes God and obeys Him, and it is his belief that gives him a right relationship with God.

Key concepts to include in your story

- Set the scene: The earth is filled with people, but all have a broken relationship with God. God has a plan.
- God chooses Abraham and comes to him with a command to leave his home and promises about his future
 - His descendants will become a great kingdom
 - He will be famous
 - All families of the earth will be blessed through him
- Abraham obeyed and went to the land God directed him to. Abraham worshipped God there
- Life wasn't always easy there
- God promised Abraham a reward
- Abraham said it wasn't any use
- God gives him a vision of the stars and says his descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky
- Because of Abraham's trust in what God says, God considers him His friend
- God kept His promise to Abraham

Notes about how the story was crafted

The introduction serves to transition the audience from Adam and Eve and the disastrous garden scene to the state of the now populated world. The brokenness and distortion that began in the garden continued and affected all people who came afterwards. The world definitely needed something—something to fix its brokenness.

We have used the name **Abraham** instead of **Abram** because our audience is more likely to have heard that name. If your audience were to hear more stories about Abraham later, you could include his name change.

We have used **God** in place of **Lord** in order to avoid overly religious terminology.

The omission of place names and other characters' names is meant to keep the story simple, free of distractions and easy to retell.

The "Kingdom" theme is explicitly introduced in this story. God chose to redeem His people through an entire nation, even at this early stage exemplifying what it means to be a community surrounding a central purpose.

The original word used for nation in Genesis 12:2 includes the idea of a political nation with its own designated territory. God does indeed make Abraham's descendants into a nation in a socio-political sense. However, in the New Testament the idea of God's people (God's nation) is redefined to include anyone who has turned from his sins and turned to Jesus to save him. We have chosen, for our initial story set, to use the term kingdom so that the New Testament concept of God's people can be more quickly and easily understood.

God's blessings to Abraham are not just for himself but also for many others. God says that through Abraham, all the **families** on the earth will be blessed. The term "**families**" refers to people groups, communities or ethnic nations so we have used the term **nations** in the example story to provide clarification.

The term bless carries the idea of God acting favorably towards someone, often in terms of giving them descendants and material possessions. In this case, Abraham's blessing carries both of these ideas. If your audience will not understand this term, you may describe it in your story.

We have included a few details that may interest the audience and add a sense of realism to the story: Abraham's age of 75, the fact that he took his nephew (who is mentioned later in the story) and that he stopped at a huge tree in the land to which God had led him. If the addition of these details will confuse your audience or make the story too difficult for them to retell, you may omit them.

We have changed **built an altar** to *worshipped and thanked God there* to keep the story simple and reduce the distraction of explaining what an altar would have been used for. In this case, Abraham used it to worship God so we have simply stated that directly.

We have included a brief summary of Genesis 12-14 in order to show that Abraham's life wasn't always easy even though he had obeyed God and was now in his "promised land!" It also sets up the reason that God would tell him to not be afraid at the beginning of Genesis 15.

The grammar of Genesis 15:6 suggests that Abraham's belief was not a one-time event brought about by God appearing at that particular moment, but an on-going attitude that began from the beginning of his relationship with God. We have said **Abraham continued believing God...** in the example story.

See below ("Questions people may ask") for more information about the term **righteousness**. We have chosen **right relationship** and **friend of God** in the example story because it seems, at this stage of our audience's understanding, to be the terms with which our audience would most likely connect. Although **friend of God** is not a comprehensive substitute for **righteousness**, it can open up opportunities for more discussion, and James 2:23 also mentions that Abraham was called a "friend of God." In addition, we'll see this concept again when Jesus tells His closest followers that they are His friends because He tells them His Father's business. This is a good point of connection and discussion about what it really means to know God.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Retelling the story

- As your group practices retelling this story, help them see the different scenes in this story.
 - Abraham's call and God's promises
 - Abraham's descendants would become a huge people group
 - Blessing and fame
 - Blessing to others, including that through him all peoples would be blessed
 - Abraham's journey to the promised land with his wife and possessions, stop at the tree, God's promise of the land and Abraham's worship
 - Abraham's challenging life in the land
 - God promises Abraham a reward
 - The vision of the stars and God's promise of many descendants
- It is easier to learn this story when your group can visualize it. One way to do this is to choose a member of your group for each character in this story (Abraham, Abraham's wife, God, even the tree!) and mark off four physical points in the room. As you tell this story, walk around to those points, with the appropriate characters. As members of your group retell the story, allow them to walk around to the points in the room as they tell the different parts of the story. You will be amazed at how this simple visualization can significantly help you remember the story!

Questions for discussion

You don't have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don't ask all the questions in a group, try to ask people what this story means for them personally. You'll find that as you continue to interact with God's Word at a deep level, God's Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

- What do you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?
- What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- How will you remember this story? *(Tell it!)*
- Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to? Or anyone you would like to practice with? E.g. Your children, your best friend, your wife, your husband, a mum at the school gate, your work colleague, your neighbour. (It's true that the best way to learn a story is to tell it. So why don't you give it a go and chat to each other next week about how you found it?)
- How does this story contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? How is this story part of the Gospel?

Questions people may have

This section can never be exhaustive. Remember that during your group discussion times, you want to focus on the above questions rather than get sidetracked by deeply academic issues. Part of the joy of experiencing and studying God's Word in this way is allowing God's Spirit to teach us and reveal His truth to us through the narrative of the individual stories, and ultimately through the narrative of the larger story line. However, we understand that sometimes people feel they need some deeper answers. Sometimes, the storyline has to speak for itself, and we have to trust it to do so. However, if your group needs some deeper answers in order to go on, here are some basics that you can discuss. If you have unresolved questions, please come and ask, and we'll help you find the answers.

- Why does God wait so long between Adam and Eve and Abraham to begin His Kingdom plan?
 - *We don't fully understand God's timing, but we see again and again in the Bible that God does not always act as quickly as we would expect or want. What we do know is that God has been very intentional in each step of His redemption plan. He chose just the right man – the one that He knew would believe in Him. However, even Abraham had to wait 25 years before the promise of a son was fulfilled! During those 25 years, God refined and molded Abraham's life in many ways.*
- And now that God has created this kingdom for Himself, why has He confined it to only Abraham's descendants? What about the rest of the nations? What happens to them?
 - *Again, we don't fully understand God's ways. What we do know about God's plan for His kingdom is this: Abraham's descendants became a picture of what the future, perfect kingdom would look like and what God's relationship with His people would look like. This kingdom of Abraham's descendants wasn't as exclusive as might be thought at first. Throughout biblical history, those who turned from false gods and believed in the true God and chose to follow Him were accepted into the kingdom, sometimes even becoming part of the genealogy of Jesus! (e.g. Rahab, Ruth....)*
- Why didn't God give Abraham an easy life? It seems unfair that God made him leave his homeland and go to a new land that God would give him just to suffer hardships.
 - *If you read Genesis 12-14, you'll see that some of his hardships were of his own doing. Others seemed out of his control. We see throughout the Bible that God's people are often in tough situations. Again, we see that God is intentional in using those situations to mold His people and teach them faithfulness and perseverance.*
- What does it mean that Abraham was a friend of God? And why didn't you say what the Bible says – that Abraham was considered righteous?
 - *The abstract term **righteousness** can be described in terms of right/good relationship or right standing with God. It refers to a person who is loyal to a covenant and acts according to a set standard. It is always accompanied by a specific act that renders someone "in right standing." In Abraham's case, however, it was achieved not by something he did, but through God's gracious gift. The way this story conveys the concept of righteousness and how Abraham received it is very important to our audience's understanding of personal salvation. Paul later confirms in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6 that Abraham was righteous because of his belief, and the New Testament makes it clear that our righteousness (our acceptance by God) is based solely on our faith in Jesus. Some people may understand the term better when it is used as an action. TEV translates Gen. 15:6 as "Abram put his trust in the LORD, and because of this the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him." Other ways to express the concept of **righteousness** in the story include "God considered Abraham to have a good relationship with Him," "God considered Abraham to be in right relationship with Him" or "God considered Abraham to be in right standing with Him."*

ABRAHAM – for children

(NCV with some passages from the NLT)

Introduction

The man and woman had to leave the garden, and their relationship with God was broken. They had children, and their children had children and their children had children. Soon all the earth was filled people, but the people's relationship with God was also broken. But God had a plan to repair (or fix) that relationship.

Genesis 12:1-3

Many years later, God ... said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation – a great kingdom – and I will bless you. I will make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ... In fact, all the people on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:4-7

So Abraham left ... as God had told him, and ... at this time Abraham was seventy-five years old. ... He took his wife ... his nephew ... and everything they owned ... and headed for the land. There he set up camp beside a huge tree. Then God appeared to Abraham and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abraham worshipped and thanked God there.

Transition (Genesis 12-14)

*Life wasn't always easy in the land where God sent Abraham. Once he had to go to Egypt because *there was no food in the land*, and once he even had to rescue his nephew who had been kidnapped! But God kept His promise, and Abraham *became rich and famous*.*

Genesis 15:1-2

After these things happened, God spoke ... to Abraham in a dream: "Abraham, don't be afraid. I will defend you, and I will give you a great reward."

But Abraham said, "... God, what can you give me? I have no son, so my servant ... will get everything I own after I die ... since you have given me no son."

Genesis 15:4-6

Then God spoke ... to Abraham: "Your servant will not be the one to receive what you have." Then God led Abraham outside and said, "Look at the sky. There are so many stars you cannot count them. Your descendants also will be too many count."

Abraham believed God. And God said that Abraham had a right relationship with God and considered him His friend because of his belief.

TELLING THE STORY – for children

Key concepts to include in your story

All Scriptures for children are taken from the New Century Version unless otherwise noted. The New Century Version has been chosen, because it is not an adult Bible packaged for children. It has been translated directly from the original texts into English with short sentences and simple, modern vocabulary that can be read and understood by children – specifically directed toward those aged between 6 and 12.

The story will need to be simplified at varying levels based on the age group of the children you are teaching. This means that many of the details in the story will need to be summarized. However, you should include the following concepts in your story.

- Set the scene: The earth is filled with people, but all have a broken relationship with God. God has a plan.
- God chooses Abraham and comes to him with a command to leave his home and promises about his future
 - His descendants will become a great kingdom
 - He will be famous
 - All families of the earth will be blessed through him
- Abraham obeyed and went to the land God directed him to. Abraham worshipped God there
- Life wasn't always easy there
- God promised Abraham a reward
- Abraham said it wasn't any use
- God gives him a vision of the stars and says his descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky
- Because of Abraham's trust in what God says, God considers him His friend
- God kept His promise to Abraham

Example of a simplified version of the story for children

The man and woman's relationship with God was broken, and they had to leave the garden. The man and woman had children, and their children had children, and their children had children. Soon the earth was filled with people, but the people's relationship with God was still broken. So God had a plan to fix that relationship. Many years later, God told a man named Abraham to leave his family and home and travel to a new land. God promised to bless Abraham and make his descendants into a great kingdom. God promised that Abraham would be famous and that everyone on earth would be blessed through him. Abraham obeyed God, left his home and travelled to the land where God sent him. Abraham worshipped God there. But life wasn't always easy for Abraham. One time he had to go to another country, because there wasn't any food in his land. Another time he had to rescue his nephew who had been kidnapped! But God kept his promise, and Abraham became rich and famous. One night God spoke to Abraham in a dream and told him that he would be given a great reward. But Abraham was not happy, because he didn't have any children. Then God told Abraham to look up at all the stars in the sky. God promised Abraham that just as he couldn't count all the stars in the sky, Abraham would have so many descendants that he couldn't count them all! Abraham believed God! God kept His promises, and because Abraham trusted Him, God called Abraham His friend!

Retelling the story

The following activities can be used to vary your storying sessions with the children and keep the action fresh and exciting. They also help the children learn the stories in different ways. You'll find as children journey through this story set with you, they become more and more capable of learning even complicated stories quickly and well. Varying activities and keeping it fun helps the children write the stories on their heart so that they can pull them out of their toolbox whenever a situation comes up where they can use them!

- **Charades** – Have participants choose one line from the story and use actions to convey that line to the rest of the group. The child that guesses correctly goes next.
- **Skit** – Assign parts to groups and have them act out the story as you or a participant narrates. This can be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, you may choose to have each team act out the whole story, or assign sections and have them perform the skits in chronological order one after the other.
- **Song** – This activity seems to work best in small groups of older and more advanced students. If you believe your group would enjoy this activity, have them write and perform a song based on a story or a portion of a story. To make this task easier, have each group choose a song melody as their foundation and change the lyrics as needed, as opposed to starting from scratch.
- **Sign Language** – This is a great way to incorporate kinaesthetic learning into storying. Work with the participants to develop "sign language" for keywords in the story. This will help them to remember the order and progression of the story. This activity may also be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, have a participant from each team narrate as the group demonstrates their motions. The more creative, the more likely they are to remember it! Sign language is a good activity if younger and more inexperienced storytellers are part of the group.
- **Perspective Shift** – This creative and critical thinking activity works best later in the story set. Assign groups of children different characters in the story. They then adjust the story they have learned to the perspective of that character. For example, they could tell the Fall story from Adam and Eve's perspectives or the Abraham story from Abraham's perspective.
- **Memory** – The storyteller starts this activity by saying the first line of the story. The story then moves around the circle as each participant tells a line. An alternate method is to go back and forth between partners as they tell the story to each other.
- **Popcorn** – The storyteller also starts this activity. As children remember, they raise their hand. When ready, the storyteller yells "pop" and the name of someone with their hand raised. That person will then jump in until more hands are raised and they shout "pop" to pass the story to another child. You will likely need to demonstrate how this works.
- **Interview** – Children are assigned different characters. A child designated as "interviewer" asks the characters questions about what happened in the story and the character answers according to his or her role. For example, the interviewer could ask Adam about what he witnessed or the actions he took in the garden when he ate the fruit, and Adam would give his answer.
- **Action words** – Before telling the story, the storyteller gives instructions associated with particular words. Children listen for those words in the story, and must do appropriate action when heard. For example, the storyteller would tell the participants to wiggle their arm like a snake anytime they hear the word "snake." There should be multiple words associated with actions in the story. This activity also works well with a younger audience.

Children's Teaching Materials

Sunday mornings will begin in the warehouse with a joint children's worship time led by a youth worship band followed by a storying session with the roving storyteller. Then groups will disperse to their usual meeting locations for the age-appropriate teaching of the story and activities that reinforce that story's message.

Sparks

10:30	Retell the story. Use a Storybook Bible, and point to Abraham, his family and animals that travelled with him, the stars and other items as they are mentioned.	Resources Needed: • Storybook Bible • Rice cakes
	Snack – rice cakes	
10:45	Craft: Star painting – Allow children to use their fingerprints to put stars on a page. Then use a marker to put faces on each star ... representing how many descendants Abraham would have – as many as the stars in the sky.	• Paper • Fingerprints or washable markers or ink pads • Markers or pens
11:05	Music Time: "Father Abraham" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"	• Music CD
11:15	Play: ~ Go on the move with Abraham as he travels to a new land. Children can pretend to be Abraham, part of his family or one of his animals as the class "journeys" around the room to the new land.	

Little Flames

10:30	Begin with prayer. (Don't repeat a specific prayer, but follow the general idea of the prayer below.) ~ Say "Hi" to God, tell Him we're glad He's there with us and ask Him to help us see Him, hear Him and know Him. Invite Him into everything we'll be doing today. Keep today's focus in mind: "I'm God's friend when I trust Him."	Resources Needed:
10:35	Retell the story together multiple times. Use a combination of flannel board and Little People methods where possible. Use a storyboard method – something that is interactive and allows the children to participate in telling the story.	• Blank black poster board (for storyboard) • Pictures or objects representing the story
10:40	"Knowledge Harvest" conversation: (use similar questions as below) ~ Why did the man and woman leave the garden? ~ What did the man and woman do next? ~ Who had a plan to fix the broken relationship? ~ What did God tell Abraham to do? ~ What did Abraham do? ~ How was life sometimes hard for Abraham?	

- ~ What promises did God keep?
- ~ Why was Abraham not happy?
- ~ What did God tell Abraham about the stars?
- ~ Why did God call Abraham His friend?

10:50	Active (content-bearing!) game or activity to reinforce the story and the message: "I'm God's friend when I trust Him."	
10:55	Biscuit break – Use this relatively calm opportunity for a little chat and prayer time. Discussion: ~ Reflect back to them: "I'm God's friend when I trust Him." Discuss ways the children can show God that they trust Him. Thank God for being a friend.	• Biscuits
11:00	Popcorn Prayer ~ Have simple prayers, popcorn style: "Thank you, Jesus, for _____!"	
11:05	Activity: Pretend Play or a table-based activity (that is non-colouring and not adult-dependant) ~ Allow the children to use Play-dough to make something from the story. ~ Leaders can play-act with the children. ~ Star painting: Allow children to use their fingerprints to put stars on a page. Then use a marker to put faces on each star ... representing how many descendants Abraham would have – as many as the stars in the sky.	• Play-dough • Paper • Fingerpaints or washable markers or ink pads • Markers or pens
11:15	Sing: Choose one or two songs from the CD ~ "Father Abraham"	• Music
11:20	Learn the words of the week: "I'm God's friend when I trust Him." Use visuals for the kids to help them learn the words. (These can be written words even though they can't read yet.)	• Visuals to help learn the phrase
11:25	Wonder Questions: Think about how God wants us to act and what type of relationship He wants to have with us ~ Ask open-ended questions showing interest in the children as individuals. This will show them that we care about what they think, feel, wonder or know.	
11:30	If there is any remaining time (or the previous activities finish early), allow the children to freely choose to do whatever they want to do. Play story-relevant music in the background. Leaders should engage with the children during this time: celebrate them, pray for them, love them. ~ Play with story-oriented toys ~ Role play ~ Play-dough creations ~ Colouring station ~ Star paintings	• Story-oriented toys • Play-dough • Abraham colouring sheets • Blank paper • Crayons • Fingerpaints or washable markers or ink pads • Markers or pens

Resources Needed:

10:35 Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story

10:45 Retell the story using sequencing

Discuss the questions:

~ What do you like about this story?

~ What bothered you about this story?

~ What does this story show you about God?

~ What does this story show you about people?

~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?

~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*

~ Who will you tell this story to?

- Whiteboard and markers
- Pictures

11:00 Music: "Father Abraham" with motions/movement

- Music: "Father Abraham"

11:05 Game: "God says" – play the game using "Simon says" rules and relate the game to obeying God ... like Abraham did

11:10 Craft:

~ Star painting: Allow children to use their fingerprints to put stars on a page. Then use a marker to put faces on each star ... representing how many descendants Abraham would have – as many as the stars in the sky.

- Blue or black paper
- Fingerpaints or washable markers or ink pads
- Markers or pens

11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

- Container for the offering

Resources Needed:

10:30 Retell the story – straightforward

10:35 Split into two teams and walk back through the story by asking questions. Each time a team gets a question right they win a star.

- Stars (Stickers? Large cutout paper stars?)

10:50 Split into groups and have the leaders retell the story
Have the children help retell the story

Discuss the questions:

~ What do you like about this story?

~ What bothered you about this story?

~ What does this story show you about God?

~ What does this story show you about people?

~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?

~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*

~ Who will you tell this story to?

Pray for who they want to share the story with

- | | | |
|-------|--|--|
| 11:05 | Craft: Have each child draw a picture of the story on a large star. Stick the stars onto lining paper. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lining paper• Large paper stars |
| 11:15 | Relay race: use objects that reflect the story or relate it to traveling to a new land (like Abraham) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (?) Objects that reflect the story |