

## WEEK 3: A PEOPLE OF GOD

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

---

#### Big Picture

*This is where we're going... the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.*

- Our identity as the Family of God
- God chose his people by grace (not by any merit of their own)
- God is looking for a family to trust him—not trust in their own ways
- The people he chose to work through were messy and sinful (His only choice given the condition of all humanity)

#### Set the Training Tone

*You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.*

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community)
- Have fun, keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (let's give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in his Story!

#### Review Last Week's Story

- 📖 **Last Week...** We learned that all humans sin—choose self over God in their hearts. And God looks at the heart, not just actions. God shows mercy and grace even while justly punishing human rebellion.
- We saw that self and sin lead to separation and death, while obedience leads to life and relationship with God. God also says life is in the blood and all life belongs to him.
- We also discussed what it means that God has created and commanded us to be fruitful.

## THE STORY & DIALOGUE

---

### Scene 1 ~ The Covenant

*Story from... Genesis chapters 11-18, 22, 26-50 & Exodus 1*

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how he had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick.

They said, *"Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are."* God saw how people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of him. At that time everyone on earth spoke the same language. So God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then he scattered them all over the earth.

A few generations later, God established a special relationship and a promise with a man named Abram. This special promise was called a *covenant*—representing the deepest of all agreements between two people.

God told Abram, *"I want you to leave your country and your family and go to the land that I will show to you. I'll make you the father of a great nation and famous throughout history. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. The entire earth will be blessed through your descendants."*

This was an amazing promise that God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family of people! There was just one problem... Abram's wife, Sarai, had not been able to have children, so how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? Not to mention that they were getting old. At that time Abram was about 75 and Sarai about 65!

So God led Abram and his family to a land called Canaan. There, God told Abram, *"Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants."* This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land".

Some time passed and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child.

Abram asked God, *"What good are all of your blessings if I don't even have a son? I am getting old and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants."* God replied to Abram, *"No, you will have a son who will inherit everything that I have promised you."*

Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, *"Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your family will be like this—too many to count!"* And Abram believed what God said, so God called him "righteous" because of his faith.

More years past and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to be a surrogate mother for her. Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai's relationship became strained. During Hagar's pregnancy, she began to despise Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly. Eventually, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abram's family.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again saying, *"I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations'. Remember this... I will always be your God, and you will always be my people."* Then God added, *"I am also changing your wife's name to Sarah, which means 'mother of many nations'. Very soon she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac."*

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God's promise.

Abraham wondered, *"How can I become a father at 100 years old?"*

*How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?" Sarah thought, "How could a worn out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is even older than I am!"*

Abraham asked God, *"Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?"* But God said, *"Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? About a year from now you will have a son. It is through Isaac that I will pass on my blessing—not through your servant's child."*

Sure enough a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means "laughter." The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.

## **Scene 1 Dialogue ~ The Covenant**

Remember **this is a dialog, not a quiz**. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

### **1. Why did God stop the people from building a monument to themselves?**

### **2. What was God's relationship with Abraham like? Abraham with God?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward some of these:*

- *Abraham trusted God—he believed God, when God made promises, he got up and left.*

### **3. Where in the story did we see Abraham struggle to believe the promise?**




*You may need to guide the discussion toward some of these:*

- *Abraham thought he would have to give up his inheritance to one of his servants.*
- *Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise and thought "How could this happen...?"*

### **4. In the story, God declared Abraham righteous because of his faith. What do you think it means to be "righteous"? Was Abraham without sin?**

*You may need to guide the discussion toward some of these:*

- *Only God always does what is good, right and perfect, so only he is qualified to determine what is right and wrong, good and evil.*
- *Abraham's righteousness means God declares him righteous (imputed by grace)*
- *Abraham's righteousness means he's in a right relationship with God (being right)*
- *Abraham's righteousness means he's rightly used by God (doing right)*


5.  **Who ultimately should decide/declare the right use of our lives, talents, time, energy...?**
- *God alone!*
6.  **Who usually decides those things in your life?**
7.  **What would it look like to start letting God decide the right use of your life? What would have to change?**
8. **What did God promise to Abraham in this covenant?**  
*You may need to guide the discussion toward some of these:*
- *To make him the father of a great nation, giving him many descendants.*
  - *To bless and protect him.*
  - *To bless all the nations of the earth through him.*
9. **What does this promise tell us about what God is like?**  
*You may need to guide the discussion toward some of these:*
- *God desires to bless all people.*
  - *God has chosen a family (nation) to be his blessing and to live in his ways. To show the world what he is like! A people blessed to be a blessing!*
10. **What does it mean for your life if you believe the fact that you were chosen by God and blessed to be a blessing?**
- *God will protect and bless his people.*
11. **Where in this story have we seen God begin to keep his promise to Abraham?**
12. **Where else in the Story so far have we seen God keep his promise? (what he said has actually happened?)**  
*You may need to guide the discussion toward some of these:*
- *Adam & Eve dying, Cain with sin crouching, Noah with the flood...*
13. **Do you believe that God ALWAYS keeps his promises?**
14. **When in your life have you MOST had to trust someone? How did that turn out?**

## EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

---




### Using Media

Use of songs or artwork for further discussion...

 Detail of *Abram and the Angel*, engraving by Lord Leighton Frederic, 1881, Tate Britain

15. **Have you been far away from city lights and seen a clear night sky full of stars? What was that like?**
16. **Put yourself in Abram's shoes. Would you believe God's promise of a huge family to number more than the stars as an old man with a post-menopausal wife? How hard must that have been?**
17. **What was the *purpose* for which God was going to bless Abraham?**

### Further Application

18.  **If what we learned in this story about God calling a special family as his own people is true, how does/should it affect your life?**
19.  **How would it affect us as a community?**
20.  **How would it affect others... our neighborhood, our city?**

### WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out handout is tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them...

**point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.**