



God chooses Abram

MEETING AIM

To discover that God chooses us, just like he chose Abram.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 11:26-12:9; 13:14-18

BACKGROUND

God's choosing Abram and his promises to him are the start of the people of God. Abram's descendants include us today, but it is difficult for young children to see the impact of this ancient story on their lives. We should try to help them see that the God who was kind to Abram and chose him to be his friend is the same God who is kind to and chooses us. You may not, however, even get that far, but it is enough just to introduce this story of faith to the children to lay the foundations that can be built on in future years..

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Ask the children if they have any stories about people who have been kind to them this week.

PLAY

10 MINS

Sing 'The farmer's in his / her den' together. Stand the children in a circle, holding hands. Choose one child to be the farmer, who stands in the centre. Sing as many verses as you can until you're all standing in the middle!

When you have finished, talk about what it feels like to be chosen. Also chat about what it's like to be in a family (whatever the make-up of your own family).

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: coats, bags, travelling cloaks, walking sticks – whatever you can gather together; shoeboxes

Show the children the clothes and backs you have gathered together. Say that you're all going to pretend to go on a journey, so everyone needs to get ready! Help everyone to dress up, and then tell this story:

Once, long ago, there was an old man called Abram. Abram loved God. One day, all of Abram's family decided to move house. They gathered all their belongings, as well as their sheep and their cows, and set off. Encourage the children to put on their coats and scarves, pick up bags and get ready to go. *If some children want to be cows or sheep, get them to practise their best 'baa' or 'moo'! Then all start walking around your house.*

It was a long, hard journey, but finally, they got to a place called Haran. They put all their bags down and Abram's father decided he would live here. *Everyone puts their bags down and takes off their coats. Sit everyone in a circle.*

One day, God visited Abram. *Invite someone to stand up and be Abram.* What do you think God said to his friend? *If your family have any ideas, let them share those now.* Well, God said this: "Abram, I'm going to make your family into a great group of people! You will be famous and everyone will admire you."

Abram was quite old – he was 75. But he gathered his household, his possessions, his sheep and his cows, and he set out into the desert. *Encourage the children to put on coats and scarves, pick up bags and get ready to go once more. Start walking to another part of your house.*

Finally, Abram came to a place called Canaan. *Stop everyone and ask your Abram to step forward.* God came to see his friend again. He said: "This land will be your home for ever."

Abram built an altar to God, so that he could remember what God said and worship God there. *Together, build an altar out of cardboard boxes.*

Later, God came to see his friend again. Ask your Abram to step forward. "Look all around you!" God said. "All this will be home for you and your family. Your family will be as big as the number of grains of sand on the Earth."

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, giving everyone a chance to respond if they would like to:

- What's your favourite part of the story?
- What didn't you like about the story?
- How did Abram feel when God chose him?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: shoeboxes; paper; crayons

Give everyone a shoebox and ask them to think about what they would take on a long journey. What do they need? Invite suggestions, such as food, clothes, money, cuddly toy – allow all the suggestions, some children will think that things which seem trivial to us are the most important. Ask them to draw these things and then put them in their box.

As you work, chat about the story and see if any of the children can imagine themselves in Abram's place. If not, comment that God chooses us, just as he chose Abram. What is the children's reaction to that? This might be a good time to share a story you have, which is similar to that of Abram's.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: boxes from 'Creative time'

Ask the children to pick up their box and walk around the room, as you say this prayer:

Thank you God that you chose us as you chose Abram.

Thank you that we can be your friend too. When things are hard, please help us! Amen.

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God's promise

MEETING AIM

To see what God promised Abram and to reflect on how God can be trusted.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 15:1-6

BACKGROUND

After God's promises in chapters 12 and 13, Abram receives another promise, this time specifically of a son. Abram and Sarai were too old to have children, but Abram believed God. Even though he took matters into his own hands later on (with Hagar and Ishmael), at this point, Abram completely trusts God, even though the promise seems unlikely. How readily do we trust God, even though situations seem impossible? How can we help young children discover the trustworthiness of God?

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Ask if anyone has made a promise this week? Did that promise come true?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: simple promises written on paper; hat or bag; anything needed to fulfil your promises

Before the session, write out some simple promises on slips of paper, such as: "I promise to give everyone a piece of apple", "I promise to say hello to everyone today". Include things that would be difficult to fulfil today, such as: "I promise to paint a picture of everybody". Put these in your hat or bag.

In turns, take a promise out of the hat. If possible, the child should fulfil it straight away. If they can't, can they promise to keep that promise later in the week? Say that we mean to keep promises, even if they are difficult, but we sometimes aren't able to. However, today's story is about God, who does keep his promises.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: equipment to make a tent big enough to sit in (such as blankets, chairs, clothes airers and cushions); torches Show the children the tent-making equipment you have gathered. Have fun making a tent, and then all sit inside it. (Before you do, make sure the tent is safe and won't fall on the children when they are inside.) Take the torches in and switch them on so that everyone can see. Once everyone is settled, tell this story:

Do you remember Abram? He was a man who lived a long time ago. God told him to move from his home to a new place. And even though he was old, he did what God said. He travelled to a new place. When Abram got there, God promised that he would have a big family and a new home.

Unfortunately, there was a problem. Abram didn't have any children. He was old, his wife Sarai was old too. It didn't seem like they were going to have a child. But Abram loved God and he knew that God loved him.

One night, Abram and his wife were asleep. Encourage everyone to pretend to be asleep. Abram had a dream. God spoke to him in that dream. God said: "Don't be afraid! I will protect you and give you lots of good things!"

Abram spoke to God. He said: "You have given me lots of good things. Everything apart from children."

But God said: "You are going to have a son of your own. Everything that you own will be his!"

God took Abram outside. Ask all the children to get up and go outside the tent. God said: "Look up into the night sky. Can you count the number of stars?" To the children. Can you imagine lots and lots of stars? Shall we count them together? Count together until the children run out of numbers. That's a lot of stars, isn't it? I wonder why God asked Abram if he could count the stars? Let's find out!

God told Abram that his family would be bigger than the number of stars in the sky! Can you imagine that? Having a family with that many members? How big is our family? Get some suggestions from the children. Well Abram's family was going to be bigger.

And do you know what? Even though it didn't seem possible, Abram believed his friend God.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, giving everyone a chance to respond if they would like to:

- What's your favourite part of the story?
- What didn't you like about the story?
- How do you think Abram felt when God told him he was going to have a son?
- Do you think God keeps his promises?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: large sheet of paper; candles; dark blue paint; paintbrushes; cover-up and clean-up equipment

On the large sheet of paper, show the children how to draw stars with the end of a candle. Tell that that they won't be able to see what they have drawn, but later they will. Once you have filled your paper with stars, ask everyone to paint their whole paper dark blue. The wax stars will repel the paint and become visible!

As you work, chat about the story and what the children remember about it. Do they think that God will keep his promise to Abram?

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: star picture from 'Creative time'

Talk with Jesus in different ways – eg children stand either side of the room and, in turn, loudly call out their thanks to Jesus; curl up in a little ball and whisper to him, so no one else but Jesus can hear; kneel in a circle, passing an object round so each child, when holding it, can make a request to Jesus in an ordinary voice – see what children suggest.

Conclude by singing a prayerful song.

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A son for Abraham

MEETING AIM

To discover that God keeps his promises.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-8

BACKGROUND

Since the last time we saw him, God has given Abram and Sarai new names, and renewed his promise of a son. Yet, Abraham seems to have lost some faith in God's promise – he has taken matters into his own hands and had a son by Sarah's slave. In today's passage, God turns up and puts a timescale on his promise. Our children may not have much concept of time, but they can discover that God keeps his promises!

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Chat about the different brothers and sisters in your extended family.

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: recipe and ingredients to make soda bread; baking equipment; access to an oven; cover-up and clean-up facilities

Show your family your ingredients and together, make the soda bread (if you don't have a recipe to hand, try this one). Ensure everyone washes their hands before you start. As you work, chat about food your children like and what makes a good party. Leave the bread to bake as you explore the Bible story.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: cushions, mats and / or rugs; pitta bread; natural yogurt; milk; cups, plates and spoons

Arrange the cushions, mats and / or rugs in a circle and sit the children down. Ask the children what happens when people come to your house for a visit or a meal. How do you make people welcome?

Explain that Abram has a new name. God changed his name to Abraham. God reminded Abraham that he and his wife,

Sarah, were going to have a son. Abraham has pitched his tent near a place called Mamre. That is where he lives now. Ask the children if they can imagine sitting on mats outside Abraham's tent. It's hot and the sun is shining. Go on to tell this story:

One day, Abraham was sitting by the entrance to his tent, just like we are doing. He looked up and saw three men standing nearby. Who do you think it was? Ask your children for their thoughts. It was God and two angels! He ran to meet them and bowed low down on the floor. Encourage the children to run across the room and bow low, then come back to the circle.

"Come and eat with me," said Abraham. He led his visitors to the circle and rushed off with his wife Sarah to organise a meal of bread, meat, yogurt and milk. Share the bread, yogurt and milk with everyone, sitting on your rugs or cushions.

While they were eating, God said: "I will come back this time next year. When I do, you will already have a son."

Sarah, Abraham's wife, was standing by the entrance to the tent. When she heard God, she laughed, because she was very old – too old to have a child.

God asked Abraham: "Why did Sarah laugh? I am God – nothing is too difficult for me! It will all happen as I promised."

And that's what happened. Exactly when God said they would, Abraham and Sarah had a child, a baby boy. And they called him Isaac. In Abraham and Sarah's language, 'Isaac' sounds like 'laugh'. Abraham said: "God has made me laugh. Now everyone will laugh with me."

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, giving everyone a chance to respond if they would like to:

- What's your favourite part of the story?
- What would you say to God if you had lunch with him?
- What makes you laugh?
- How did Abraham and Sarah feel when they had a baby?

CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

You will need: bread from 'Play'; bread knife and board; butter; jam; paper plates; plastic knives; household play equipment
Once your bread from 'Play' has baked and cooled, cut slices and share out with your family. Help the children to spread the bread with butter and jam, if they wish.

Show everyone the household equipment you have brought and let them play at mealtimes and homes, using the bread and butter as the food. Encourage them to play with the story too, role-playing the meal Abraham had with God, and Abraham and Sarah cradling their baby boy. As you play, chat about the story and what the children remember.

If you didn't bake any bread, go straight to the free-play part of the activity.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: smiley faces cut from paper; crayons or felt-tip pens

Share out the smiley faces and explain to your family that they should try to think of something they want to give thanks to God for. What makes them laugh? What are they happy about? You might need to give one or two examples, if the children are struggling to come up with their own ideas.

Encourage them to draw those things on the back of their smiley face. Once everyone has finished, ask them to hold the smiley faces in front of their face. Say this prayer, inviting the children to shout out what they want to say thanks to God for at the right time:

Thank you, God, that you kept your promise to Abraham.

Thank you, God, that you keep your promises to us.

Thank you, God, for... Leave a gap for children to shout out.

Amen.

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A wife for Isaac

MEETING AIM

To discover that God is guiding our lives.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 24

BACKGROUND

This story is nice one to tell with children, as they can easily understand the narrative. However, behind this story, we can see God guiding the action – what the servants does, Rebekah's response and her faith in agreeing to travel for days and days to a new land, to marry Isaac (whom she has never met). Read the story again yourself, as if for the first time, and wonder at the work of God through the lives of the people in the narrative.

STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). Chat about any weddings that the children have been to. What were those weddings like?

PLAY

10 MINS

You will need: 'travelling' dressing-up clothes (such as coats, scarves and boots); small suitcases and rucksacks

Show the children the travelling dressing-up clothes you have gathered and ask them to imagine they are going on a journey. Let the children play with clothes and then walk around your space, pretending that they are going on a long trip.

Play together and share any journeys that you have been on. What were they like? Where did you go? Did you know where you were going, or was it a surprise?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: play figures (such as Playmobil); map; two soft-toy camels; sand in a bag; water and jug; gold bracelets and rings

Sit your family in a circle and have all your props close at hand, so that you can produce them at the right time in the story.

Abraham was married to Sarah and they had a son called Isaac. *Place three play figures in the centre of the circle.* Sarah and Abraham were very old and one day, Sarah died. *Carefully remove one of the figures and sensitively place it out of sight.* Abraham and Isaac were very sad. *Pause.* Isaac was growing up and Abraham realised it was almost time for Isaac to get married.

So, Abraham sent for his servant. *Put a new play figure next to Abraham and Isaac.* "Go to the land where I was born and find a wife for Isaac there," said Abraham. "But that's a long way away!" said the servant. *Get out the map and pass it round the circle, and comment how maps help us to find our way to places that are far away.* "I know," replied Abraham. "But this is a what we should do."

The servant got his things ready and packed everything on the back of some camels. *Move Abraham and Isaac out of the circle, place one camel next to the servant and pass the other round the circle for everyone to look at.* He travelled for a long time across the desert. *Pass the bag of sand around the circle, inviting your family to put their hand in to feel the sand.* *Move the camel and the servant around the circle as if they are walking.* Finally, he found the place where Abraham's brother lived and stopped by a well – a place where people came to get water.

The servant prayed to God: "Let me find a wife for Isaac today. If a woman comes to the well, I'll ask her for a drink. If she gets me one, and gives water to my camels too, then I know she's the one." *Pass round the glass of water and jug, helping the children not to spill it.*

And do you know what? That's exactly what happened! A woman called Rebekah came to the well and helped the servant. *Place another play figure next to the servant.* The servant gave her the gold jewellery he had brought as gifts. *Pass round the gold jewellery.*

When the servant had told Rebekah and her family why he had come, and what he had asked God, Rebekah agreed to go with him. They travelled back across the desert to where Abraham and Isaac were waiting. *Move the servant and Rebekah around and return Abraham and Isaac to the circle. Make them all 'meet up' together in the centre.* Rebekah and Isaac were married and they loved each other very much.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, giving everyone a chance to respond if they would like to:

- What's your favourite part of the story?
- What are long journeys like?
- How did Abraham and Isaac feel when Rebekah came? How did Rebekah feel?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: different coloured poster paint mixed with sand; paintbrushes; paper; clean-up and cover-up equipment

Give the children a sheet of paper each and show them how to paint with the different colours of sandy paint. Remind them that the servant had to travel a long way across the desert to find Isaac someone to be with. Let the children paint as whatever they wish and, as you work, chat further about the story and the issues the children would like to chat about.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: play figures (such as Playmobil)

Give each child a play figure and ask them to hold it. This will act as a spiritual focus for the children as they pray. Ask them to think about today's story. What would they like to say to God about that story? Encourage them to think about this quietly. Then ask them to think about what they would like to ask God for. Invite them to talk about that with God now, either out loud or in their heads. Finally, finish with a prayer thanking God that he is in control and guiding us.

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