


Lesson 1: Hope in God's Promise

GENESIS
PROFILE



Genre: *Theo-History: God-centered (theological) reflection on the family stories of God's people*

Author: *Traditionally attributed to Moses*

Where Is It: *Old Testament, the first book of the Bible: **Genesis**, Exodus, Leviticus*

Key Characters: *God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph*

Main Plot: *The theo-history of the people of Israel from the creation of the world, to the calling of Abraham (the first Israelite), through the lives of his children, to their slavery in Egypt. Abraham is the ancestor of our faith.*

 **THE WORD**
Genesis 12:1-9

 **ENGAGE THE WORD**
Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

Our world is fallen. You don't have to look far to see relationships suffering. Divorce, human trafficking, ecological destruction, community disintegration, and many other realities often lead youth to mistrust others in relationships. When many of their core relationships are dysfunctional, how do we ask our students to trust God and step out in faith?

The short answer? Slowly. We see in the story of Abraham that God didn't ask him to do everything at once. In fact, often God didn't reveal the next step in Abraham's journey until he had completed the first. What does Abraham's story tell us about learning to trust? Trust is built in baby steps, over time. As youth create a history with God, they will see that God is trustworthy. As they spend time in God's story, they will see that God also wants good things for us.



Wesleyan Snapshot
Holiness is Relational.

The heritage of Wesleyan theology is the growth of a person by grace as they experience God more and more in their lives.

John Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.

Biblical Commentary

GENESIS 12:1

The story of Abraham (here Abram, because God had not yet changed his name) is a story of hope for creation. The chapters previous to the introduction of Abraham tell the story of God's original creation of all that was good and the subsequent brokenness through human sin. With the calling of Abram, we see God again moving to reconcile creation and humankind, this time through revealing God's very

SundayTeacher.com

Don't forget to check out the resources for this lesson at SundayTeacher.com, which includes social media posts for your teens and emails to parents. The password is



THE MAIN IDEA

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD DOESN'T HAPPEN ALL AT ONCE, BUT WE BELIEVE GOD WILL PROVE TRUSTWORTHY.

nature to Abraham. This God is not like other false gods. YHWH will go with Abram.

GENESIS 12:2-3

The hope of God's promise for us comes through the promise to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (verse 3). The intention is that through God's relationship with Abram, all people will come to know God. God is inviting Abram to model the pathway back to relationship and wholeness with God. The purpose behind the covenant with Abraham is to use this unique relationship with the Israelites to reveal himself to the world. The prophets will arise from these people. They will be the ones to record the history of their relationship with God. Ultimately Jesus will be born from this line and reconcile us all back into relationship with God once and for all.

GENESIS 12:4-7

Abram steps out in faith. He puts his trust in this God who has made a promise to him, and he leaves the only home he's ever known. It is significant, however, that Abram doesn't go alone. He goes with his family—Sarai and Lot. None of us can follow God by ourselves. We need our church community to come along with us and help guide us. God also goes with Abram. God doesn't just hang him out to dry. The Lord appears again to Abram as he enters Canaan to reassure him that this is indeed his new homeland (v. 7). God will go with all of us as well.

GENESIS 12:8-9

Abram's journey continues. God isn't done with him—or us. Abram still has more to see, to learn, and to grow.

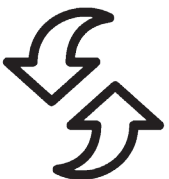
RESOURCES

- Bibles
- Pens and markers
- Copies of handout found in the back of this book
- "Leap of Faith" clip from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (<http://youtu.be/xFntFdEGgws>)
- Blindfold for each pair of students

REFLECT ON THE TOPIC:

In what ways do you see Abram learning to trust God throughout his life?

How are you learning to trust God and inspiring your students to do the same?




REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

What are ways that you see your students struggling with trust?

How can your students start to see who God is through their relationship with you?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

<p>LESSON OUTLINE</p> 	<p>Main Idea: <i>Relationship with God doesn't happen all at once, but we believe God will prove trustworthy.</i></p> <p>Connect to My Experience:</p> <p><i>Welcome and Obstacle Course</i> <i>Prayer</i> <i>Dialog about hope</i></p> <p>Connect to the Word: <i>Lectio Divina</i></p> <p>Connect to My Life and the World: <i>Indiana Jones</i></p> <p>Closing: <i>Affirmation and Prayer</i></p>
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CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

Student Goal: Youth will begin to understand the concept of trusting in something they can't see.

*Before the lesson you will need to set up an obstacle course for your students to maneuver through. Keep in mind that they will be blindfolded and carrying someone else as they go. Make sure you meet in a place where the students can't see the obstacle course ahead of time.

WELCOME YOUR GROUP AND OPEN WITH PRAYER.

ASK: How did faith play a role in the game we just played?

If you had to define faith for a group of people, what would you tell them?

SAY: Today we are going to continue on in God's story by taking a look at the hope we have in God. At the end of our last series, we saw how God is still about the work of bringing creation back to Him. This story continues with a guy named Abram (who is later named Abraham by God).

Ask a student to read Hebrews 11:1.

ASK: What things can you think of that exist, but can't be seen?

If you can't see them, how do you know they exist?

SAY: Today we are going to take a look at a man who learned how to trust God, because God kept the promises he made.

Light the candle you brought to class and explain the meaning of a "Christ Candle."

Pray: Begin class with a prayer. You may consider using this prayer from St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
 where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;

OBSTACLE COURSE

You will need one blindfold for each pair of students. Explain to students that the first group to successfully navigate the course wins. Here are the rules: One student will wear the blindfold while the other rides "piggyback" through the course giving directions. Give a prize to the first team to successfully finish the course. (If time allows, have the students run the course round-trip, switching places before they head back.)

where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

DIALOG:

Start a conversation with something like this:

What is hope? Why is having hope so hard?

Have you ever had a time when God was trustworthy to you?

What is it about trust that makes it so difficult?

Read Numbers 23:9. The text asks a rhetorical question. The answer is a big “No!” God does fulfill promises. God does act. God does not waver. If your students are skeptical, don’t force the point. Instead, ask them questions about why they don’t trust God.

Say: Every single one of us will be let down by someone in our lives at some point. Humans are just not perfect. But sometimes we will begin to wonder: “What is God doing?” and struggle to believe that creation is being restored. Today, we are a journey where we will look at different characters in the Bible who wrestled with just that. We will see that in their lives, God did prove to be trustworthy or faithful.

Ask: What does “hope” mean to you? Who can tell me something about the book of Genesis? Where is it found in the Bible? Who are the key characters? What is the main plot of the story? What’s a story from Genesis that you’ve heard before?

Take a Bible and turn to the book of Genesis, show them where it lands in the Bible—at the beginning! If students bring their own Bible, have them open their Bibles with you.

CONNECT TO THE WORD



Student Goal: Youth will learn that our hope is tied to God’s promises.

Ask two or three students to read Genesis 12:1-9. Break the passage into a few verses for each.

Help my unbelief

Since the time of the Israelites, the people of God have been aware of the difference between how they feel and what they know God is calling them to. Between what they doubt and what they long to believe about God. God doesn’t desire a fake perfection; God desires honesty.

Numbers 23:19

“God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

Sitting, Standing, or Both

When we go through lessons with our students, our physical posture communicates a lot. If we are the only ones who ever stand, while they sit, we can unintentionally communicate that they are not welcomed to speak. In informal gatherings, try to sit with them.

CREATIVE OPTION:

After you have read the passage, share some of the historical context about Abram with your students, such as why his name is not Abraham yet. Helping them place this event in God’s story is important. As you share, have students add this story to a larger timeline that places all the events we have covered in Genesis.

Pass out the student handout (found in the back of this book) and give the following instructions: Circle each promise and instruction God gave to Abram. Draw a line under each response of Abram to God’s instruction. Ask students to imagine they were Abram—how would they have responded to God’s words and actions?

Say: Earlier we talked about what faith means, but where does it come from? How can we trust in something we aren’t sure of? As Abraham got to know God, he learned that he could trust him. Through his trust in God, he received hope in God’s promise. That hope led to faith and that faith led to action.

Give lots of time for discussion and questions.



CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE WORLD

Student Goal: Youth will understand that faith comes as we get to know God.

Some Observations

1. Abram wasn’t perfect. In fact, he asked his wife, Sarai, to lie and got her taken by another man (twice) in order to save his own skin.
2. It took his whole life to learn to trust the Lord with everything. Be patient with your students (and yourself!). God is at work, even when you don’t see it.

PRAYER WALL

Invite your students to hang their prayers on the wall in your meeting space. They can remain folded up and private, or they can face outward. Each meeting, ask them how God is bringing hope into those prayers and situations.

INDIANA JONES

Show the clip from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade where Indiana Jones has to take a leap of faith by crossing the bridge without being able to see the path. You can find this clip on YouTube.

ASK: Have you ever had to take a leap of faith where you didn’t know what was going to happen next? When? Why?

If your step of faith was with someone you know, how did knowing that person help you have faith in him or her?

SAY: The more we get to know who God is, the more we will learn that we can trust in God and the hope he offers. Let’s take a few minutes to look at a few of the things the Bible tells us about who God is:

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|---------------|---------------------|
| Exodus 15:26 | (Lord who heals) |
| 1 John 4:8 | (God is love) |
| Genesis 22:14 | (Lord who provides) |

Matthew 23:9	(Father)
1 Timothy 1:17	(Eternal, immortal, invisible, only God)
John 17:3	(The only true God)
Revelation 15:4	(Holy)
Acts 17:24	(Creator of all things)
John 3:16	(Savior)
James 1:17	(Unchanging Father who gives good gifts)
Hebrews 15:16	(God chose us)

ASK: If the characteristics we just read about are true of God, how do they give you hope? Does it make you want to know God more?

SAY: Faith is an action word. Abram trusted in God's promise. He hoped and took action in his faith. I want us to take a few quiet minutes and ask God what action steps we should take in our relationship with him. God might be calling you to spend more time reading the Bible and getting to know him and grow in your trust of who he is. The Lord might be calling you to spend some time in prayer with him, talking with him and listening. God also might be calling you to share your faith with someone else.

Give students a few minutes to quietly spend some time with God, asking God to reveal ways they can make their faith one of action. When they are done, invite your students to share about their experience.



CLOSING AFFIRMATION AND PRAYER

Reaffirm the following truths to your students in your own words:

1. We don't have to have everything about God all figured out all the time. We are on a journey, just like Abram.
2. Abram learned that God was faithful by stepping out in faith and seeing what God did. He got to know God on his journey.
3. God is still all about restoring his creation through his promise to Abraham and ultimately to us too. Taking the time to know and trust who God is strengthens our faith in him.

Pray for your students, asking God to reveal himself to them and show them his faithfulness in the next week.



Facilitator Note:

The personal timeline exercise could be highly personal for your youth. It might help students if you share your own timeline of an event in your life before they begin.

Share appropriately and honestly. It is also important to not pressure students who are not ready to complete the exercise. Let them know they can talk to you one on one. If you think a student needs serious help, be prepared with someone in mind they could talk to about their situation.