

LESSON 7



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 18 2023

long, strange trip

Scripture Story: Genesis 12–15; Genesis 17:1-16; Genesis 18.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 11 and 12.

Key Text: Genesis 12:2

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

His name and life is a metaphor for faith. He is the father of many nations, and a man whose life sits at the center of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the world's three foremost religions.

Abraham is revered for many reasons. He accepts God's call to go into a land he knew not, and one that God would show him along the way. On his journey he runs into difficulties that expose his imperfections. He lies more than once about the fact that his sister is also his wife, for instance. But in each challenge, God delivers him, and his faith is buoyed.

He encounters the great challenge of family members who sometimes make bad decisions, as Lot did when he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Abraham begs God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, but alas, God does not. However, Abraham's concern and prayers for his nephew's family help to save some of their lives.

As if this challenge were not enough, God tells Abraham to kill his son—the son of promise, the one through whom would come the many nations, and descendants as numberless as the sand of the sea. Abraham's response in this situation almost strains credulity. With pained heart, he packs his belongings, packs up his son, and heads for the mountains.

Abraham's life is a study in faith and obedience, even when the facts don't seem to add up. God calls us not to look at the facts; He calls us to look at Him. However, if we persevere in trusting Him and doing His will, we will find ourselves as Abraham did—blessed

beyond our wildest dreams. God kept His word to Abraham, for through his lineage came Jesus. Who can argue with that?

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Examine the life of Abraham to understand how God calls us and the challenges that sometimes result from His call. (*Know*)
- Become aware of the calling God has for their lives. (*Feel*)
- Be given an opportunity to accept God's call in their lives. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 19

"The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow human beings. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness" (Exod.

20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Few people will ever be asked by God to leave their home, family, and loved ones for an ill-defined place in the wild blue yonder. Yet this is what God called Abraham to do.

Many people have answered what they perceive to be an inner call to pursue a dream or destiny. At age 15, the following famous people made very pivotal moves that led them to the notoriety they enjoy today. While they are not all advisable examples, share them with your students.

Then ask the students what drove these people to do what they did. After sampling answers, ask the students how the move made by these famous people is similar to or different from Abraham's big move.

At age 15:

- Albert Einstein, with poor grades in geography, history, and languages, dropped out of school.
- Swedish tennis star Bjorn Borg dropped out of school to concentrate on tennis. (Note: For every Bjorn Borg who drops out of school, there are thousands who drop out to chase their dreams, only to see their dreams dashed, not to mention their education.)
- American reformer Susan B. Anthony began teaching school.
- Isaac Asimov entered Columbia University.
- Henry Ford, disliking life on the farm, moved to Detroit and trained as a machinist.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

With the call of Abraham, God was fulfilling a promise made in Eden to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). After sin had decimated the planet, leading to its destruction by flood, God picked Abram, whose name would later be changed to Abraham, as the person through whom the Deliverer would come.

God made of Abraham a great nation, whose ethnic purity remains to this day. Jesus, our Savior and Lord, is a direct descendant of Abraham. God kept His promise to Adam and Eve, both of whom died in peace knowing that their fall would not be the death knell of earth.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Who are the main actors in this story?
- What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)
- What aspects of the story are new to you?
- God chose a man whose character seems less than sterling. What does this say to you about God?
- What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham's story? Explain.
- What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a *rectangle* around them.)
- What lesson does Lot's life teach us?
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
- What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (*Circle* them.)

In the biblical passages below, you will notice major movements by God in the life of Abraham. Notice the frequency of God's voice.

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

'I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

"So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they

set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”

“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’”

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’”

“God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’”

“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.”

(Genesis 12:1-5; Genesis 15:1, 2; Genesis 17:1, 2, 15, 16; Genesis 18:1, 2, NIV)

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share in your own words.

It is worth noting that God had great reasons for



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Show-and-Tell

One of the tips left by Jesus during His teaching days on earth was this one: Show your audience what you’re trying to tell them. Sounds weird, right? However, it worked.

Can’t you see Jesus speaking to the thousands assembled on the hillside? When He tells the people to first remove the speck in their own eye before they go hunting for beams in others’ eyes, can’t you see Him with a splinter in one hand and a 2 x 4 in the other? That would make the point, wouldn’t it? Who is to say Jesus didn’t do something like that?

Try a little show-and-tell with your group. Identify someone in your church who made a dramatic decision to follow God. Why not invite this living, breathing Abraham to tell their story to your class?

RABBI 101

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raising a peculiar (belonging exclusively to Him) people who would serve as an example of godliness for the rest of the world. Here are some other facts that give context to Abraham’s life and service.

1. When God called Abraham, he was living in Ur of the Chaldees, a very modern Babylonian

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

city when compared to other cities of the day. Founded 600 to 900 years or so before the birth of Abraham, Ur of the Chaldees was a city with a legal code, a system of schools, and libraries. Abraham was not leaving the “boonies” for a life on the road. He was leaving a big established city, which no doubt made the parting more painful.

2. Babylon is synonymous with disobedience, confusion, debauchery, and other dastardly things. The city was also a place where idol worship flourished. Terah, Abraham’s father, is described in Joshua 24:2 as an idol worshipper. The residents of Ur worshiped gods representing the fire, sun, moon, and stars. But none were more revered than the one appropriately named Sin, who was the chief deity worshiped.
3. Abraham heard the voice of God. Notice, Abraham does not seem to mistake God’s voice for that of one of the other gods worshipped in Ur. He knows who God is. It says something about Abraham that even in the midst of an evil city, growing up in a home where his father worshipped idols, Abraham still knew God. When God called him, he did not question God’s reasoning. He didn’t lament the journey, though I’m sure he thought about it. He obeyed.
4. Ellen White shares the following about the power of Abraham’s faith:

“Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’ ([Hebrews 11] verse 1). Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned

home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. ‘By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise’ (Hebrews 11:9, RV)” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask students to think of the longest journey they have ever taken. Some examples might be a long drive, plane flight, or train ride, perhaps, to see family members or on vacation. Ask them what difficulties they encountered during the trip. Ask them if they prayed to God for help during their trials.

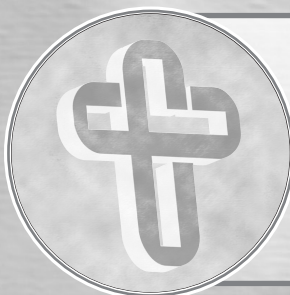
Close by inviting each student to pray silently for one minute asking God’s guidance in their daily journey of living for Him.

Summary

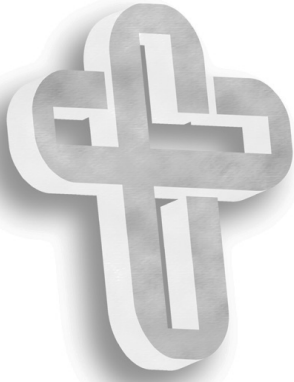
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Abraham was God’s choice as He sought to raise up a people who would obey Him and bless the world. While God chose Abraham, He never said that Abraham was perfect. In fact, he was very human.

However, Abraham’s weaknesses could be changed by God because he believed in God—he exercised great faith, and he was obedient. These two qualities set him apart from most biblical patriarchs and matriarchs. Abraham believed that God would not forsake him, and this God counted to him as righteousness. We, too, have the same opportunity to trust God and to see our lives transformed and blessed. However, we must be obedient, and we must exercise faith.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 11 and 12. A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Genesis 12–15; Genesis 17:1-16; Genesis 18.
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long, strange trip



Photo by Audrey Gaforth

flashlight

“It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. . . . God [had] spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126).

keytext

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”

(Genesis 12:2, NIV)

what do you think?

Throughout the Bible God calls on seemingly ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Fill in the blanks below.

_____ was called to deliver God's people from the Philistines.

_____ was very young and very afraid when called by God.

_____ spent 40 years getting ready for his task.

_____ has a name that sounds like that of his mentor, who was taken to heaven.

_____ volunteered to pay the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

did you know?

The city of Ur—Abraham's home until God told him to leave—was a developed city, complete with libraries, schools, and a system of law. It was also a place where astrology was the main religion. Even Abraham's father, Terah, worshipped strange gods and idols (see Joshua 24:2). No wonder God told Abraham to leave.

INTO THE STORY

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

"So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there."

"Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This

was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom."

"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.' But Abram said, 'Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?'"

"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.'"

"God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'

"Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?'"

"The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground."

(Genesis 12:1-5; Genesis 13:10-12; Genesis 15:1, 2, 5; Genesis 17:1, 2, 15-17; Genesis 18:1, 2, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Put a *rectangle* around them.)

Why do you think God told Abraham to leave his home, his family, and his country?

What do you think God meant when He told Abram he must be “blameless”? How can we be blameless before God? (See Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 1:8-2:2; Revelation 14:5)

What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham’s story? Explain.

What two lessons can Sarah’s life teach us?

1.

2.

punch lines

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NIV).

“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—eternal life” (1 John 2:24, 25, NIV).

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5, NIV).

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1, NIV).

“The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:19, 20, NIV).

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (Proverbs 8:17, NIV).

“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” (Luke 9:25, NIV).

further insight

“Many are still tested as was Abraham . . . He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone.”—Ellen G.

White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Were you able to find all the answers in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson? Read the following scriptures below, each of which tells us something interesting about God's call to each of these people, and to us. Write a brief explanation of how God called each of these people to serve Him.

Judges 13:1-5. _____

Jeremiah 1:4-8. _____

Exodus 3:7-12. _____

What do you think God is calling you to do? Ask Him to show you, and have faith that He will.

Sunday

Read Hebrews 11:8.

Read the Bible passages around which this lesson is built (*Into the Story* section). You will notice that these scriptures are a series of short passages about the life and times of Abraham. Based on what you just read, list the three most important moments in Abraham's life. Explain how these three moments changed Abraham's life. (Hint: One is provided for you.)

1. God tells Abraham to leave his home.
2. _____
3. _____

Monday

Read carefully Genesis 12:2. Imagine God coming to you and saying the following: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (NIV).

Most people do not believe it, but God wants to bless us beyond our wildest dreams. Look up the passages below to find out what God promised to do for the people mentioned there: Isaiah 56:4, 5. _____

Matthew 11:28. _____

John 10:28. _____

What can God do for you?

Tuesday

Read Romans 12:1.

Notice the last sentence in the *Flashlight* section of the lesson.

Does this mean that Abraham never got upset with God for making such a challenging request of him? When God asks tough things of us, how should we respond?

What place in your life is God asking you to leave? Abraham could not receive the blessing God had for him until he was willing to leave all behind to follow God. What things are you willing to give up for God?

Wednesday

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" (Luke 9:25, NIV). That's one of the *Punch Lines* this week. Explain in your own words what this text means to you.

Do you know of someone who went after the alluring things of the world—money, riches, fame, illicit relationships, etc.—only to lose sight of who they really were? How can the *Punch Line* found in 1 John 2:24, 25 help to prevent this from happening to any of us?

Thursday

Read Genesis 16:1-8.

One of the truly sad episodes in the life of Abram and Sarai was the Ishmael scandal. In today's reading, what did they do to "help" God's promise come true? How did their scheme turn out? In what ways might you

be trying to "help" God out—trying to make something happen for you that God alone has power to control?

Try this for one day: ask God's guidance about what to wear, what to eat, where to go, whom to talk to, what to say to those you meet, etc. Look for opportunities to seek God's guidance before you act.

Friday

Read Hebrews 11.

Abraham's life of faithfulness got him into the great Hall of Faith found in Hebrews 11. Most of us will never be asked by God to leave our home for a strange land we don't know. Most of us will never be asked to sacrifice a child. However, to achieve God's purpose for our lives, He will require a sacrifice of something we hold dear. Are you prepared to make that sacrifice?

In your own words, write a prayer to God asking Him to show you His plan for your life and to give you willingness and strength to sacrifice for Him.

Remember, God's timing may not match yours perfectly. He may choose to reveal His plan for your life in pieces, bit by bit. But if you trust Him and do not give up, He will bless you beyond your wildest dreams.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or Beginning of the End), chapters 11 and 12.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.