

AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

PRETEEN SECTION

Make sure your parents read the Bible story too! You may read together, or separately.

BIBLE STORY: ISHMAEL AND ISAAC (GENESIS 17-22)

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."

Notice: *How old is Abram now? What does God do different this time so that Abram won't doubt God's promise?*

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

The sign God gives Abraham for this covenant is circumcision, a medical procedure for men.

To this day, Jewish people celebrate circumcision as a sign that they are part of God's covenant, similar to how Christians celebrate baptism.

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?" And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

Notice: *Last time God made a promise, Abraham believed God. How does Abraham respond this time?*

Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have

heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.” When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

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.

Notice: Who shows up at Abraham’s tent (home)? How does Abraham respond?

He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get six gallons of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

Notice: How does Sarah respond to this news?

Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left.

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Notice: *Why does Sarah lie?*

Pro Tip! *Isaac’s name means laughter.*

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham laughing, and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

Notice: *Why doesn’t Sarah like Hagar?*

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

Pro Tip! *Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old. Abraham is now 99 years old. How old is Ishmael?*

When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she began to sob.

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

Notice: *What does God do when he hears the crying?*

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

Notice: *Why does God test Abraham?*

Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love— Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

Pro Tip! *Isaac must be a young boy now if he can carry a bundle of fire wood.*

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

Notice: *What do you think of God's test?*

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Pro Tip! *If you go back through the story, you'll notice God made the same promise to Abraham 7 times. Like the days of creation, 7 represents completeness in Hebrew.*

Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself.

What is God doing in this story?

What does this story tell me about God?

What does this story tell me about me?

What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?

MEMORY WORK: THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible is a collection of many smaller books. Because these books were written in a different language, they have names that may sound very strange to us. To help us navigate the Bible, it's very useful to memorize their order.

This week, try to **memorize the first two columns**, the **Pentateuch and the Historical Books**.

If it helps you memorize, try any of these songs. Pick the version you like best!

- youtube.com/watch?v=g4KEWLNnmCQ
- youtube.com/watch?v=i7ZtWRSCH7E
- youtube.com/watch?v=V__n3oXTBcc
- youtube.com/watch?v=powlzb2Rfdw
- youtube.com/watch?v=v3aRBIxMs5g
- youtube.com/watch?v=5PGW70OrOdk
- youtube.com/watch?v=K9DodTRI3vU
- youtube.com/watch?v=OwDywQ5qaqM
- youtube.com/watch?v=4gMcKtleVko
- youtube.com/watch?v=eTbSZfc7s1Q

THE 39 BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

<u>The Pentateuch</u>	<u>Historical Books</u>	<u>Wisdom and Poetry</u>	<u>Prophets</u>
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Lamentations
Numbers	1 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	2 Samuel	Song of Solomon	Daniel
	1 Kings		Hosea
	2 Kings		Joel
	1 Chronicles		Amos
	2 Chronicles		Obadiah
	Ezra		Jonah
	Nehemiah		Micah
	Esther		Nahum
			Habakkuk
			Zephaniah
			Haggai
			Zechariah
			Malachi

THINGS TO NOTICE

The history books tell the story of the Hebrew people from the time they enter the Promised Land at the end of the Exodus (sometime before 1200 BCE), through many good times and bad, until a time when people are so bad that their kingdom is destroyed, but even then God remembers the promise to Abraham and protects some of his descendants and brings them back to rebuild (about 538 BCE). That's a long time! Over 700 years!

AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

PARENT SECTION

As you discuss questions with your preteens, these thoughts might help you go deeper.

CONVERSATIONS – BIBLE

What does God do different this time so that Abram won't doubt God's promise?

God changes Abram's and Sarai's name. They both have an "H" sound added to their name, which in Hebrew is part of the sound of God's name. Have you ever made a change or done something different to remind you of something important?

How does Abraham respond to God's promise?

Abraham laughs! God's promise sounds more impossible than ever. Have you ever seen anyone do something that seemed impossible?

Who shows up at Abraham's tent (home)? How does Abraham respond?

God but also three men but also God? If we are made in God's image, then maybe God can show up in any human. Not that we are God, but God's presence might show through us. Have you ever encountered someone and afterwards thought, "It felt like God was present just now?" How would you know if God is present? How did Abraham know?

Abraham prepares a feast for them. When people in Abraham's day met strangers and travelers, it was customary to welcome them, feed them, and care for them. Have you ever welcomed people into your home? Have you ever feed someone on the street? How do you show people you don't know God's love?

How does Sarah respond to this news?

Sarah laughs! Just like Abraham. Sarah's only 9 years younger than Abraham, so this sounds impossible to her too. Has anyone ever told you a true story that made you laugh?

Why does Sarah lie?

She was afraid. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden. Have you ever lied when you're afraid? What would help us not lie when we're caught doing something embarrassing or wrong?

Why doesn't Sarah like Hagar?

Sarah wants her son to get everything, and is afraid Hagar's son will get what belongs to her son. She's jealous. Have you ever felt jealous? What do you do when you feel jealous?

What does God do when he hears the crying?

Helps Hagar find water. Water is important in a desert! When you are upset, who has helped you? Have you ever received help from surprising places?

Why does God test Abraham?

Remember, tests are meant for good. This is an opportunity for Abraham to show his faith in God. Some people say Abraham was tested seven different times in his life, though we skipped some of those stories. Some tests Abraham passed, and some Abraham failed. What normally happens when you fail a test? How many chances do you think God gives us to succeed?

What do you think of God's test?

This test sounds hard! I'm not sure I'd pass. But this test isn't just hard, it puts Abraham's trust in God in question. Remember, God has been promising Abraham many descendants. What happens if Isaac dies? Will that cancel God's promise? Abraham's biggest hope has been having a child; will he trust God even when God's commands don't make sense?

Even though this test makes us feel uncomfortable, it's clear in the end that God's goal wasn't Isaac's death, but strengthening Abraham's faith. When has your faith been strengthened? When your faith feels weak, how has your strength been renewed? When has it been hardest to believe?

LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself. I've put in some of my answers but remember: Our answers don't have to be the same. You may have heard and seen things I didn't even notice!

What is God doing in this story?

Promising. Giving signs. Visiting. Eating. Protecting. Testing.

What does this story tell me about God?

God may show up in strangers. God provides ways out of difficult situations.

What does this story tell me about me?

Sometimes it's hard to believe God. Even with God at my side, parts of life will be wonderful and parts of life will be difficult.

What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?

God is actively involved in my life. It's OK to laugh in front of God. Some things God asks me to do may be hard.

CONVERSATIONS – THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The books that start with a number are each one book, but because they are so long, they had to be split into two books. Back in those days, books were written on scrolls, not pages. And since you roll a scroll up, a book can only be so long before it fills up the scroll. These books you pronounce like “1st and 2nd Samuel”, not “One Samuel” or “Two Samuel”.