



Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet

Title: Genesis 22: 15-18

Theme: Promises.....

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

A new month means a new theme – we promised to keep things moving. And 'promises' is the theme we'll be looking at this month. In today's session we'll be looking at the difference between promises we make and promises that God has made. Sometimes a promise can seem to be a threat and that might be brought up in the first two verses of today's passage.

You know your group (and your co-workers) best so you should decide whether or not to use the full passage or start at with a God who is merciful and kind, but we must remember that Jesus promised us a new relationship with God.

There might be conversations in your group about Abraham and Sarah having more descendants than there are stars in the sky – and we can remember that the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) all trace their origins to Abraham and Sarah. As Christians, we too are children of Abraham.

The image of 'stars in the sky' is used regularly throughout the book of Genesis. It may be that your church recently held a Light Party or similar to commemorate All Hallows Eve and you can make a link back to what you explored there.



Sometimes it is difficult to see the stars – because of clouds, light pollution, or because our nearest star, the sun, is shining so brightly. That doesn't mean the stars aren't there. God is always with us, too, even when God is obscured by other things.

Triggers: Be aware that the content of this week, especially if you use the full passage, may evoke feelings for children and adults who face abuse and violence. This week may also elicit difficult emotions for those for whom broken promises are a way of life.

Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,

Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.

Amen

Active game – Bring me

A fun run around game, where the children race to bring you certain items. You need to know that the items can be found somewhere in the building, and you may have placed



certain items that the group will need. You might need to explain which rooms the children can run to, if the building is a multi-use space.

Sit the children in groups of three or more, or the game can be played individually.

Give the children a few minutes to go and collect anything they think you might mention in the game, and create a little store of their own. They might want to agree who will be doing the running each time.

The leader stands central to all groups and shouts 'Bring me...' They then mention an object and then it's the first child/group to bring that item(s) to you that gets the point. The difference with this game is that you will ask for a specific number of items each time, to link in with the story (number of stars and grains of sand)

Here's some suggestions of things you could ask for:

five pencils
nine toilet roll squares
three paper clips
six human hairs, all different
10cm of sellotape
four cups
six grains of rice
three matching socks
one felt tip in each colour of the rainbow
two shoelaces (not in a shoe)
someone older than 20 yrs
two friends

Quieter game - Hidden Stars

This game explores the idea that the images of stars and sand mentioned in the promise to Abraham are impossible to count. The images help to show just how generous God's promise is.

You will need:

- tray – enough for one per group
- play sand
- small confetti stars or star shapes
- timer or stopwatch

Each group has a tray of sand – with hidden confetti stars. Groups must work as a team to separate the sand and the stars within a timed period. The team who separates the most stars from sand are the winners.

Is it easier to count the stars or the sand?

Alternatives to suit different groups

- *Cardboard stars hidden in ball pool balls*
- *Star-shaped objects hidden around a room – groups compete to find the most stars*
- *How many stars can you draw in 1 minute? The team who draws the most wins*



Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the **International Children's version**.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2022%3A%2015-18&version=ICB>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: God's Promise for Abraham By Saddleback Kids

<https://youtu.be/zUhs-MWoTbg?si=8rhvcHD49Mjaflos>

Five to eights: Genesis 22: 15-18 By Inverness East Church

<https://www.youtube.com/live/6UBb3prOEuu?si=0S51hANC2-yIbYXx>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Father Abraham By Hi Heaven

<https://youtu.be/hzvkmkgbyAc?si=NzAmEblJN6Tq38ar>

Five to eights: All Through History By Worship for Everyone

<https://youtu.be/7ko7N74fQTc?si=m9j1DTjrOrzljUOV>

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme - This is a reflective story using a sandbag/tray.

You will need:

- the script
- a sand tray or bag as the base for your story (or a sand-coloured piece of fabric)
- 30 small figures to represent people in the story: Abraham and his wife, son Isaac etc
- sand timer (or picture of one)
- nativity manger
- paper stars and star confetti
- Bible: with the story marked in Genesis
- God's promise to Abraham written on a paper scroll
- a collection of stars with Gods promises on the back of each one (a simple search of Gods bible promises will give you a load to choose from
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/gods-promises-verses-in-the-bible/>)
- a picture of stars in the sky

What you do: (actions are in black, words to say are in red)

Lay out the sand and smooth it out ready. **There are many stories in the Bible that take place in the sandy deserts. Today's is one of them**

Place the picture of the starry night on the sand in the desert. **There is no light pollution, and all the stars in the sky can be clearly seen.**

Can you guess how many stars there are in the sky? Have you ever tried to count stars? There are too many to count. Only God knows the number of stars in the sky, just as God



knows how many grains of sand in the desert there are or hairs on your head. In today's story God is going to give someone a promise, a promise that their family would have as many people in it as there are stars in the sky.

Place the Bible open at Genesis by the side of the sand story. This is the story found in Genesis.

In the story there is a man named Abraham,

And his wife Sarah.

Abraham and Sarah are old and they have never had any children. They would like children but have never had any. Now they are old, it's too late for them.

They love each other and they love God.

God gave them a promise, that they would have a child.

They had laughed because they were so old.

But God kept the promise and Abraham and Sarah had a baby boy called Isaac.

Show the sand timer. Many years later when time has passed, God gave Abraham another promise.

Show the scroll, God said I will bless you and make your family as large as the number of stars in the sky and grains of sand on the beach.

Abraham was confused by this promise. They were both very old, how could they have so many children?

But God had a plan.

Place the figure for Isaac below Abraham (a bit like a family tree). God passed the promise onto Isaac, Abraham's son – you will be great and have many descendants.

Place the figure for Jacob below Isaac. The promise was passed onto Isaac's son, Jacob – you will be great and have many descendants.

Place the figure 12 for tribes below Jacob. God's people, the 12 tribes of Israel, came from Jacob, Abraham's grandson.

Place more figures below the tribes. Out of Abraham's family came God's chosen people.

Abraham means "Father of many nations".

The promise didn't end there.

Place the nativity manger below the tribe's people (a bit like a family tree). Out of Abraham's family tree came someone very special, Jesus Christ, but that's a story for another day.

Place the figure for Paul below nativity. Later in the Bible, Paul writes that if you are a Christian, you too are a descendant of Abraham, you are a child in God's family.

Scatter the promise stars around the story, encouraging children to have a look at them and possibly read them out. God has given many promises; many can be found in the Bible.

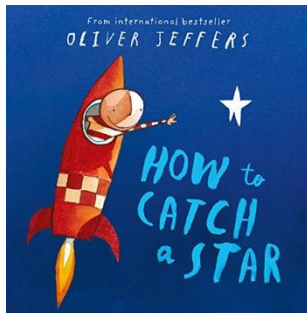


As God kept the promise to Abraham, even long after Abraham had died, so we can be sure that God will keep the other promises.

Just as sometimes there is too much light and you can't see the stars in the sky, you know they are there. And that's how it is with God's promises. Even when you can't see them clearly, they are there, speaking to us over time and space. God does and will keep his promises.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way, as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).



How to Catch a Star by Oliver Jeffers - 2004: Harper Collins

Read by Story Time with Rocket

https://youtu.be/H6S7RyE80QI?si=RJAIAiNEiH_QMMD6J

In this story, the boy is determined to catch a star – but they seem so mysterious, and the task feels impossible!

- Can you see stars from your window? How would you try to catch one?
- The boy has to be very patient – like Abraham. Do you think Abraham expected God's promise to take so long to come true?
- Do you like waiting for things?

Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- What is the difference between a promise we make and a promise God makes?
- Are there promises made on your behalf?
- If God could promise you one thing, what would you want it to be?
- What does it mean to make a promise?

Wondering reflections on the theme

- What was the last promise you made? Do you make promises you can't keep?
- I wonder if you've ever broken a promise
- I wonder if we make promises to God

What's in the box? (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing, "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the



things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Stars – talk to the children about the stars they may see in the sky, and how many there are. Abraham was given a promise by God that his family would be like the stars in the sky.
- Sand – look at the sand, talk to the children about it being made up of lots and lots of small grains. I wonder how many grains of sand are here. God also said to Abraham that his family would be like the sand on the beach.
- Rainbow – to signify God's promise (include every week)
- Lots of small figures and one large figure – this is what Abraham's family would look like but more and more and more people.
- Pinky promise – using your hand make a pinky promise – God's promise is like a pinky promise that will never be broken.
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc).

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity – Find me jar

Shake your 'find me' jar. When you find a star think about someone who is a star in your life. Shake it again and think about the people who you are a star to.

Shake it again and think of the places in the world that need the stars to shine bright. Shake it again and pray for the people who shine like stars in the world.

Shake it again and pray for God to shine like a star in your life.

Spoken prayer

God (point up) promised them that their children and their children and their children's children (make cradle with arms and rock)

would be as many as the stars (hands raised with fingers wriggling).

Thank you (sign 'thank you' by straightening your hand, bringing your fingers to your chin, and then pulling them away) for Abraham (dad sign – tap two fingers from one hand onto two fingers from the other hand) and Sarah (mum sign – tap three fingers from one hand onto your open palm of your other hand).

Amen.

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.



With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response. However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Find the star jar

You will need:

- an old jar
- sand
- bowl
- funnel
- some star sequins, buttons or beads

What you do:

Fill a jar with sand leaving a gap at the top, then tip it into a bowl, mix in some stars and then using a funnel pour the sand back into the jar. Close it tightly and shake it, now try to find the stars. Feel free to decorate the jar lid however you like.



Star Garland

You will need:

- felt sheets in various colours
- small bag of soft toy filling
- embroidery thread

What you do:

Fold the felt in half and draw three stars, using a star shaped cookie cutter or star template, onto the felt and cut them out using sharp fabric scissors. You may want to do this in advance.

Pair your felt stars up and pin them together making sure the edges are lined up.

Sew around the edge of your felt stars about 2mm from the edge. Remember to leave a gap large enough to put some of your soft toy filling in the inner corners, as shown in the image. Ensure you secure your stitches by back stitching at the start and finish.

Using a blunt pencil/knitting needle or equivalent poke a small amount of the soft toy filling through the gap you left in each star making sure you get some of the filling into each star point. Keep adding filling until your star is as plump as you desire. Bear in mind you need to be able to close the opening afterwards.

Be careful not to push your pencil/knitting needle through the felt, damaging your star.

Sew closed the gap you left for your filling.

You can decorate the stars using sequins or other things to decorate by gluing them on.

Measure out double the amount of thread as the length you want your garland to be.

Thread your needle so it is halfway along your thread.

Take your first star and push your needle through the first point, through the middle of the star and out the opposite point. Move the star all the way down your thread until it is at the starting point. You may want to tie a knot in the thread to stop the star from slipping down the garland.

Repeat this with your three stars. Create a loop at the top of the garland to hang it from.





Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you something they have learnt about God's promises.
- Create a little manifesto of promises that you would make if you were in charge of: the country/the town you live in/your school/your home.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of the **A promise for Abraham** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing **sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk**

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group **bit.ly/FACT_FB**

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Jesus' promise to us**.

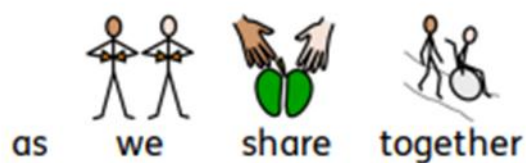




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



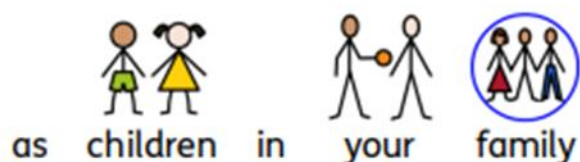
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



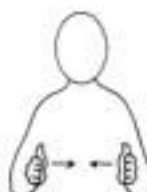
Amen



Right middle finger
touches centre of
other palm, repeat
with left hand



Alternate hands back
and forth





The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

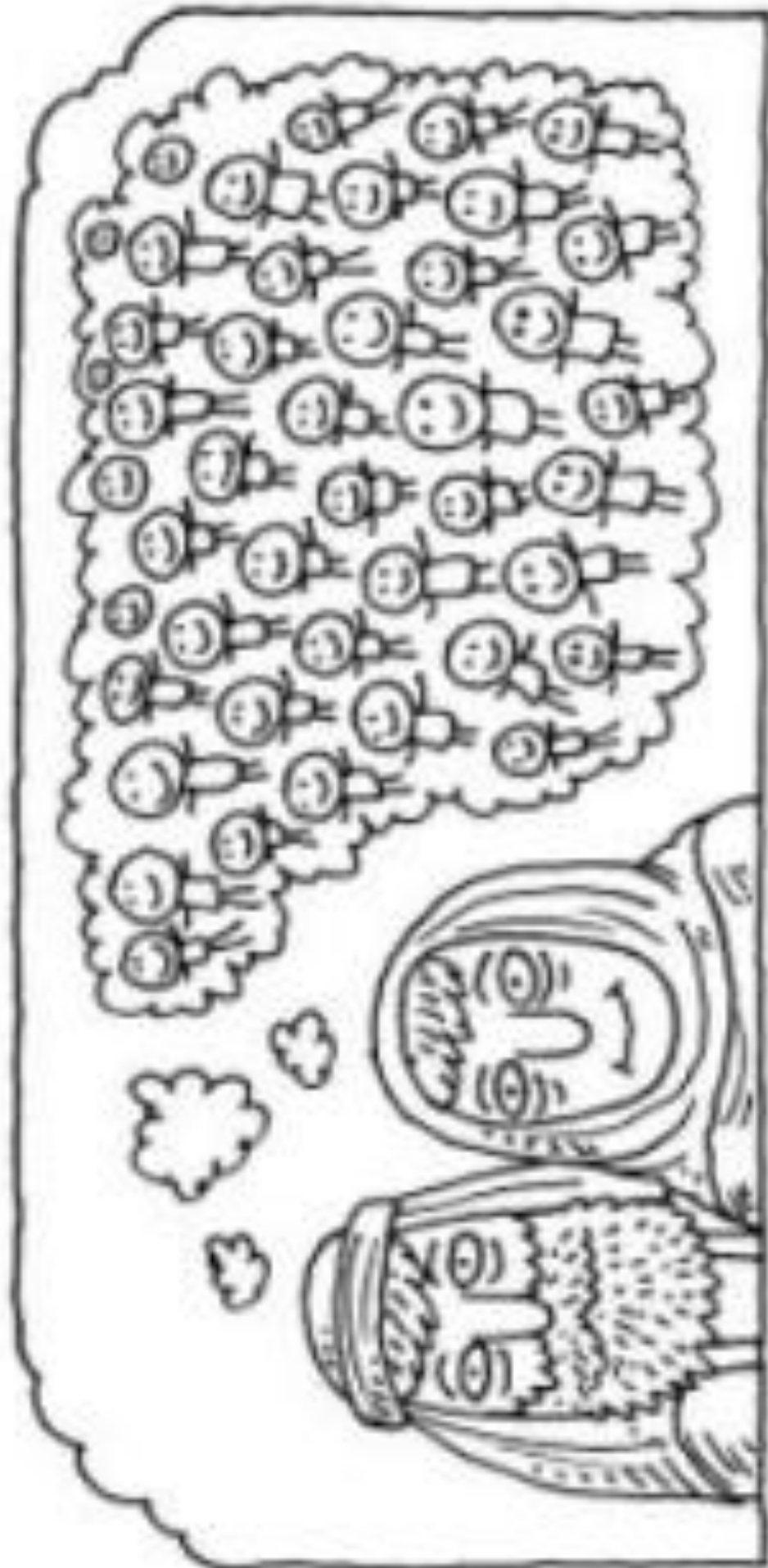
Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever . Amen



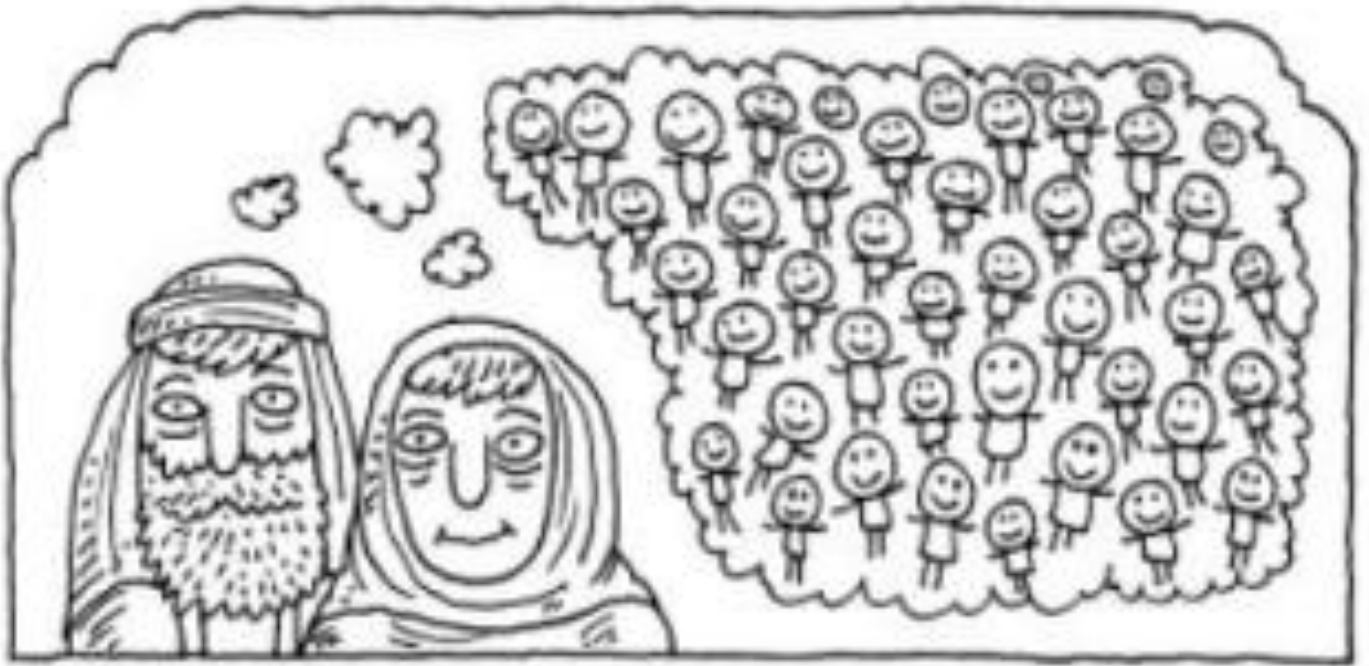


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