

**Gen. 12:1–4a**

*Ps. 121*

*Rom. 4:1–5, 13–17*

*John 3:1–17 or*

*Matthew 17:1–9*

# God Calls Abram

**Goal for the Session**

*Third- and fourth-graders will identify Abram’s response to God’s call and consider how they can respond to God’s call.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Genesis 12:1–4a

#### WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Carol A. Newsom

(vv. 2–3). If the command underscores what Abram puts at risk, the blessing reassures him that God will provide abundantly. The key term in this section is “bless/blessing” (five occurrences). In Hebrew, blessing signifies flourishing. It includes physical vigor, fertility, security, and success in one’s undertakings (e.g., Ps. 128). Although this is the key term, it is significant that the opening words are not “I will bless you” but, rather, “I will make of you a great nation.” The emphasis is not on Abram the individual but on the future Israel. The term “nation” (Heb. *goy*) is not a kinship term but a word that designates a political entity. The nation will be the result of God’s blessing Abram, and the nation is the means by which Abram’s name will be “made great.”

#### WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Frederick Neidner

All views of blessing hang on a single theological premise: God chooses to remain intimately connected to the creation and particularly to the flesh and blood that became human when God mixed dust with God’s own breath. God may grieve and even rant over the incessant evil that humankind dreams up in every generation, but given the nature of God’s commitment, God will not or perhaps cannot give up the creatures that share the divine breath. Inevitably, such faithfulness on God’s part means that God will suffer all the pain and sorrow that this troubled relationship generates. From the vantage point of Golgotha, the question was never whether, but only when, that faithfulness would finally cost God life itself.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Donald P. Olsen

Our own experience and the witness of Scripture concur that the one who calls is the one who equips. The one who equips always leads the called to more complete expression of the persons they were created to be. Consequently, if the call is of God, the answer to all the above questions is yes. A faithful response is the embrace of what God has already called into being—a newness of being—and the release from what is known for what is promised. A faithful response is neither forced nor coerced, but a step freely taken toward our true selves.

#### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by James Mctyre

The other facet of Abram’s mirror is the side that reflects God to all the nations. From this half of the visual image comes the church’s mandate to mission and evangelism. The church must be more than analyst and commentator, more even than encourager or discourager. Beyond its social and personal purposes is the church’s divine calling. Abram is a blessing, not because of his own skill, but because he will be used to purely reflect God’s light. The church is called to be a blessing to the nations, not because it is faultless, but because it reflects the One who is.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

***Genesis 12:1–4a***

## Focus on Your Teaching

Children this age seldom go places without close supervision from parents, teachers, and other caring adults. Thus, it seems initially that third- and fourth-graders may feel that the story of Abram and Sarai has no connection with their lives. While they may not be able to imagine leaving their parents and homes and setting out on their own, they may be beginning to sense that God is calling them to take action. Help the children consider how Abram and Sarai trusted in God and responded faithfully to God's call, and they can too.

*When you call, O God, help me respond faithfully, and guide me as I encourage these children to do the same. Amen.*

### YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- battery-powered candle
- Bibles
- Lent poster (Color Pack 1, 2)
- Color Pack 3, 28, 29
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pencils
- Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023; CD player

#### For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2; pencils; *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023; CD player
- option 2: Color Pack 3, old road maps, card stock, scissors, glue sticks, markers
- option 3: paper lunch sacks, markers, index cards, stickers

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, tape together Color Pack 1 and 2 to create the Lent poster. Arrange the purple cloth in the center of the table and place the Lent poster (Color Pack 1, 2) and the candle on it. If you are using option 2 in Responding, for each child bring one 8-1/2" x 11" piece of card stock and one 8" x 10" piece of a map cut from an old road atlas or state highway map.

Greet learners and gather around the candle. Tell learners that today is the second Sunday in the church season called Lent. Ask volunteers to read aloud the information on the Lent poster. Light the candle. Pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each phrase: Thank you, God, / for bringing us together today. / During Lent, help us learn / to follow Jesus more closely. / Amen.

Play a game of "Listen to the Leader." Designate starting and finishing points. Have the group stand along the starting line and tell them to follow your commands as they move to the finish. Call out instructions, such as walk backwards, skip, wiggle, dance, or jump until all have crossed the finish line. Afterward, discuss:

✿ When is it important to listen to directions?

Say that the Bible story is about someone who was told to follow God's directions.

Solution to Resource Sheet 1: conversations, prayer, worship, Bible study, songs and hymns.

## EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles and ask learners to turn to Genesis 12:1-4a, helping as needed. Ask them to follow along in their Bibles as you read the story aloud. (In verse 4a, stop at the first period.) Next, form two groups to read the story in unison, alternating verses between groups.

Refer to verse 1. Discuss:

- ✧ What did God tell Abram to do?
- ✧ How would Abram know where to go? (Emphasize that Abram didn't have a map to follow; he trusted God to lead him.)
- ✧ Do you think it was easy or difficult for Abram to obey God's instructions? Why?

Ask learners to look at verse 2. Explain that to be blessed is to recognize God's love, protection, and guidance. Blessings are things we see as evidence that God loves us and cares for us.

- ✧ What do you think it means that Abram "will be a blessing"? How can a person be a blessing?

Ask learners to look at the end of verse 4 to find out where Abram was when God spoke to him. Show Color Pack 3 and ask a volunteer to point to Haran. Ask learners to follow along as you read aloud verses 4b–5a. (Stop at the first period in verse 5). Ask:

- ✧ What did Abram do to follow God's instructions?
- ✧ Do you think Abram was faithful—did he do his best to follow God's call, even when he wasn't sure what would happen? Why or why not?
- ✧ In what direction did Abram and Sarai go? Ask a child to point to Canaan on Color Pack 4.

Discuss how Abram knew that God was calling him to do something. Encourage a variety of responses. Proclaim that God still calls people to take action. Wonder together how learners might know when God is calling them. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (God Is Calling) and pencils. Ask learners to work individually or in pairs to solve the puzzle. When all have finished, discuss:

- ✧ What kinds of things do you imagine God might be calling you to do?

Sing together the refrain and the first stanza of "Blessed to Be a Blessing" (Color Pack 28; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023).

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Following Faithfully** Children will work together on ways to respond to God's call in situations they may face. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Respond!). Read the information at the top of the page. Form pairs to complete the activity. Play "Blessed to Be a Blessing" (track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023) as pairs work. After all have finished, ask each pair to tell its response to one of the scenarios.

### Blessed to Be a Blessing

Refrain:

We are blessed to be a blessing,  
 we are blessed to be a blessing,  
 we are blessed to be a blessing,  
 growing in the grace of God.

1. Just like Abraham and Sarah,  
 just like Abraham and Sarah,  
 just like Abraham and Sarah,  
 growing in the grace of God.

*Refrain*

**EASY  
 PREP**

- 2. Wherever God Leads** Children will create a wall hanging to reflect their ideas about responding to God's call. Show Color Pack 3 and recall that Abram didn't have a map to follow, but instead trusted God to lead him. Distribute card stock, pieces of maps, and glue sticks. Ask learners to glue their piece of map to the card stock. Set out markers. Have learners print "I Will Follow God's Call" at the top of the map. As a group, list things that God may call learners to do now and in the future. Invite learners to choose three or four things that God may call them to do and draw pictures or write words about these on their maps. Take time for learners to look at each other's maps. Encourage them to find a place at home to display their maps. Assure learners that God sends the Holy Spirit to help them respond faithfully.
- 3. Blessing Bags** Children will consider ways that they respond to God by being a blessing to others. Recall how God promised to bless Abram and to make Abram a blessing. Explain that a blessing might be a good thing that happens, words that comfort you or make you feel joyful, or the way someone shows God's love to you. Affirm that God is always blessing us. Wonder together about how you and the learners have been a blessing to others. Distribute lunch sacks and invite learners to write "My Blessing Bag" on the front and then decorate the bag with markers and stickers as desired. Give each learner seven index cards. Direct them to write one way they have been blessed or one way they can bless others on each card. Help them with ideas, as needed. Have them place the cards in the sacks to take home. Encourage them to draw one card each day and talk with a family member about being blessed or being a blessing.

### Behold, I Am with You

Behold, I am with you,  
(Behold, I am with you,)  
And will keep you wherever  
you go, (And will keep you  
wherever you go,)  
And will keep you wherever  
you go. (And will keep you  
wherever you go.)

Repeat

### CLOSING

Gather in a circle. Ask volunteers to tell one thing God may be calling them to do and how they might respond. Affirm their ideas, and reassure them that God sends the Holy Spirit to help them do these things.

Invite the group to join you in prayer. Explain that when you pause after each line of the prayer, their response is, "Help us be faithful, Lord."

*God, you claim us as your children.* (Response.)

*God, you call us to tell about your love and mercy.* (Response.)

*God, you call us to love others by what we say and do.* (Response.)

*Thank you, God, for Abram's example and for calling us, too.* (Response.)

*Amen.*

Form two groups to sing "Behold, I Am with You" (Color Pack 29; track 3 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023) as a reminder of God's loving presence. Ask one group to sing the line first and the other group to be the echo.

Say good-bye to the children by name, telling them that you hope to see them next week.

March 5, 2023  
God Calls Abram

Grades 3–4  
Resource Sheet 1

## God Is Calling

**Directions:** How does God call people today? God works in many ways, and you may be surprised when you sense God is calling! Unscramble the words below to identify some ways God may call you.

\_\_\_\_\_ with other Christians  
VERTIONSCONSA

\_\_\_\_\_

YERPRA

\_\_\_\_\_

SHIPROW

\_\_\_\_\_

BLEIB TUSDY

\_\_\_\_\_

SSGON and YMNHS

March 5, 2023  
God Calls Abram

Grades 3–4  
Resource Sheet 2

## Respond!

“Now the LORD said to Abram . . .” (Genesis 12:1).

When God called Abram, the Lord didn’t give Abram many details about *how* to follow God’s call. When you sense God is calling you, there may be many possible ways to respond. Your challenge is to be faithful to God’s ways of love, care, peace, and justice in whatever you do. And remember that if things don’t go well, God is ready to forgive and offer another chance. Read the call in each footprint and jot down what you might do if that call came to you.

