

Gen. 12:1–4a

Ps. 121

Rom. 4:1–5, 13–17

John 3:1–17 or

Matthew 17:1–9

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Goal for the Session

Tweens will examine God’s covenant with Abram and explore what it means to be God’s chosen people and blessings to the world.

■ 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

Tweens may feel that they are too young to be called by God. Looking around at problems in the world and at their limitations, they might think they can't make a difference. The story of Abram and Sarai reminds us that God can use unexpected people to change and bless the world. Tweens also may take their many blessings for granted or fail to see the ways that God has blessed them. This lesson is a chance for them to recognize the ways they are blessed and to identify ways that God may call them to turn around and bless the world.

Lord, open my ears to your call, my eyes to your blessings, and my heart to be a blessing in this world. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- 6 votive candles in holders
- matches or lighter
- newsprint or markerboard
- markers
- Color Pack 1, 2, 28
- Resource Sheet 1
- scissors
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- Bibles
- colored pencils or fine-tipped markers
- Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 27; *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player
- option 2: index cards, pens
- option 3: paper, markers

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, arrange the purple cloth in the center of your learning space and place Color Pack 1 and the votive candles on it. Cut apart the cards on Resource Sheet 1 (Job Applicants).

Greet tweens as they arrive. Invite them to work together to make a list of especially difficult or challenging jobs on newsprint or the board. (Examples: president, school principal, sixth-grade teacher, police officer, miner, nurse.)

When all have arrived, gather around the candles and say that today is the Second Sunday in Lent. Ask a volunteer to light two candles. Invite tweens to recall what they know about the season of Lent. Summarize that, as we move toward Easter, Christians reflect on their faith and on ways to live more closely in line with God's will. Pray aloud:

Dear God, thank you for bringing us together today to learn more about you. Bless our time together during Lent this year, and open our hearts to your Word. Amen.

Extinguish the candles.

Review the list of challenging jobs. As a group, choose one job and circle it on the list. Ask tweens to imagine they are in charge of hiring the right person for this job. What questions might they ask the applicants during the job interview? Give each learner or pair of learners one of the cards cut from Resource Sheet 1 (Job Applicants), saying that each of these individuals has applied for the job. Have tweens read the information on their cards and tell the group if they think each applicant would be a good person for the job and why. Vote on which applicant is the group's first choice for the job. Ask:

✠ How hard is it to choose the best person for the job?

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

If learners have trouble naming blessings in their lives, suggest some of the following: good health, family, friends, school, church, food, clean water, forgiveness and love from Jesus, sense of humor, patience, faith, hope, varied talents and abilities.



Say that the Bible story today is about a person chosen by God to do something challenging.

EXPLORING

Ask tweens to recall what they know about Abram and Sarai (God renamed them Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 17). Review that Abram and Sarai are among the first people of faith named in the Bible. Their story is told in Genesis.

Distribute Bibles and ask tweens to turn to Genesis 12. Show Color Pack 2 and invite them to look at it as you read aloud Genesis 11:31–32. Ask a volunteer to point out Ur and Haran on the map. Say that at the beginning of today’s story, Abram and Sarai and their family were living in Haran.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (*Lectio Divina*) and colored pencils or fine-tipped markers. Read aloud the directions and answer any questions. Say that you will help the tweens with step 1 by reading aloud the verses. After the reading, ask them to work individually to complete the remaining steps. When all have finished, invite learners to tell which words or phrases stood out for them. Discuss:

- ✧ What does the word or phrase you chose tell you about the story of God and Abram?
- ✧ What choice did Abram face? What might he have lost by following God’s call? What did God promise he would gain?

Read aloud Genesis 12:4b–5a (end at the period) from your Bible. Discuss:

- ✧ Why do you think Abram and Sarai decided to follow God’s instructions?
- ✧ How do you think God blessed the world through Abram and Sarai? (Welcome all ideas; comment that one needs to read the rest of Genesis to learn how God did this.)
- ✧ What blessings have you received from God?
- ✧ How might God use you to be a blessing to the world?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Blessing Song** Tweens will express God’s blessing through song and movement. Recall the many times the word *bless* was used in the Bible story. Ask: Who blessed Abram and Sarai? What did God say would happen because Abram was blessed? Show Color Pack 27 and play “Blessed to Be a Blessing” (track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023). Discuss: What is a blessing? How has God blessed you? In what ways have you been a blessing to others? Work as a group to create actions to go along with the words of the song. Sing it with the actions. Option: Teach the song and actions to a class of younger children, or ask to sing it during worship.

- 2. Count Your Blessings** Tweens will identify their blessings and consider ways that God may be blessing the world through them. Form groups of three or four. Give each group five index cards and a pen. Ask each group to identify five blessings God has given to them, individually or as a group. Have them write each blessing on a separate card. When groups have finished, collect the cards and place them facedown on the floor or table. Have one group draw a card, read the blessing, and tell one way that blessing could be used to bless others. (For example, being blessed with musical talent could be shared with residents of a nursing home.) Continue until each group has had two or three turns.
- 3. God Chooses Me** Tweens will ponder how God blesses each of them and chooses them to be blessings to others. Review with learners how God blessed Abram and chose him to be the leader of a great nation. Discuss: Why do you think God chose Abram to be a leader of a great people and to be a blessing to the nations? (Welcome a variety of responses; the Bible does not say why God chose Abram, only that he was faithful to God's call after it came.) Invite tweens to ponder why God chooses ordinary people to be blessings to others. Affirm that God chose Abram and Sarai to be blessings and God chooses them, too. Pass out paper and markers. Invite tweens to draw cartoons or caricatures of themselves that show some of the things that "qualify" them to be used by God as a blessing in the world. Display the drawings in your learning space. Remind tweens that you and they are not "super-people," but that God's grace is so amazing that the Lord can use every one of God's children to bless the world!

Over My Head

Refrain:

Over my head,
I hear music in the air.
Over my head,
I hear music in the air.
Over my head,
I hear music in the air.
There must be a God
somewhere.

(Repeat refrain)

And when the world is silent,
I hear music in the air.
And when the world is silent,
I hear music in the air.
And when the world is silent,
I hear music in the air.
There must be a God
somewhere.

(Repeat refrain)

And when I'm feeling lonely,
I hear music in the air.
And when I'm feeling lonely,
I hear music in the air.
And when I'm feeling lonely,
I hear music in the air.
There must be a God
somewhere.

(Repeat refrain twice)

CLOSING

Gather around the candles and light two of them. Invite tweens to tell what amazed them most in the story of God calling Abram and Sarai.

Ask learners to join you in a "popcorn prayer." After you begin the prayer, they are welcome to speak their prayers aloud, without worrying about taking turns or speaking at the same time. Pray aloud:

Amazing God, thank you for blessing us and choosing us to be blessings to others. Hear our prayers. (Pause for popcorn prayers.) Amen.

Stand in a circle to sing "Over My Head" (Color Pack 28; track 19 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*). Invite tweens to join you in the actions as they sing. When singing "over my head," raise hands over head. When singing "there must be a God somewhere," hold arms straight out from shoulders and turn in a circle.

Say good-bye to tweens by name. Thank them for being part of your Sunday school class.

Job Applicants

Alice: 23 years old; has college degree in civil engineering; likes classical music; plays soccer with her friends; wants to design and build bridges.



Al: 64 years old; teaches English at a community college; is the drama coach at the college; volunteers with the youth group at his church; likes to work in the community garden.



Maria: 12 years old; is a good listener; gets straight As in school; loves animals; is shy at school and her classmates don't know her well; likes to read.



Mike: 40 years old; has a disabling back injury and had to quit his job as a chef; lives in a homeless shelter; cooks amazing meals in the kitchen there for the other residents.



Jerry: 56 years old; retired Air Force pilot; takes care of his grandchildren two days a week; likes to play golf; is president of the church council.



Jennifer: 32 years old; is a single mother with three children; works two jobs; helps with homework; is good at making her money stretch; volunteers at church.



Lectio Divina

Lectio divina means “divine reading.” Here’s how it works:

1. Read the text slowly or listen to someone read it aloud.
2. As you read or listen to the text, identify one word or short phrase that jumps out to you as important. Underline it.
3. Read or listen to the text again. Circle this word or phrase each time it appears.
4. Write the word or phrase in the box below. Use balloon-style letters.
5. Think about why this word or phrase seems important to you today as you color or decorate the letters.

Genesis 12:1–4a, CEB

¹The LORD said to Abram, “Leave your land, your family, and your father’s household for the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you,
those who curse you I will curse;
all the families of the earth
will be blessed because of you.”

⁴Abram left just as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him.

