

Gen. 12:1–4a

Ps. 121

Rom. 4:1–5, 13–17

John 3:1–17 or

Matthew 17:1–9

God Calls Abram and Sarai

Goal for the Session

After hearing God’s call to Abram and Sarai and their response, children will consider how they are blessed and a blessing.

■ 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

Most children have some ideas about moving. If their family has not relocated, they may have a classmate who came from another place, near or far away. Today traveling to a new place without a map or GPS is unlikely. So children may wonder how Abram and Sarai knew where to go. A fruitful discussion about trusting God may result. Allow children to express their certainty and their hesitation. Blessing may be an unfamiliar word to children. They can begin to grasp its meaning as they discover ways they are blessed every day.

Trustworthy God, I pray that I will see Abram and Sarai as role models for trusting you. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- tall candle
- matches
- offering basket
- Bible
- Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player
- Color Pack 1, 2, 29
- Resource Sheet 1
- Resource Sheet 3
- paper plate, marker
- slip of paper, pencil

For Responding

- option 1: newsprint or board, paper lunch bags, markers, stickers, index cards
- option 2: *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player; Color Pack 30
- option 3: index cards; pens; *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player; Color Pack 30
- option 4: copies of Resource Sheet 2

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place a bookmark at Genesis 12 in the worship table Bible. Write a packing list for a trip on a slip of paper. Prepare the paper plate for the Second Sunday in Lent according to Resource Sheet 3. If you did not have a paper plate from the First Sunday in Lent, make one and include it on the table as well.

Invite the first children to arrive to prepare the worship table with the purple cloth, tall candle, offering basket, and Bible. When everything is ready, ask the children to sit down. Light the candle.

Play “Do Lord, O Do Lord” (Color Pack 29; track 6 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*) and invite the children to sing along as they are able.

Review the information about the season of Lent on Color Pack 1. Lead the children in the opening prayer, asking them to echo each line:

Thank you, God, / for bringing us here together. / During this season of Lent, / help us learn to follow Jesus more closely. / Amen.

If you receive an offering, do so now. Extinguish the candle.

Without any explanation, ask a child to read the list that you have prepared. Ask:

- ✪ What is this list for?
- ✪ What would you add if you were going to the beach? On a skiing trip? To summer camp?

After children have enjoyed suggesting items to add, explain that two people take a trip in today’s Bible story.

Do Lord, O Do Lord

Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do remember me.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do remember me.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do remember me,
Way beyond the blue.

Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,
I know I need to pray.
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,
I know I need to pray.
Yes, Lord, O yes, Lord,
I know I need to pray,
Way beyond the blue.

Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do help me to pray.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do help me to pray.
Do Lord, O do Lord,
O do help me to pray,
Way beyond the blue.

If children need prompting to consider how they are blessed, suggest things such as good health, loving family, church, school, or friends.

EXPLORING

Invite the children to play “Listen to the Leader.” Designate start and finish lines on opposite sides of the learning area. Have everyone stand along the start line. Explain that they are to listen and follow your instructions in order to move to the finish line. Call out instructions, such as tip-toe, skip, dance, hop, or walk backwards until each one has made it to the finish line. Ask:

✪ When is it important to listen carefully to instructions?

Suggest that the children listen for who gives instructions and who listens in today’s Bible story. Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and open it to the bookmark. Ask the child to read the name of the book and the chapter or invite another child to do so.

Show Color Pack 2 with the map of the ancient Middle East. Point to Abram and Sarai in the upper right corner and explain that Abram’s father was born in Ur. He took his family to Haran on the way to Canaan, but they stayed in Haran for many years. This is where the story for today begins. Tell the story from Genesis 12:1–4a on Resource Sheet 1 (We’re Moving!). Ask:

✪ What do you think they had to do to get ready?

✪ How do you think the rest of the family felt about Abram, Sarai, and Lot leaving?

✪ How do you think Abram, Sarai, and Lot felt?

✪ Why do you think they trusted God to show them the way?

Read Genesis 12:2a (which is on the Lenten plate for today). Ask:

✪ What does it mean for God to bless Abram?

✪ How does God bless us?

✪ How might you be a blessing to others?

This conversation about blessing will prepare children for Responding.

RESPONDING

Select at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest children who can work on their own.

- 1. Blessing Bags** Children will consider how they can be blessings to others as they respond to God’s blessing of them. Recall how God blessed Abram and Sarai and the children’s conversation about how they are blessed and a blessing to others. Affirm that God is always blessing them. Then concentrate on ways the children can be blessings to others. Be specific and write ways on newsprint or board. Give the children paper lunch bags. Have them write on the bags “My Blessing Bag” and their names. Provide markers and stickers to decorate the bags. Then give each child seven index cards. On each one, the children are to write a way that they are blessed or a way that they are a blessing to someone else. When they finish, have them place the cards in their bags. Suggest that they remove one card from the bag each day and discuss what it says with a family member.

**EASY
PREP**
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,
growing in the grace of God.

If there are more than six children in the group, form groups of three or four. Have each group discuss the situations and bring them together to hear their ideas.

2. **Blessing Song** To reinforce the idea of blessed and blessing, children will learn “Blessed to Be a Blessing” (Color Pack 30; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023). Play the song or read aloud the lyrics. Recall the conversation about blessed and blessing in Exploring. Sing the song together until the children are comfortable with the melody and the lyrics. Together, create movements to express the words. Sing the song together as everyone adds the movements.

Perhaps the group can teach the song and actions to a group of younger children or sing it in worship.

3. **Blessed and Blessings** Children will identify how they are blessed and name ways they can be blessings for others. Set out index cards (one per child) and pens. Appoint one or two children to be scribes. Ask the group to name ways they are blessed. For example, one child plays the violin; another enjoys talking to senior adults. When all cards have a blessing on them, mix them up and place them on a table or floor facedown. Invite children to take turns selecting a card and reading the blessing. That child has the first chance to name a way that blessing can be a blessing for others. Then other children can suggest ways.

Adaptation: Assign the older children in the group to prepare the cards (at least one per child in the group) while younger children sing “Blessed to Be a Blessing” (Color Pack 30; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023). Then everyone can participate in naming ways to be blessings to others.

4. **Following Faithfully** Children will focus on how following God faithfully is part of being a blessing to others. Form pairs and distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Respond!). Read aloud the information at the top of the page. Have the pairs discuss each statement. When everyone is ready, bring the group together. Ask each pair to tell its response to one of more of the statements.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table. Play “Do Lord, O Do Lord” (track 6 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023). Suggest that the children think about how God blessed Abram and Sarai so they could be a blessing to many.

Read Genesis 12:2a on the paper plate for the Second Sunday in Lent. The object for today’s session is the packing list from Gathering.

Say to each child:

(Name), *go out as one blessed by God to be a blessing to others.*

Thank the children for coming and encourage them to return next week.

March 5, 2023
God Calls Abram
and Sarai

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

We're Moving!
(based on Genesis 12:1-4a)

In the land of Ur, lived Terah, the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran, who died, had a son named Lot. Abram and Nahor were also married. Abram was married to Sarai.

After some years, Terah, along with Abram and Sarai, and Lot moved to a place called Haran. Yes, it is the same name as Terah's son who was the father of Lot and who died in Ur. They settled there for a long time, even though they were on their way to Canaan. Terah died in Haran.

Some time after Terah's death, Abram had a most unusual experience. God said to Abram, "Leave Haran and the rest of your family. Take your wife Sarai and your nephew Lot with you. I will show you the way to a new land. In that land, you will become a great nation. I will bless you there. Indeed, you will be a blessing."

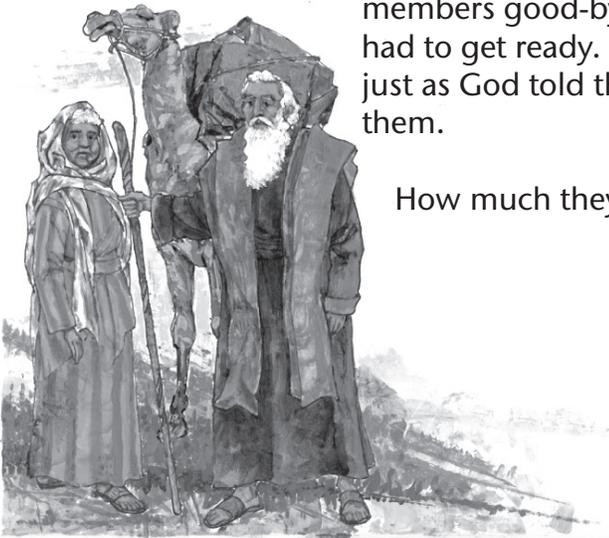
Abram was so astonished that he couldn't speak. After all, how does one speak to God?

God continued:

"Whoever blesses you, I will bless.
Whoever curses you, I will curse.
All the families on the earth
will be blessed because of you."

Nothing in the Bible says that Abram and Sarai talked about whether they should move. It doesn't even say that they told their family members good-bye. It does say they took all their possessions, so they had to get ready. But the Bible simply says that Abram and Sarai left, just as God told them to do. And they took their nephew Lot with them.

How much they trusted God to go off on this journey!



March 5, 2023
God Calls Abram
and Sarai

Multi-Age
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.



March 5, 2023
God Calls Abram
and Sarai

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 3

Lenten Table

Setup

- table or box large enough to hold six plates
- purple cloth
- six paper plates without plastic coating
- marker

Cover the table or large box with a purple cloth. Arrange the six paper plates on the cloth.

For the six Sundays in Lent, create a Lenten Table to be the focus for Closing.

For each Sunday, write these Bible verses from the Common English Bible on paper plates:

First Sunday in Lent: The woman said to the snake, “We may eat the fruit of the garden’s trees but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Don’t eat from it, and don’t touch it, or you will die.’”(Genesis 3:2–3)

Second Sunday in Lent: “I will make of you a great nation and will bless you.” (Genesis 12:2a)

Third Sunday in Lent: “Hit the rock. Water will come out of it, and the people will be able to drink.” (Exodus 17:6b)

Fourth Sunday in Lent: “Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7b)

Fifth Sunday in Lent: Jesus shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” (John 11:43)

Palm Sunday: The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9)

For each session, bring the following objects, adding one each week:

- First Sunday in Lent: piece of artificial fruit
- Second Sunday in Lent: packing list
- Third Sunday in Lent: small glass of water
- Fourth Sunday in Lent: eyeglasses (real or costume)
- Fifth Sunday in Lent: paper tear drop
- Palm Sunday: piece of palm frond

