

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,
just like Abraham and Sarah,
just like Abraham and Sarah,
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."

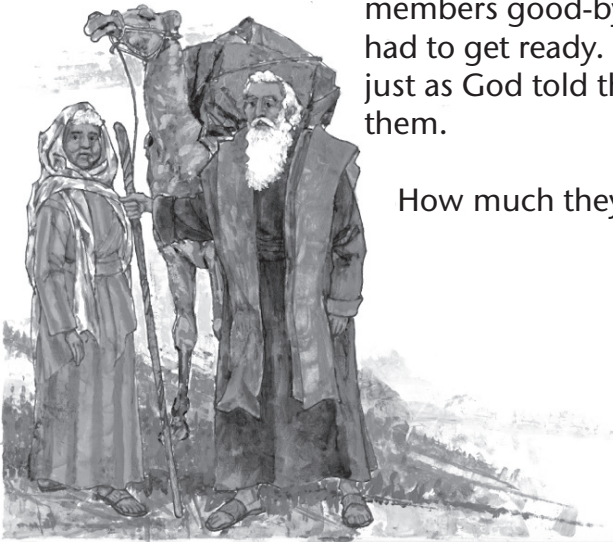
Abram was so astonished that he couldn't speak. After all, how does one speak to God?

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



Gen. 12:1–4a

Ps. 121

Rom. 4:1–5, 13–17

John 3:1–17 or

Matthew 17:1–9

God Blesses

**Goal for
the Session**

Adults will delve into the story of Abram and discern what it means to be blessed by God to be 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

Bless you! Bless her heart! What a blessing! Adults have heard these phrases, and many more like them. Depending on their life experiences, some may think of blessings in terms of having the “good things” of life—health, material comforts, family. Some may feel that they have not been blessed because of the hard times they have endured. Some may resent individuals whom they perceive to have received more blessings than they have. This session offers group members food for thought about the nature of God’s blessing.

Thank you, generous Creator, for blessing me as your child. Guide me to reflect your goodness and blessing to each person I meet. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- pillar candle, lighter
- purple cloth or placemat
- board or newsprint
- markers
- Bibles
- map of ancient Near East that includes Ur, Haran, and Canaan
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 for March 12, 2023

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, colored pencils or fine-tipped markers
- option 2: supplies for project chosen
- option 3: construction paper, markers

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if you are using option 2, bring information about a service or mission project your church is doing during Lent or choose a local ministry organization to help.

Welcome adults to the Second Sunday in Lent as you spread the purple cloth or placemat in the center of your learning space. Place the candle on the cloth and light it. Pray aloud:

Holy God, we gather today seeking your good news. Open to us the mysteries of your mercy. Amen.

Ask adults to recall phrases they have either said or heard that include the word *bless*. Discuss:

✠ What are some definitions of the word “bless”? (*Welcome all responses and record them on newsprint or the board.*)

Comment that the focus scripture invites an exploration of the meaning of God’s blessing.

EXPLORING

To set the context for the focus scripture, ask adults to look for a map of the ancient Near East in their Bibles or show the map you brought. Have a volunteer read aloud Genesis 11:31–32. Ask adults to locate Ur and Haran on the map. Note that the Bible does not say why Terah moved his family.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 12:1–4a. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1, and ask a volunteer to read aloud the “What?” excerpt. Discuss:

✠ Based on the Hebrew understanding of blessing, what might we add to the list of definitions started in Gathering? (*Add responses the list on newsprint or the board.*)



FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

God Blesses

Many study Bibles have excellent maps in the back. In addition, your church library may have a Bible atlas you can borrow. If you want an online map to view on a computer or to project, try a Web site like bit.ly/BibleMaps.

Have adults refer to the map of the ancient Near East while you read aloud Genesis 12:5–9. Wonder together about the hardships Abram and Sarai might have faced on this journey and the doubts they might have had about God's blessing.

There are references to Abram (God gives him the name Abraham in Genesis 17) in the New Testament. As a group, read Acts 3:25; Romans 4:13–17; Galatians 3:6–9, 16; and Hebrews 11:8–16. Discuss:

- ✧ Why do you think these early Christians considered the story of Abram to be important to their mission?

Read aloud the following information about blessing from Donald P. Olsen:

First, a blessing may be understood as a sense of well-being or the presence of peace in the life of the recipient . . . The whole of humanity is blessed by God's creation of the creatures of sky, field, and sea; the grains, vegetables, and fruits for harvest; and the system of sun, rain, soil, and wind that maintains them for our use and consumption. This blessing is expanded further for a third understanding that includes the gifts, talents, and abilities—even biological abilities—that God bestows upon individuals. (*Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 2* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010], 54.)

Discuss:

- ✧ When have you felt a strong sense of God's blessing and guidance? When have you longed for such a sense?
- ✧ What examples of God's blessing as the presence of peace have you experienced in your own life or seen in the lives of others? What examples of God's blessing as the abundance of creation? What examples of God's blessing as the gifts, talents, and abilities that God bestows on individuals?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the "So What?" excerpt on Resource Sheet 1. Discuss:

- ✧ What blessings have we, as individuals and as the church, received from those who have gone before us?
- ✧ How might our response to God's blessing become a blessing to others?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the length of your session:

1. **Meditation** Adults will enter a time of meditation about God's blessing. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Bless) and set out colored pencils or fine-tipped markers. Invite adults to trace the letters with their fingers or color the designs as you read aloud the following paragraph, pausing as noted:

The city Haran, from which Abram is called, means "highway" or "crossroads." God's call to Abram at this crossroads and Abram's faithful response is the starting point of Israel's history. [pause] . . . This text could be used to explore your own crossroads; the needs, callings, and challenges of your congregation as well as the

EASY
PREP

faithful response of its individual members to God's call. Such exploration may lead to naming some of the unique crossroads faced by your congregation and perhaps the demarcation of new starting points in the ministry of your church. [pause] Sunday school teachers, ushers, deacons, liturgists, lay preachers, and individuals sensing a call to ordained ministry are at a crossroad. [pause] Do I have the time? [pause] Do I have the gifts and talents, the skill set for this task? (Donald P. Olsen, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 2* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010], 54.) [pause]

- ✿ Where might God be calling me to go? [pause]
- ✿ Who might be blessed through me? [pause]

Lead me to live as your blessing, God. Amen.

2. **Blessing Project** Adults will choose a way to be reflections of God's blessing during Lent. Ask a volunteer to read the "Now What?" excerpt on Resource Sheet 1. If your church is engaged in Lenten mission or serving projects, tell the group about these. Invite them to add any details they know. Or tell about a community ministry that is in need of help. As a group, decide how the group can participate in one of these projects during Lent. If necessary, ask for volunteers to coordinate the effort.
3. **Blessing Posters** Adults will communicate their understanding of blessing to younger members of the church. Write "God's blessing is like _____." on newsprint or the board. Ask adults to imagine they are explaining God's blessing to children or teenagers. Brainstorm ways to complete this sentence. Set out construction paper and markers, and invite participants to work individually or in partners to make a mini-poster that incorporates one of these explanations. Ask volunteers to put these on doors or bulletin boards in the area where children meet for Sunday school.

Encourage adults to be creative with color, graphic design, and illustrations that will appeal to children and youth.

CLOSING

Light the candle, if necessary. Invite adults to focus on the flame as they pray silently for wisdom in honoring the blessings they have received from God. After a few moments, read aloud Psalm 121, the psalm appointed for the Second Sunday in Lent.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for March 12, 2023, or e-mail it to the participants during the week. Encourage participants to read the focus scripture and Resource Sheet 1 before the next 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.

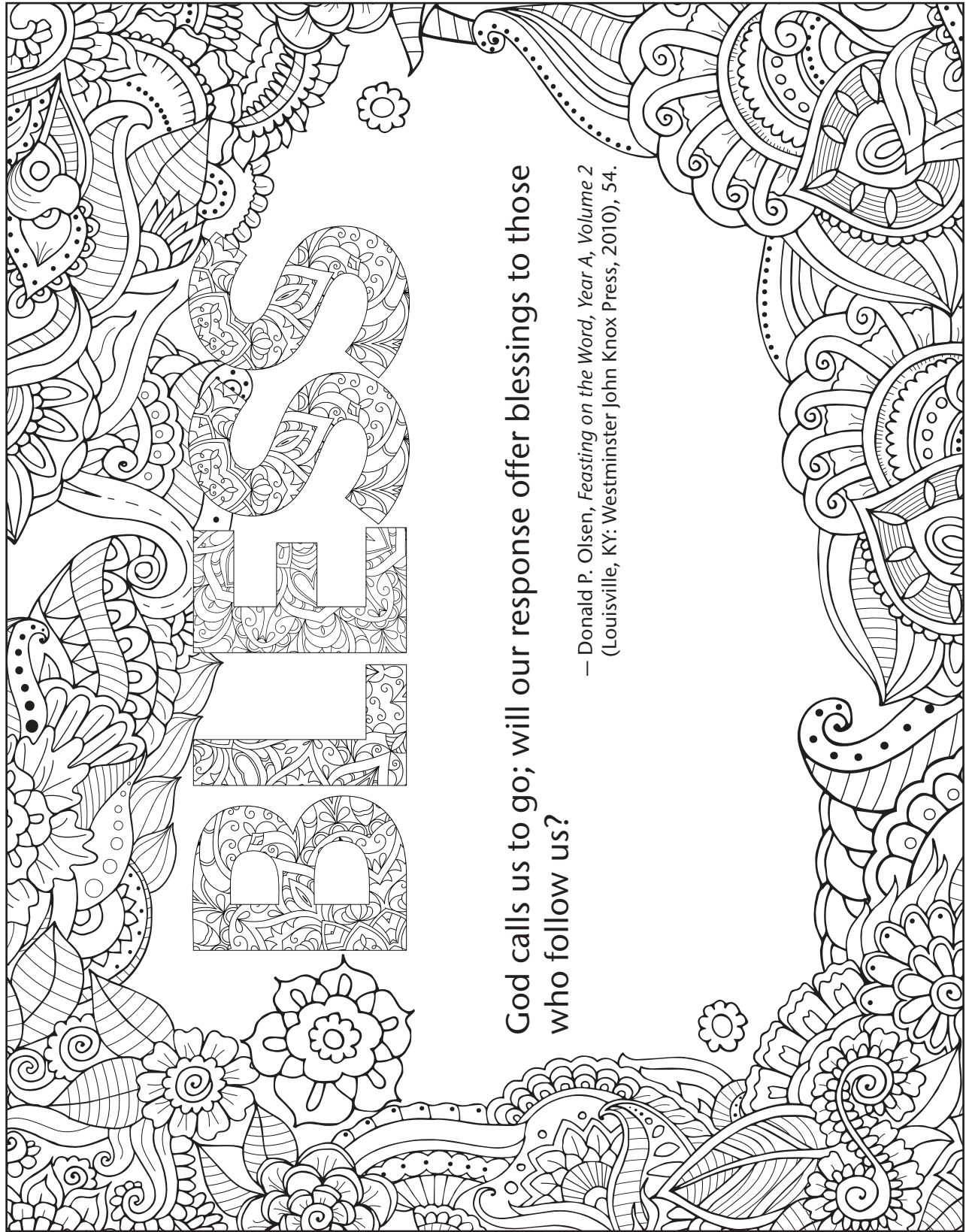
NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—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.

Bless



God calls us to go; will our response offer blessings to those who follow us?

— Donald P. Olsen, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 2* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 54.

Joining the Feast

Year A
Spring 2023
Second Sunday in Lent—Pentecost



What you will find in *Joining the Feast!*

The Church Year Calendar

Describes the important church festivals and special days for the coming season. It provides theological reflections on their importance for the church's life and our own lives.

The Shape of the Season

Presents an overview of the focus scriptures for the weeks in the coming season. It discusses the biblical and theological significance of each of the passages.

Joining Worship and Learning: Making the Connections and Time with Children

A helpful feature in this section of *Joining the Feast* is the inclusion of the stories on the focus scriptures from the multi-age course. These stories can be used in the children's time during worship. Notice that some songs are used by several age levels but not in the same session. If you are interested in including a prayer, poetry, or artwork from an age level, speak with the leader in advance. May your congregational worship be enlivened by these suggestions to join worship and learning.

Joining Mission and Learning

Help the participants in the *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* connect with existing service opportunities in your congregation. Review this list, and offer suggestions to the leaders. Give this chart to the chair of the mission or outreach committee so that the work of the committee can be strengthened through the church school.

Litanies and Prayers

A selection of poetic prayers and responsive readings that helps worship leaders connect the church's educational and worship experiences to find fullness and blessing in the praise and service of God.

Children's Bulletins

A fun activity page is provided weekly to give children a sense of belonging and help them feel welcome in the worship experience. These special children's bulletins connect their worship experience to the education themes.

Joining the Feast

We invite you to “Join the Feast”!

Our exciting *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* offers great opportunities for the local church. Pastors, educators, and participants can experience the wonder of God’s nourishing word to us. For church schools, for study groups, and in preparation for teaching and preaching, the resources here will deepen and strengthen our faith. We have an amazing “feast” set before us! We desire and can find further understanding in our faith—of who God is and what God has done!

Joining the Feast helps pastors, educators, and worship leaders plan for education and worship. We want to assist in reflecting on how to incorporate scriptural and seasonal emphases across different parts of the church’s life.

Joining the Feast can be shared in education and worship committees. It enables important biblical themes to be integrated into the church’s study and worship experiences. A chart of suggestions for ways educational emphases can be used in worship is a feature of what follows here. Church school teachers can discuss these materials with each other to enhance education for all age levels in the church. Pastors who plan their lectionary preaching will find taking an overall look at this church season to be useful for their preparations. In all this we want to join teaching and preaching. We want the church’s educational and worship experiences to find fullness and blessing in the praise and service of God!

An important goal for pastors and educators in the church is to connect or join the church’s educational experience with the church’s worship experience. People of all ages who participate in church school study can find their Christian faith enhanced when the Scriptures read and proclaimed in worship reinforce and expand what they have been considering in their educational time. Education and worship can be mutually supportive in helping God’s word in Scripture come alive in the Sunday morning experience. Consideration of the same lectionary reading in preaching can deepen the insights gained in church school.

Pastors who want to build on what has been done in education welcome this *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* as a way to prepare congregational members for directions into which the sermon can lead. Those who participate in the education time will find the insights gained there enhanced by preaching which considers the same passage and brings God’s word to bear in fresh and nourishing ways. So as we “Join the Feast,” joining the church’s educational and worship dimensions can bring to life the richness of God’s word in Scripture.

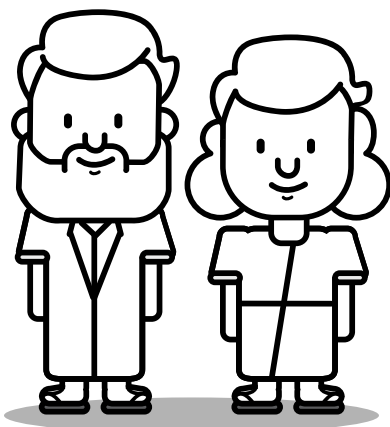
Donald K. McKim



We're Moving!

Genesis 12:1-4a

Abram and Sarai lived in Haran, where Abram's father had taken his family on the way to Canaan. After Abram's father died, they continued to live there, until something surprising happened.



God spoke to Abram. God said, "Leave Haran and the rest of your family. Take your wife Sarai and your nephew Lot with you. I will show you 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 surprised that he couldn't speak. After all, how does one talk to God?

Then God said:

"Whoever blesses you, I will bless.

"Whoever curses you I will curse.

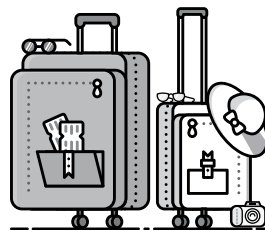
"All the families on the earth will be blessed by you."

Abram did what God said. He, Sarai, and Lot packed up all that they had and left for this new land that God would show them.

Trace the letters.

Be a
blessing.

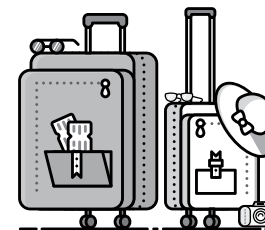
Abram and Sarai had to pack in a hurry. Sometimes it's easy to forget something when we are in a hurry. In each set, find which picture has the item that is not packed and identify the item.



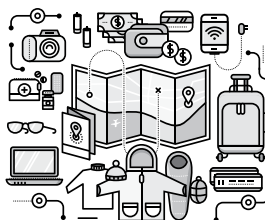
1-a



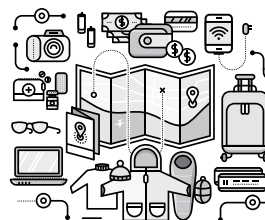
1-b



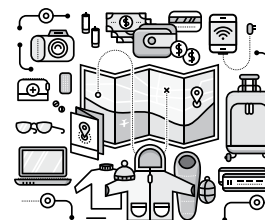
1-c



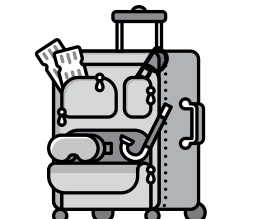
2-a



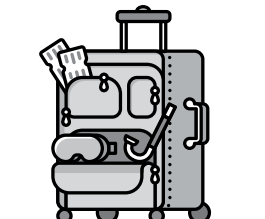
2-b



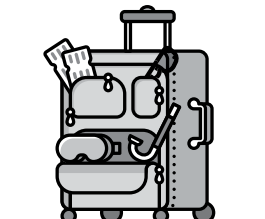
2-c



3-a



3-b



3-c



4-a



4-b



4-c



5-a



5-b



5-c