

# 1

# Leave Your Comfort Zone

GENESIS 12:1–9



## GOAL

After hearing of Abram’s courage and crossing boundaries, young children practice having courage and imagine how they can discover God in new experiences.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: [bit.ly](#) addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Holy one, give me courage to trust that, no matter how many borders I cross, you will be with me and you will guide me to follow you. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

Physical and emotional effort is required to listen to God and move out of our comfort zones. We can get so settled in our routines and traditions that we are tempted never to do something different and discover something new. When we cross borders of a country, we risk being out of place because of possibly not knowing local customs or languages. Stepping out of our comfort zone to follow God is no different.

## THE BIBLE STORY

In Genesis 12:1–9, God speaks to Abram (later Abraham) instructing him to leave the land he has always known and to go to a new place, promising that there he will be blessed. Abram’s move was not easy. Regardless, Abram crossed borders, both geographic and comfort, so he could follow God’s instruction and hope in God’s promises.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children are often not very good at transitions. They can create a scene when changing activities or meeting new people. Children are encouraged, however, to be brave like Abram and his family. New and different experiences are a part of growing up and engaging in the world around them, as well as following God and growing in faith.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- “Making a Map” (p. 8): Draw an outline of your town or city on a large piece of paper or four pieces of 8½" x 11" paper taped together. It does not have to be perfect! Add any major streets to orient the map.
- “Trying New Foods” (p. 9): Obtain a variety of allergy-friendly finger foods that children may not have tried, such as olives, oyster crackers, rice crackers, raw green beans, blackberries, jicama, or edamame. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.
- “Abram’s Move” (p. 9): Determine two places inside or outside (weather and location permitting) you could easily move to with the children during the story. Gather a stuffed animal or doll and a bag with a handle or backpack for each child. Obtain the *Cross Borders* infographic poster ([bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters](#), Year 3 Set). Obtain six river stones and place them in a bag.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Be Brave” (p. 10): Obtain *Be Brave, Little Penguin* by Rachel Elliot (Igloo Books Ltd., 2012) or use the YouTube video “Be Brave, Little Penguin—Read Aloud Books for Kids” ([bit.ly/FMLittlePenguin](#), 3:59).



# GETTING STARTED

- Prepared paper with outline of your town or city
- Markers, crayons
- Internet-connected device
- Mural paper

## MAKING A MAP

A X

Greet the children as they arrive and engage them in conversation about traveling. Wonder who has been on a long car or airplane trip, or if anyone has moved to a new house. Ask the children what the experience was like, what were the good things and what were the hard things about traveling and/or moving.

When everyone has arrived, display the prepared town or city outline. Tell the children that it is a map of your town or city. Write the name of your town or city at the top of the paper. Make a cross approximately where your church is located and point that out to the children. Wonder where the children live. If anyone knows their address, look it up on your internet-connected device and make a small house shape in the approximate spot on your map, labeling it with the child's name. Wonder what else the children can add to your map, such as a familiar building, park, landmark, lake, river, mountains, and so forth. Invite the children to take turns coming forward and adding to the map. Perfection is not the goal, but rather helping the children to identify that they live in a particular place.

Display a larger piece of mural paper and attach the map of your town or city to it. In broad strokes, identify other major cities, states, and geographic landmarks that lie in each direction from your town or city. For a city, draw a couple of tall buildings. Make a bold line for a state border. Draw peaks for mountains, Vs for valleys, straight lines for plains, and wavy lines for bodies of water.

Make any connections with the travels or moves that the children shared earlier and suggest that, when they traveled from your town or city, they were crossing borders, sometimes to different towns, cities, or states. Sometimes they may have crossed geographic borders such as mountains, valleys, plains, rivers, or even oceans. Tell the children that they will learn about the travels of some people in the Bible and how they experienced some good things and some hard things when they had to travel or move.



Display the map mural in your space. Keep for sessions 2, 3, and 4.

- Resource Page 1
- Glory to God* hymnal or hymnal with the tune *THE SERVANT SONG* or internet-connected device



Keep Resource Page 1 for use in sessions 2, 3, and 4.

## PILGRIMS ON A JOURNEY

M T AM

Using Resource Page 1, teach the children the words to the first verse of “We Are Pilgrims on a Journey,” by lining out each phrase and having the children repeat after you. Then sing the verse together to the familiar tune *THE SERVANT SONG* (*Glory to God*, #727, or another hymnal with that tune); for instrumental accompaniment, play the YouTube video “The Servant Song” ([bit.ly/FMServantSongInstrumental](https://bit.ly/FMServantSongInstrumental), 2:26, stopping at 0:42).

Lead the litany on the Resource Page, inviting the children to repeat your words and motions as indicated.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

### TRYING NEW FOODS



Invite children to sit at a table and wonder what things make them feel comfortable. Tell them that they are going to try something new. Wonder if the children like trying new things and how it makes them feel to try something new. Suggest that trying new things sometimes makes people feel uncomfortable and that is often called “moving out of your comfort zone.”

Give each person a napkin and invite them to try some foods that they may not have eaten before. Assure the children that all the foods are good and many people eat these foods.

One food at a time, put a food on each child’s napkin, telling them what it is generically, such as fruit, cracker, vegetable, and so forth. Encourage them to try the food, but do not force it or comment if they do not want to try it. Ask the children to give you a thumbs-up or thumbs-down to show if they liked the food and would eat it again. Then repeat with another food sample.

When you are finished trying foods, engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What did you like about trying something new?
- What did you not like about trying something new?
- How does trying something new make you feel?
- What might be something else you might try that is out of your comfort zone?

- Variety of foods that children may not have eaten before
- Napkins



Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.



As an alternative to trying foods, invite children to try new physical activities, such as snapping fingers, hopping on one foot, doing a push-up, clapping a rhythm, and so forth. Ask the same questions after the children try new activities.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### ABRAM’S MOVE



Gather the children in a circle and place the stuffed animals, dolls, bags, and backpacks around the room outside of the circle. Set the scene for the Bible story. Tell the children that long, long ago there was a man named Abram and his wife, Sarai. Comment that God would later change their names to Abraham and Sarah. Explain that they loved God and tried to follow God’s way of living. Draw the children’s attention to the *Cross Borders* infographic poster and point out that Abram and Sarai lived in a place called Haran. Then one day God called Abram and Sarai to move to a new place. Wonder how Abram and Sarai might have felt about this move. Suggest that this would be moving out of their comfort zone as they were settled in Haran and knew the place well.

Read aloud the adapted Bible story from Genesis 12:1–9 on Resource Page 2 following the instructions provided in parentheses. When you return to your space, point out the places of Shechem and Bethel on the *Cross Borders* infographic poster and comment that it would have taken many years to move there. Wonder together:

- I wonder how Abram and Sarai felt moving out of their comfort zone, the place they had lived for many years, and moving to a new place.
- I wonder what new things Abram and Sarai faced along the way.
- I wonder what trusting in God feels like.

- Stuffed animal or doll for each child
- Bag with a handle or backpack for each child
- Six river stones in a bag
- Cross Borders* infographic poster
- Resource Page 2



The *Cross Borders* infographic poster will be used in each session of this unit. Keep the infographic poster for sessions 2, 3, and 4.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Be Brave, Little Penguin* by Rachel Elliot (Igloo Books Ltd., 2012) or internet-connected device

### BE BRAVE



Wonder what is often needed when trying something new or moving outside your comfort zone. If necessary, suggest that courage or being brave helps us when we are feeling scared or nervous about something new or different. Tell the children they will hear a story about a little penguin who tried something new.

Read aloud *Be Brave, Little Penguin* by Rachel Elliot or show the YouTube video “Be Brave, Little Penguin—Read Aloud Books for Kids” ([bit.ly/FMLittlePenguin](https://bit.ly/FMLittlePenguin), 3:59). After the story, ask the children the following questions:

- ➔ What was Little Penguin scared of?
- ➔ Why do you think he was scared?
- ➔ What happens when Little Penguin lands in the water, and how does he feel?
- ➔ How does Little Penguin help Little Polar Bear?
- ➔ When have you been afraid to try something new or move outside your comfort zone?
- ➔ What or who helped you?
- ➔ When might you be the helper for someone else who is scared?

- Blanket, sheet, or small rug
- Pipe cleaners, at least four or five per child

### HUNGRY BIRDS



Invite the children to create two or three simple obstacle courses from one side of the room to the other. Some ideas might be to step over a stack of books, crawl under a table, zig zag between items, and so forth. The courses may use the same obstacles, but vary the order they are in. Make sure each obstacle is safe for the children to navigate. At one end of the obstacle, place a blanket, sheet, or small rug, and at the other end, scatter pipe cleaners, at least four or five per child.

Gather the children on the blanket, sheet, or rug and tell them that they are going to pretend that they are baby birds; that the blanket, sheet, or rug is their nest; and that they are ready to fly and need to find worms for their dinner. Explain that they have not left the nest yet and flying is moving outside their comfort zone of the nest. Show the children the obstacle courses they created and tell them that they will need to move through the obstacles such as flying through trees (zig zagging), over hills (stepping over a stack of books), and through hollow logs (crawling under a table). Make up scenarios as your obstacles suggest. Point out the worms (pipe cleaners) at the other side of the room and explain that the children need to get their worms (four or five each) and fly back to the nest. Have the children take turns leaving the nest, alternating between obstacle courses so they aren't all on one at the same time.

When all the children have had a chance to gather worms and return to the nest, comment that, when we move out of our comfort zones and try something new, we might run into obstacles. Suggest that we can trust God, be brave, and ask for help when we need it.



# PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

## THREE THINGS

AM A

- Copies of Resource Page 3
- Crayons

Tell the children that there will be many times when they will need to move out of their comfort zone and try something new. Wonder together what some of those times or situations might be. Some suggestions might be trying a new food, going to a new school, trying a new sport, meeting a new friend, going to a different playground, sleeping in a different bed, sitting in a different place in church, and so forth. Tell them that there are three things that can help when they are feeling scared or worried about something new or different. Lead the children in an action poem, inviting them to repeat your words and motions.

When I move out of my comfort zone, *(take a giant step forward)* /  
I may feel scared or all alone. *(wrap arms around self)* /  
There are three things that I can do. *(hold up three fingers)* /  
One. God is with me and you. *(hold up pointer finger, then point to self and others)* /  
Two. I'll stand up tall and be courageous. *(hold up two fingers, then stand up tall and put hands on hips)* /  
I know, it's so outrageous! *(hold up hands, palms facing out)* /  
Three. I'll ask for help, I will. *(hold up three fingers, then hold hands out in front with palms facing up)* /  
I'm not alone. It's such a thrill. *(shake head back and forth, then raise arms in the air)* /  
Brave and daring, that's what I'll be, *(take a giant step forward)* /  
for God is always here with me. *(point up with pointer finger making circles, then point to self)* /

Provide the children with copies of Resource Page 3 and crayons. Invite them to color the pictures around the action poem. Encourage them to take their papers home and have family members or caregivers read the poem and do the actions as they follow along.

## ENCOURAGING OTHERS

A T

- Newsprint, marker
- Copies of Resource Page 4
- Crayons, colored pencils
- Smartphone, tablet, or video recording device (optional)

Tell the children that they are going to make posters to display around the church encouraging others to move out of their comfort zone and try new or different things. Brainstorm together ideas for what people might want to try. Encourage the children to think about new or different things people can do at church or with the church family. Write suggestions on a sheet of newsprint. Some suggestions may be:

- Sitting in a different place during worship
- Bringing a new food to a potluck
- Talking to someone you do not know
- Going to Sunday school
- Meeting your neighbors
- Learning a new song
- Putting down your phone
- Helping at church in a new way
- Visiting with someone who can't be at church



Alternatively or additionally, create a video. Begin by having the whole group say, “Move out of your comfort zone!” Then film each child speaking one of the suggestions. Share the video via social media and/or during worship, per your church’s social media policy.

Read through the list with the children. Provide copies of Resource Page 4 and invite them to choose one of the suggestions and draw a picture of that idea. Talk with each child about their drawing and write what their picture is about on the blank line at the bottom of the paper. Display the children’s pictures around the church where others may be encouraged to move out of their comfort zones.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### RESPONSIVE PRAYER



Invite the children to sit in a circle, close their eyes, and open their ears. Tell them that you will lead a prayer and at times you will ask them to say different things. Encourage them to listen carefully for these times.

Dear God,

Sometimes you ask us to go somewhere new. Friends, if you will go somewhere new, say “I will go.”

**I will go.**

Sometimes, we may be scared or worried. Let’s ask God to be with us.

Please say, “God is with me.”

**God is with me.**

Sometimes we will need to be brave to follow God. Let’s say, “I am brave.”

**I am brave.**

Be with all of us, God, as we serve you this week. Let’s all say “Amen” together.

**Amen.**

# Pilgrims on a Journey Song

Tune: THE SERVANT SONG

We are pilgrims on a journey  
to another time and place,  
singing songs and telling stories  
to recall God's love and grace.<sup>1</sup>

## Litany

When we cross a border, *(pretend to step over a line)* /  
When we travel from here to there, *(point down in front of you and then away)* /  
Who are we? *(place hands palms up and shrug shoulders)* /

Are we tourists? *(pretend to take a picture)* /  
Are we pilgrims? *(pretend to hold a staff)* /  
Are we refugees? *(walk as if carrying a heavy backpack)* /  
Are we missionaries? *(pretend to open a Bible)* /  
Are we diplomats? *(make the peace sign "V" with index and middle fingers)* /  
Are we soldiers? *(pretend to put on a helmet)* /  
Are we students? *(pretend to write in a notebook)* /  
Are we teachers? *(pretend to write on a chalkboard)* /

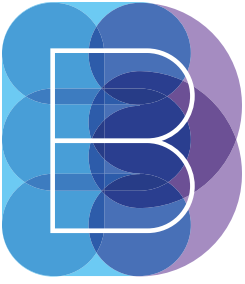
When someone crosses a border *(pretend to step over a line)* /  
and comes to where we are, *(point down in front of you)* /  
When they travel from there to here, *(point away and then down in front of you)* /  
Who are we? *(place hands palms up and shrug shoulders)* /

Are we innkeepers? *(pretend to hold a lantern out)* /  
Are we family? *(give an air hug)* /  
Are we guardians? *(cross arms and stand with feet spread apart)* /  
Are we strangers? *(place right hand on heart and stretch out left hand, palm out as in "stop")* /  
Are we enemies? *(put arms up in boxing stance)* /  
Are we interpreters? *(turn head from side to side pretending to talk to others)* /  
Are we tour guides? *(point to left and right as if pointing out sites)* /  
Are we first responders? *(pretend to hold up another person)* /

Let us step out and discover *(take a step forward)*  
who we are and who they are. *(point to self then open arms wide)*



1. Text excerpted from "We Are Pilgrims on a Journey," by Mary Nelson Keithahn. © 2017 Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc. Used by permission.



## BIBLE STORY

### BASED ON GENESIS 12:1–9

Abram was a man who always listened for God. For many years, Abram listened for God while living in the land of Haran. Abram was at home in Haran where he lived with his wife, Sarai, and their many servants who helped him take care of his land, and their many possessions, and their many animals.

One day, Abram heard God speaking to him. God told Abram that he and Sarai should take all of their family and all of their servants and all of their possessions and all of their animals and follow God to a new place. God said that they would be blessed and become the ancestors of many, many people.

Abram and Sarai did not want to move, but they did want to follow God. They told everyone that they were going to move. Their relatives and their servants packed up all their possessions and took all their animals and began a long, long journey to a new place.

*(Pack up and move! Invite the children to get a stuffed animal or a doll and a bag or a backpack and follow you to a new place. Take the bag with the six river stones with you. Go to your first location.)*

The first place Abram and his family came to was a land called Shechem. God told Abram that one day this land would belong to his family. Abram was so pleased to hear God's voice that he placed stones and worshiped God by a large oak tree there.

*(Place three river stones on the ground and invite the children to repeat after you:*

*Thank you, God, /  
for leading me. /  
I will follow you. /  
Amen. /)*

However, God told Abram and Sarai that they had to keep going. God told them to take all of their family and all of their servants and all of their possessions and all of their animals and follow God.

*(Invite the children to pack up and move! Have them gather their stuffed animal or doll, bag or backpack, and follow you. Go to your second location.)*

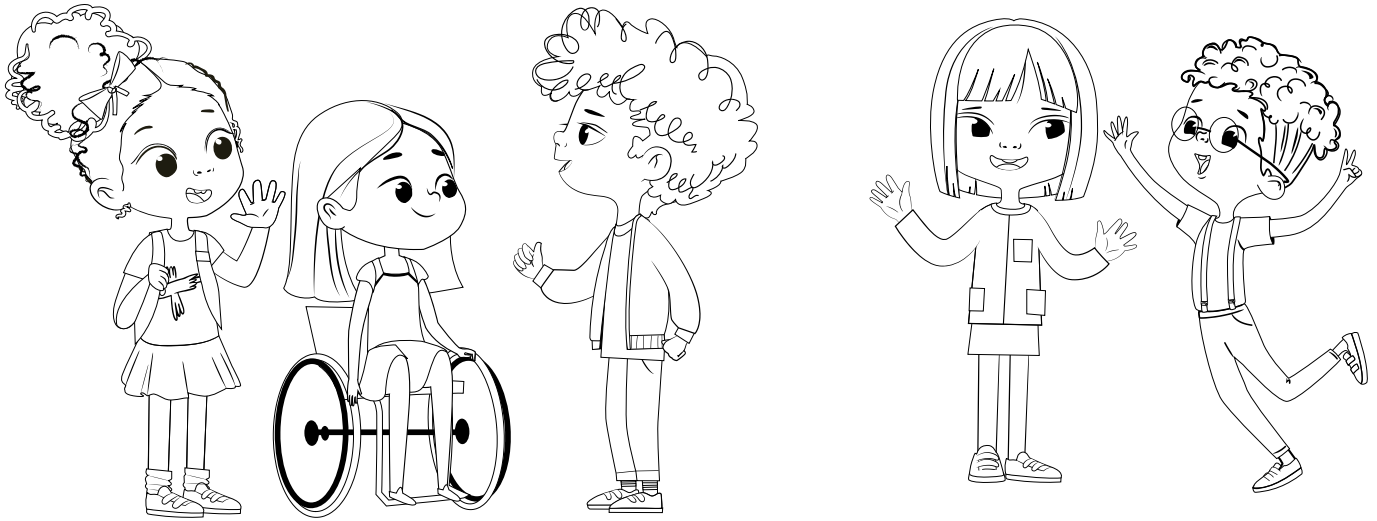
Then Abram, his wife Sarai, and all of their servants with all their possessions, and all their animals climbed into the hills at a place called Bethel. Bethel was in the land that God promised to Abram and his family, that they would live there for many generations. Abram placed stones in this place and worshiped God. Abram and Sarai trusted God. God's promises were true to them.

*(Place three river stones on the ground and invite the children to repeat after you:*

*Thank you, God, /  
for leading me. /  
I will follow you. /  
Amen. /)*

*Take the children back to your space.)*





When I move out of my comfort zone, (take a giant step forward) /

I may feel scared or all alone. (wrap arms around self) /

There are three things that I can do. (hold up three fingers) /

One. God is with me and you. (hold up pointer finger, then point to self and others) /

Two. I'll stand up tall and be courageous. (hold up two fingers, then stand up tall and put hands on hips) /

I know, it's so outrageous! (hold up hands, palms facing out) /

Three. I'll ask for help, I will. (hold up three fingers, then hold hands out in front with palms facing up) /

I'm not alone. It's such a thrill. (shake head back and forth, then raise arms in the air) /

Brave and daring, that's what I'll be; (take a giant step forward) /

for God is always here with me. (point up with pointer finger making circles, then point to self) /



Move out of your  
comfort zone by . . .