



God Makes a Promise

(based on Genesis 12:1-9; 15:2-6)

From the beginning, God had a plan. God wanted to bless the people of the earth. “How shall I bless all people?” God thought. “I know! I will choose one family to help me fill the world with my love.”

God came to a man called Abraham. Abraham lived with his wife, Sarah, in a city called Haran (HAY-ruhn).

“Abraham, I have chosen you and Sarah,” God said. “Leave this land. Leave your family. Leave your home. Pack up all your things and go. Don’t worry; I will show you the way.”

Abraham and Sarah had a hard decision to make. It wouldn’t be easy to leave their home. God knew how hard it would be; God smiled on them and made a promise.

“Abraham, I love you and Sarah. I will make you into a great family. I will bring good things into your life. I will be with you every step of the way. You will bring my love to the whole world. Everyone will remember what you have done.”

Wow! What an amazing promise! Even though it must have been difficult and quite scary, Abraham and Sarah trusted God. They gathered everything they could carry and everyone who lived with them and set out. What a journey it was! It took a very long time, but God was with them every step of the way.

Finally, Abraham and Sarah came to the land of Canaan (KAY-nuhn). They traveled up a mountain to Shechem (SHEE-kuhn), to the oak tree of Moreh, a holy place. It was a holy place because people heard God’s voice there.

In Shechem, God made a promise: “Abraham and Sarah, you have done well. I give this land to you, your children, and your children’s children.”

But Abraham said, “Lord God, Sarah and I are so old. And we still have no children.”

God told Abraham, “Look up at the sky and count the stars. That is the number of children you will have.”

Abraham built a stone altar to mark the place where God had spoken these words of promise.

Abraham and Sarah, and everyone with them, traveled from one end of Canaan to the other, from Bethel and Ai (AY-ee), and even toward Egypt. They admired the beautiful land; they came to know all the roads, rivers, hills, and towns. God was with them every step of the way.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Invite everyone to close their eyes and picture Abraham and Sarah's family, with all the animals and people. Ask: What do you think was the most challenging part of accepting God's blessing and promise?
- Think about a time when your family made a change: a move, a new baby, a parent's different job, or a new school. Ask: Looking back, how do you feel that God was with us in that experience?
- Take turns naming and making a list of ways that God blesses your family. Post the list on the refrigerator or in another prominent place in your home.



Responding to God's Grace

- Play a game to complete the following sentence: "I am going on a trip and I know God is with me when I feel . . ." Using the letters of the alphabet from a to z, each person names a feeling he or she identifies with God's presence—for example, *amazed*, *blessed*, *comforted*, and so forth.
- Create a family ritual of blessing each other when someone goes to work, to school, or to play. Example: The person staying behind says, "God be with you as you go." The person going says, "God be with you as you stay." Here's another idea: place a hand on each person's head as he or she leaves, and say, "You are blessed to be a blessing."
- At the end of each day, take a moment to name one way that you were blessed by someone or that you were a blessing to someone.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Dance, twirl, jump, clap, thump, whisper, and shout in celebration of life.
- In gratitude for God's blessings and promises, find one way to be a blessing to someone else this week: bake and take cookies to a neighbor; open doors and welcome people arriving at church; or allow someone to take your place in line.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

God, you bless us each day and promise to be with us. Help us be a blessing to others by showing your love. Amen.