Lesson 3  Abraham and Sarah’s Sacred Journey

Teacher’s notes:
The story begins with Abram and Sarai, whose names are later changed to Abraham and Sarah. This lesson covers their entire journey and so, for sake of consistency, “Abraham” and “Sarah” are used throughout. At the core of their journey is the establishment of a covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham. It is important to remember that the covenant is with the descendants of Abraham, and not exclusive to Abraham and Sarah. At one point in the story, Abraham and Sarah get impatient with God’s promise of a child and try to make things happen through Sarah’s servant, Hagar. Hagar’s child with Abraham causes much drama in the family. Eventually God promises that Ishmael, Hagar’s son, will also have many descendants and be blessed. The story of Abraham’s blessing and covenant with God is a common story for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Each tradition has seen the covenant with a different perspective, based upon their understanding of God and the scriptures.

Abraham and Sarah are called by God to leave home and go to a new place. This is a common experience in their life; each time they move, they wonder if God will be in the new place. Of course, each time, God is there with them. They also practice the ritual of building altars of stacked rocks as reminders of God’s presence with them. The lesson’s story focuses on their travels from Haran to Shechem, to Bethel, to Egypt, and to Hebron.

Along Abraham and Sarah’s journey, we find many shorter stories about their family. Scripture tells us about Sarah laughing at God’s promise that she will have a child. We read about God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Don’t worry. It was just a test and the kid comes through just fine!). We hear about their travels with their nephew, Lot. Themes of testing, judgment, hospitality and deceit come up regularly in this portion of scripture. Although this curriculum only gives one week to this special journey, it deserves special attention as a core story in the understanding of God’s special relationship with people.

Scriptures:
Genesis 12 – 13 (selections through story)
Genesis 12: 1 – 8 (focus verses)

Supplies:
• Small rocks (lots! 3 per person, plus 15 for story telling)
  *creek stone works well (purchased by the bag at Wal-Mart)
• Paper and markers or pens
• Large flat container of sand

Preparation:
Have 15 rocks in a small basket and the two figures and script from Children Worship and Wonder’s “Abram and Sarai: Genesis 12-13 (Sonia Stewart: Young Children and Worship, p. 100-103). (See: www.discipleshomemissions.org/FamilyandChildren/CWW.htm)
You will also need a “desert box” (flat box with sand in it).
Practice the story or invite a storyteller to join you in class.
Have a blank sheet of paper for each class member and pens or markers for each person. Have another basket full of rocks so that each person can take three small rocks with them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving Time</td>
<td>Invite class members to think about a move they have made or will make. This can be a move to a new house, a new town, a new state, or another “transition” (maybe a new school, new bedroom at home, etc.) Ask those who would like to share the when, how and why of the move. Older youth might already be thinking about their move to college.</td>
<td>5 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story Time</td>
<td>Tell the Abraham and Sarah story from Children Worship and Wonder, or have a trained Storyteller come and share the story.</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
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<td>Time Line</td>
<td>Give each person in class a piece of paper. Explain that no one will have to share their work if they don’t want to. Ask each to put a mark on the paper for the beginning of their life and one for this moment in time. Explain that the space in between is the timeline of their life. Ask them to put in five important moments in their life on the time line. They can draw a picture to represent that moment or write it in.</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
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Ask:
- What makes you nervous about moving?
- What gives you comfort in the midst of moving?
- Does one change in your life affect other parts of your life?
- I wonder how Abraham and Sarah felt when they were asked to move to a new home?
- I wonder how it felt to leave their home and not know where they were going?
- I wonder, have you ever gone somewhere and not known where you were going?
- I wonder if God sounded different in each of these places?
- I wonder how they knew God was with them?
- How do we know when God is with us?
- How did Abraham and Sarah remember God’s presence on their journey?
- How do you mark God’s presence in your life?
- Can anyone share one of the moments on your timeline?
- As you look at your timeline, are there places you felt “settled”?
- When were you most comfortable? Why?
- When were you least comfortable? Why?
- What were the most challenging parts of your journey?
Where do you think God might send you next?
Where do you hope God will send you next?
How do you feel about God calling you to new places or
God calling you to do new things?
How do you feel God’s presence, or hear God in your life?
Do you ever wonder if God is with you or will be with you?
(new camp, new church, going to college)
How do you respond to those feelings?
What have you made, built, written, or done to help you
remember that God was, is, or will be with you?
Have you ever thought of those things as altars?
Are your “altars” more about God or about you? How?

Monument Moment

Explain to the class that they will be taking some time to
think about how our culture records and remembers.
Ask them to list any public monuments they are familiar with.
Make a list of monuments from Washington D.C., around
your state or even in your community. Are there any at school?
What about at the cemetery?

Ask:
- What is the purpose of such structures?
- Do they achieve their purpose?
- What meaning do they hold for your?
- What meaning do they hold for other people?
- Do any of them tell a story?
- Where is God in each monument’s story? Is God in the story?

Invite the class to think about the ideal public monument that
would show God’s presence. They can choose where it goes,
what it looks like, and how it is built. Money is no object…
that is the beauty of imagination! Provide some craft
supplies to let them build a model of their monument to God.

Closing

Give each student three rocks. Remind them about the
story they were told and about Abraham and Sarah’s
journey, where they stacked rocks to form an altar to
remind them that God was in that place. As we leave,
we each take rocks with us. Invite them to stack them
in a place where they could help them remember God’s
presence, or a place they want to celebrate God’s presence.

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.
Ask each person to thank God for a special place where
they remember that God is with them.