

ABRAM, BEFORE HE BECAME ABRAHAM

Genesis 12 - 16

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Abram and Lot

Key-location: Canaan

Key-repetitions:

- Abram's concern for Lot: Abram took Lot with him to Canaan (Gen 12:1-5); when they separated, he allowed Lot first choice (Gen 13:6-11).
- God promises Abram: to bless him and to make him a blessing (Gen 12:1-4); to give him numerous descendants (Gen 15:4-5).
- After events that involved Lot, God promised Abram descendants: Lot went with Abram to Canaan, and the Lord promised Abram that he would give the land to his descendants (Gen 12:7); after Abram and Lot separated, the Lord told Abram that he would give all the land to his descendants forever, and they would be as many as the dust of the earth (Gen 13:14-16); after Lot had been conquered, Abram rescued him and God promised that Abram's descendants would be as many as the stars (Gen 15:5-6).
- Altar/called on the name of the Lord (Gen 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; 22:9-14).
- Son/descendants: Abram didn't have children (Gen 11:30; 15:2); God promised descendants (Gen 13:14-16; 15:4-5); Ishmael (Gen 16:1-16).

Key-attitudes:

- Negative attitude toward Lot.
- Positive attitude toward Abram.
- Lot's selfishness.
- Abram's generosity.
- Abram's concern for Lot.
- Abram's faith.
- Abram's cowardliness; he asked Sarai to say she was his sister instead of his wife.
- Abram's anguish because he did not have a son.
- Abram's weakness to resist Sarai's suggestions.

Initial-situation:

After the flood, God commanded Noah's descendants to multiply and scatter throughout the whole earth (Gen 9:7).

Initial-problem:

God called Abram to leave his country and his people and go to the land he would show him.

Final-situation:

Sarai and Abram had no children. Abram had a son with Sarai's Egyptian slave girl named Hagar.

BIBLE STORY**God Calls Abram**

Abram was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. Abram's family had settled in Haran (Gen 11:31-32).

One day, the Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your family, and your father's home. Go to the land I will show you" (Gen 12:1).

The Lord promised Abram:

- "I will make you into a great nation.
- "I will bless you.
- "I will make you famous.
- "You will be a blessing to others.
- "I will bless those who bless you.
- "I will curse those who curse you.
- "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:2-3).

Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran and set out for Canaan. Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and everything he owned. After arriving in Canaan, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." Abram built an altar to the Lord (Gen 12:4-9).

Abram in Egypt

There was a severe famine in Canaan and Abram went down to Egypt. Just before they entered Egypt, Abram told his wife Sarai, "You are very beautiful. When the Egyptians see you, they will kill me but will let you live. Tell them you're my sister, so that my life will be spared" (Gen 12:10-13).

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, heard about Sarai's beauty. Pharaoh took Sarai into the palace. Pharaoh was kind to Abram because he thought Abram was Sarai's brother. Pharaoh gave Abram sheep, cattle, donkeys, servants, and camels. Pharaoh discovered Abram's deceit, summoned Abram and accused him sharply, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me Sarai was your wife? Why did you tell me she was your sister? Take your wife and get out!" Abram left Egypt with Sarai, Lot, and everything he owned (Gen 12:14-20).

Abram and Lot Separate

Abram was very rich. He was wealthy with livestock, silver, and gold. His nephew Lot also had many sheep, cattle, and servants. There wasn't enough pastureland for both Abram's and Lot's herds. Fights broke out between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. Abram told Lot, "Let's not have fighting between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are family. Let's separate. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

Lot saw that there was much water in the fertile plain of the Jordan. Lot chose for himself the Jordan valley and left the dry, hilly land for Abram. The two men separated (Gen 13:6-11).

Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived near the cities of the plain. Lot pitched his tents near the wicked city of Sodom (Gen 13:1-13).

After Lot left, the Lord told Abram, "Lift up your eyes and look north, south, east, and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as many as the specks of dust of the earth; if anyone could count the specks of dust, then he could count your descendants." Abram moved his tents to Hebron and built an altar to the Lord (Gen 13:14-18).

God's Covenant with Abram

Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision, "Abram. Your reward will be great."

Abram prayed, "O Sovereign Lord, what good are your blessings when I have no son?"

God led Abram outside and said, "Look up and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that, too many to count."

Abram believed the Lord. God considered that Abram's faith was worthy of reward. God considered Abram righteous on account of his faith. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "I give this land to your descendants" (Gen 15:1-21).

Ishmael's Birth

Sarai and Abram had no children. Sarai took her Egyptian slave girl named Hagar, and told Abram to sleep with her. Sarai said, "Maybe I can get children through her." Abram slept with Hagar; she became pregnant. Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born (Gen 16:1-16).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What covenant promises did God give to Abram?
2. What crisis resulted in Abram and Sarai going down to Egypt?
3. What did Abram do that proved he did not trust God to protect him?
4. How are we guilty of actions that prove we don't trust God to protect us?
5. When it became necessary for Abram and Lot to separate, what principles guided Abram, and what principles guided Lot?

6. What principles should guide us when we are required to make a life-changing decision?
7. How was Abram impatient to wait for God to fulfill his promises?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God's promises are often conditional on people obeying his commands. God keeps his promises to people who obey his commands.** The combination of command (Gen 12:1) and promises (Gen 12:2-3) implied that the Lord's keeping of his promises depended on Abram obeying the divine command.
2. **A crisis tests the trust one has in God.** A time of famine tested Abram's faith. Without consulting God, he went on his own initiative to Egypt (Gen 12:10). In Egypt, he put Sarai in jeopardy to protect himself. He valued his own life more than Sarai's honor (Gen 12:11-13). This showed that he didn't trust God's promise to protect him (Gen 12:2-3).
3. **A person's character is revealed when he faces a crisis crossroads that requires a life-changing decision.** Lot could no longer stay with Abram. His Uncle Abram chose to peacefully resolve the conflict. Lot chose prosperity, comfort, and a life of ease when he chose the fertile plain of Jordan near Sodom; a region where immorality flourished. He left Abram the dry hilly land (Gen 13:6-13).
4. **Complications follow when people use their own resources to obtain the very thing God has promised.** God promised Abram protection (Gen 12:2-3), Abram endangered Sarai and he was rebuked by Pharaoh when he tried to protect himself in Egypt. God promised Abram descendants (Gen 12:2-3; 13:16). Abram slept with Sarai's maid in order to obtain a son (Gen 16:1-3), and complications followed (Gen 16:4-15; 21:8-20).

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Role-playing Drama:

Invite two people to dramatize one of Abram's servants talking to one of Lot's servants after Abram and Lot split. Lot's servant is bragging about how Lot got the best of his Uncle Abram. Abram's servant is bragging that Abram revealed his character.