

Lesson 14: Blessing Abraham

Welcome, once again, to the summer season and Via Positiva! Last week, we offered an Introduction to our theme, which is Blessings and Gratitude.

For the next three Sundays, we'll focus on some of the blessing-related stories in the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob saga. This epic tale takes up most of *Genesis* (Chapter 12-50/end). If you've never read it, or haven't read it in a long time, I highly recommend it. Much of it is fairly easy reading (even though it's the Bible), and it truly is an amazing story.

To get you (and the kids) started, we'll begin with God blessing Abraham with as many descendants as there are stars in the sky.

Introduction/Review

Begin by reviewing what "blessings" are (things that make us feel good, happy, and/or lucky).

Then, set up today's lesson by pointing out that it focuses on the blessing of family and review the people in your family.

Finally, provide a little preview of this story....Families have been around for a LONG time, which is why there are many Bible stories about families. This particular story is about an old man, named Abraham, and his old wife, named Sarah. They really wanted to have a baby, but it looked like that wasn't going to happen. Then, God came and told them that they would be blessed with a baby. And that baby would have babies. And those babies would have babies! God told them that eventually they would have as many people in their family as there are stars in the sky!

Videos

Most of the available videos do not present the story in the way I want. They tend to focus on Abraham trusting God and Sarah trusting Abraham - rather than focusing on God's blessings. They also tend to emphasize, in one way or another, God as a male. Finally, some videos do address the issue of Hagar -- Abraham's slave who was the mother of his first son, Ishmael - but Christian versions of this story tend to dismiss Hagar/Ishmael, which I also don't like.

However, if you really prefer a video over a reading, this [one](#) probably comes the closest to making the points we are trying to make with this story.

Reading/Lesson - Younger Kids

When we can't find a version of the story that we like, we write our own! So [here](#) is our

version of this story that we read to the kids in the Preschool-Kindergarten and Lower Elementary classes.

Readings/Lesson - Older Kids

For the older kids, we share the relevant Bible verses. This story spans several chapters in *Genesis*, so we use excerpts. Some of them do require a bit of effort, but kids can certainly understand it with some help. Feel free to re-read passages to facilitate comprehension. [Note that Abraham is called Abram at the beginning of the story.]

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Content Question

What blessings did God promise to Abram? [Answer = that God would make a great nation out of Abram; that Abram's name would be great.]

There was only one, little problem with that promise. Abram kept getting older and older, and nothing was really happening. He didn't feel like he was receiving any blessings at all.

Thought Questions

Have you ever felt like someone made a promise to you and then didn't keep it?

Have you ever made a promise to someone else and then broken it? Why did you break your promise?

Do you think there's ever a good reason for breaking a promise?

Make sure they know what the words "covenant," "ancestor," and "multitude" mean. Then, continue with the story...

Genesis 17:1-6; 15-17; most of 19; 22

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous. Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you...."

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." The Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?...God said, "...your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him....And when [God] had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Questions

Abraham and Sarah were clearly old, and Sarah still hadn't had even one kid! And you can't really be the ancestor of many people when you don't even have one kid. So, God promised them a son. Do you remember what they were supposed to name him? [Isaac]

Why do you think God changed the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah? [No right or wrong answer here.]

Have you ever named anything - a pet or a sibling? How did you come up with the name?

Does your name mean something or did it come from somewhere?

Have you ever wanted to change your name? Why? What would you change it to?

Do you have a nickname?

When Abraham was almost 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old, God gave them a son. Nowadays, you can't have a baby when you are that old. Some people think that Sarah having a baby at 90 years old was a miracle - that God can do anything. But some people think this story is just a story - that it didn't actually happen, but that it teaches us many lessons - what it means to make a promise, what it means to have a covenant with God, what a blessing it is to have children and a family, etc.

After Isaac was born, God did something very strange. God asked Abraham to kill Isaac! Here's that part of the story.

Genesis 22:1-3; 9-12; most of 15-17a

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham!" And [Abraham] said, "Here I am." [God] said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for

the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham! Abraham!" And [Abraham] said, "Here I am." [God] said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "...Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore...."

Questions

What do you think? Do you think this story really happened or that it was a story that was meant to share certain morals or lessons?

Now we finally know what the blessing will be. What was the blessing? [Abraham would have as many kids as the stars in the sky. They would all be the descendants of Isaac.]

How many stars do you think there are in the sky? [Let them guess. Scientists guess that there are *at least* 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars. That's 1 sextillion - billion, trillion, quadrillion, quintillion, sextillion, septillion. You can write that number on paper if you want. It has 21 zeroes. There might even be *as many as* 1 septillion stars - that's 24 zeroes!]

In this story, there is a covenant between God and Abraham. God promised Abraham blessings, but then God tested Abraham to see if he was really worthy of those blessings. Do you think it was fair of God to ask Abraham to kill his only son, Isaac? [No right or wrong answer here.]

Crafts

Our crafts this week focus on...what else?...stars!! Here are few options to get you started.

Easy Tin Foil Star



For this star, simply draw a star or print out a star template. Then, let the kids cover it with aluminum foil to make it shiny.

If you have a hole punch, you can punch a hole near the top and run some yarn/string through it for hanging.

Easy 8-pointed star

There are many versions of origami stars. This one is pretty simple and requires only a single sheet of paper cut into eight strips. We use strips measuring 4" x 2"



This [video](#) shows you how to make it. You'll also need tape or a glue stick to connect the pieces at the end.

Harder 8-pointed star

If you enjoy origami folding, try this star, which is a bit more complicated.



The [video](#) moves pretty slowly, so you can make the pieces while you watch. This star requires four square pieces of paper. If you make the squares 4" x 4", then you need only a single sheet of paper. Also, no tape required!

Activities

Since Abram and Sarai's names were changed, our activities usually focus on name games. Again, here are a couple to get you started.

Name Game Song

The Name Game was a real song sung by Shirley Ellis. This [video](#) will show you the rules as you listen to her sing it. If you know/remember the tune, then just follow this example for the name "Aiden."

Aiden, Aiden, bo-bAiden

Banana-fana fo-fAiden

Fee-fi-mo-mAiden

Aiden!

Describe Yourself

Another fun, easy name game is to simply describe yourself using adjectives that begin with the letters of your name. Again, for the name AIDEN, you would come up with an adjective that describes you and that begins with the letter "A". Then, come up with another adjective that describes you and begins with the "I". Continue for each letter in your name.