

Lesson 015

God Makes A Promise To Abram

Genesis 15-16

MEMORY VERSE

“And He believed in the Lord and He accounted it to him for righteousness” Genesis 15:6

Connecting New Testament to Old Testament: ROMANS 4:13

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

If the lesson is too long for the lower elementary kids, just skip the promise to Abraham as it is similar to the promise in the next lesson, just focus on Hagar’s story.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- A balloon.
- Newspaper, a dish pan full of sand and small treasures like small rubber balls, small erasers, stickers, etc.
- As many cardboard stars sealed in envelopes as the number of children in your class and crayons.

ATTENTION GRABBER! No Let Down

Have your class stand in a large circle. Blow up a balloon and toss the balloon into the circle. Do not let the balloon fall to the floor.

Tell the class that they may only hit it with their hands, and they must not catch or hold it. For every hit, count by 10’s. The goal is to reach 1000. If the ball falls to the ground, you must start over.

- When you have reached your goal (or run out of time), ask the following questions:
- How did we sometimes let the balloon down? How do we sometimes let people down?
- Is it sometimes hard to keep promises? Can we depend on God?
- Does He always keep His promises? Of course, God always keeps His promises! God wants us to trust Him.

Lesson Goal:

God's way is best!

The Lord is always with us. He sees and hears all that we do. He loves us so much and has special plans for our lives. His way is always best and when we follow His plans for our lives, He can do great things through us.

If, rather than trusting God, we take matters into our own hands, it can have disastrous results and suffer the consequences of our sin. *God's way is best!*

Today we are going to look at the story of a man full of faith who had a lapse (failure) of faith. He wondered how God would fulfill His promise. He decided not to wait on the Lord to do what He said, but to take matters into his own hands. It ended up causing a lot of problems for his family. Let's look at what happened...

Summary by Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty:

Sarai remaining ten years in the land of Canaan, bearing no children from Abram, as she was barren, used her own human thinking to realize God's promise. She asked her man to go to her Egyptian maidservant Hagar; Yet once Hagar conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. When Sarai blamed Abram, he put Hagar in his wife's hand to do to her as she pleases; and when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. This situation represents how man sometimes lean on his own judgment, and plans for himself, without seeking god's counsel.

As Abram and Sarai were acting in faith, even their weakness was used by God for the glory of his name; as Sarai came to represent the Church of the nations (the New Testament), that was previously barren, giving God no children; while Hagar referred to the Jews who gave birth to slaves, through their rejection of sonhood to God in Christ

LESSON TIME!

GENESIS 15:1

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

The words, "After these things," speak of the events that had just occurred in Abram's life--the rescue of Lot and the offer of the riches of Sodom. Abram was victorious in both things. Here, God tells him that He was Abram's shield, Abram's protector, and his great reward. Abram lost nothing when he refused the reward offered by the king of Sodom.

We can rest in the fact that God is our shield in the time of battle, and He is our "exceedingly great reward," as we wait upon Him. As Abram refused the world's riches, God rewarded him. May our hearts only desire our God and what He has for us, by faith. God wants us to trust Him.

GENESIS 15:2-5

2 But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" 4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Abram now responded to God by asking the Lord how he was to become a great nation, for he was aware that humanly speaking he was pretty old and still childless. He wondered if his servant, Eliezer, would be his heir. Without a son to continue his line and receive his inheritance how could he hope his descendants would become a great nation?

When Abram responded to God's promise with a question, God did not rebuke him. His honest question did not express unbelief. In verse 4, we read God's answer, "And behold, the Word of the Lord came to him..." Eliezer would not be his heir and gave him the precious promise that a son would be born unto him. God then told him, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them...so shall your descendants be."

Abram could never count the stars, but God could. As Abram looked at the stars, he saw an order, a number he could not count; yet it was symbolic of God's promise to him. So, Abram believed God even though, from the human point of view, the fulfillment of such a promise seemed impossible. It was this trust in God, in the face of a future that seemed hopeless, that caused Abram to be remembered as the hero of faith for all time to come.

GENESIS 15: 6

6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Abram believed in God; that is, literally, he built his faith on God. Because of Abram's act of faith, God declared him to be righteous.

GENESIS 15:7-21

7 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." 8 And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:

"To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— 19 the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Here we see God reminding Abram of the covenant He made with him. God repeated to him the promise that he should inherit the land, and Abram asked Him for a sign. Again, Abram's request for a sign to confirm God's Word to him was not unbelief. God responds to our honest desire to know and confirm His Word and will for our lives.

Hidden Treasures

Spread newspaper on a table or the floor. Fill a dish pan with sand and hide several little treasures like small rubber balls, small erasers, stickers, etc. Let the children take turns digging for treasure.

Explain to your class that, just like the buried treasure, sometimes God's promises are hard to see; but we can trust Him because He always keeps His promises. God's way is best!

Abram was obedient in preparing the sacrifices God asked him to prepare. He was given a prophecy that his descendants would leave the land and go into captivity for 400 years and afterwards return with great substance. Abram would pass in peace to his fathers before these things happened. This

prophecy is actually talking about a time in the future when the nation of Israel would be enslaved in Egypt and then delivered by God through Moses.

GENESIS 16:1-4

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So, he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

Sarah's suggestion:

After this wonderful act of faith, we see that the next recorded event is the challenge of that faith and God's promise. This chapter [16] is a record of the attempt on the part of Abram, at the prodding of Sarai, to accomplish the purposes of God by human ways. Waiting is hard for the natural man; it is a testing of our patience and trust in God. Abram listened to his wife.

God had promised both Abram and Sarai children in His timing. God alone can fulfill the promises He gives to us. He alone is wise and knows what is right and best for us. If we cling to His Word, we will never be disappointed. He is always faithful. Yet Sarai doubted the Lord's plan for her life and convinced Abram that they must try to do things in their own strength rather than rely on their Maker. When we do things in human strength instead of allowing God to rule, we will be robbed of the great things He wants to do in us. At the same time, we will create unnecessary hardships and trials in our lives.

Almost immediately, Abram begins to reap the consequences of his mistake in the bitterness that sprang up in his home. Sarai blames Abram even though it was her idea. He refuses to accept responsibility for Sarai's wrong actions and leaves her to deal with it. In doing this, he now surrenders to her his position as head of the household and lets her deal with Hagar.

When we cease to trust in God, we can fall into sin; and sin always has consequences. Hagar conceived an heir while Sarai remained barren. Pride reigned in Hagar; jealousy reigned in Sarai. Hagar, Sarai, and Abraham were wronged in this ungodly plan. The results were much hurt and sorrow. Even though it was Sarai's idea, she was angry with Abram for allowing it to happen. Abram would suffer the consequences for making this choice. He should have waited on the Lord to fulfill

His plan. God has given a special responsibility to the husband and father in the home to care for his family and to make wise choices in leading his family.

When we strive to accomplish good things apart from God's guidance, our lives become chaos and full of pain. Good can only come from the perfect plan the Lord has for each one of our lives. We must let God rule in our lives. God's way is best!

GENESIS 16:5-6

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me." 6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

When we step out of God's plan, disastrous results occur. Sarai blamed Abram for her faults; and he, in turn, gave Hagar back to her. Sarai, wrongfully, treated her slave with harshness. Hagar fled. The entire family was turned upside down as a result of their disobedience and lack of faith.

Our lives and families can be turned upside down when we do not obey and wait upon the Lord. When we choose to step out of the safety of obedience, we must live with unnecessary hardships. How much better it is to wait and trust in the Lord who alone is wise and has good plans for our lives! How much better it is to walk trusting in Him and His unending love knowing He does all things well! How much better it is to obey! God's way is best!

GENESIS 16: 7- 8

7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

How sweet it is to know that God, the Creator of the universe, cares so intently about each one of us. God's love for man is so great that Jesus Himself; Our Coptic Church teaches us in our prayers that God is [Lover of Mankind]. The Angel of the Lord came and ministered to a runaway Egyptian slave girl in the wilderness. God loves us and desires to take care of us! Even when we are in the middle of suffering and pain brought on by our own actions, the Lord still comes to find us and minister to us. What a great picture of grace! Abram, Sarai, and Hagar made a wrong choice; but God knew what was happening. In His love, He came to Hagar to relieve her suffering.

GENESIS 16: 9- 12

9 The Angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." 10 Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." 11 And the Angel of the Lord said to her:

"Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the Lord has heard your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

The Lord tells Hagar to be obedient and return to Sarai. He told her He would be there for her and gave her a great promise. He told her He would multiply her descendants exceedingly. When we return our lives to the Lord and submit ourselves to Him, He bestow upon our lives the blessings He desires.

God heard Hagar as He hears each one of our cries. God gave Hagar the name for her child: Ishmael which means "God Hears." Hagar would long be reminded that God heard her and blessed her out of His love. Ishmael would be a wild man causing us to see the consequences of human efforts instead of God's ways. The fruits of our own hands cannot be blessed. God's way alone is blessed, because He knows what is right and truly best for us.

[Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty] Hagar bore Abram a son and named him "Ishmael"; meaning (God listened). Abram confirmed that name, on the assumption that God listened to him and gave him a son to inherit him as he did not expect Sarai to give him a son. Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael, and 100 years old when Isaac was born; So, Ishmael was 14 years senior to his half-brother Isaac.

GENESIS 16:13-16

13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Hagar obeyed God and returned to Abram and Sarai. Hagar knew the Lord was with her, and He saw her affliction. We can all be encouraged by the fact that God is always with us. He sees everything that happens to us. He knows our hurts and our joys.

If, as Hagar did, we cry out to God, He will reveal Himself to us. He longs to meet our needs and take care of us. God Wants us to trust him whether He will grant our requests and prayers or not, He is

great and trustworthy and will do what is best for us. Let us Obey God and Trust Him, so we can experience His presence and blessings in our lives. God's way is best!

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust the Lord in all things--first to believe in Him for salvation and then to trust Him to show us how to live our lives for Him.

