

# COUNT THE STARS

## MAIN POINT.

Authentic **faith** will lead us to **obey**, resulting in God's **blessing**.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

God blessed Abraham by making his name great and making him into a great nation, where all people will be blessed through him. This blessing is ultimately fulfilled in his descendant, Jesus, who brought salvation to all people through His death and resurrection.



This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

**Genesis 12****Genesis 15****FAITH LEADS TO OBEDIENCE****GENESIS 12:1-9**

1 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. 2 And 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. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." 4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

**OBEDIENCE LEADS TO REWARD****GENESIS 15:1-6**

15 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 2 But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." 5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may He teach you new and wonderful truths (Ps. 119:18).

Authentic **faith** will lead us to **obey**, resulting in God's **blessing**.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### FAITH LEADS TO OBEDIENCE

#### GENESIS 12:1-3

"The many promises of the passage cohere into three strands: land, seed, and blessing. . . . But the blessing so bountifully promised is preceded by a word of command, 'Leave ...' (v. 1a). His answer to the command is not by word but by deed: 'So Abram left' (v. 4a)."<sup>1</sup>

#### GENESIS 12:1-9

"God called Abram out of a pagan world and made amazing promises to him, promises that later became the Abrahamic covenant. The passage also extols the faith of Abram, teaching that faith obeys the word of the Lord. Here was a man who was middle-aged, settled, prosperous, aristocratic, and probably pagan (although it is possible that among the gods he revered there was a remembrance of the ancestral God Yahweh). Then suddenly the word of the Lord came to him, although it is not known exactly how. He obeyed the word, turned his back on the old ways, and obediently left Ur to follow God's direction. That is why Abram is the epitome of faith in the Bible, and believers are referred to as 'the seed of Abraham' (Rom. 4:1-3, 16-24; Gal. 3:6-9; Heb. 11:8-19; James 2:21-23)."<sup>2</sup>

### OBEDIENCE LEADS TO REWARD

#### GENESIS 15:1-6

"The New Testament finds this a momentous chapter in two respects: first in its declaration that Abram was justified by faith (6), a phrase at the heart of Paul's gospel in Romans 4 and Galatians 3; and secondly in its record of the covenant—for this, rather than Sinai's, was the fundamental covenant, and it spoke of grace and not law (Gal. 3:17-22). To honour this promise God would bring his people out of Egypt (Ex. 2:24), and his Son into the world (Luke 1:72, 73)."<sup>3</sup>



## CONTEXT

God's call of Abram, a descendant of Noah, seemed to come out of nowhere. Abram lived in a pagan culture, and whether or not he was aware of the one true God, Yahweh, is unknown. It's also unlikely. Abram's culture worshiped ancient Babylonian gods. During this time period, family ties ran very deep. It was rare for anyone to leave family and migrate hundreds of miles to resettle. **But the Lord's call was so clear, so real, so life-altering, that Abram responded in immediate obedience.** He believed God's words. The call of Abram marked a huge moment in human history: God's promise was for Abram's people and all people who are made coheirs in Christ. While Abram wouldn't always walk perfectly, he listened to God and believed His word.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION



### God is faithful

God's faithfulness means **He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises** (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of "faithful" to God's coming through on His word in 1 Thessalonians 5:24. We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

## LEADER'S PRAYER

**LORD, HELP US WALK IN OBEDIENCE. REMIND US THAT YOU'RE FAITHFUL, EVEN WHEN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE DIFFICULT.**





## KICK STARTER

### ♡ HEART CHECK

Let's check in on how you're doing spiritually. How did you magnify God's name over your own last week? When did you struggle with pride or building your own towers instead of obeying the Lord?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## WORTH IT OR NOT WORTH IT

**SUPPLIES LIST: NONE**

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to vote and share responses:

- **WORTH IT OR NOT WORTH IT: GOING TO SCHOOL ON SATURDAYS TO GRADUATE A YEAR EARLY?**
- **WORTH IT OR NOT WORTH IT: SAVING 75 PERCENT OF YOUR ALLOWANCE OR INCOME NOW SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORK DURING COLLEGE OR IMMEDIATELY OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL?**
- **WORTH IT OR NOT WORTH IT: LETTING YOUR SIBLING HAVE THE BIGGER ROOM IN EXCHANGE FOR HIM OR HER DOING ALL YOUR CHORES FOR A YEAR?**

With almost everything we do, we weigh whether or not it's worth it. We determine if we want to do something based on the cost. It's important to know that when you weigh the cost of obeying God, it's always worth it.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Be honest. Have you ever questioned if following Jesus—obeying Jesus—would be worth it? Have you worried about all the things you might have to “give up” to obey God? What if He asks you to do something you don't want to do? Many of us have asked ourselves these questions. Jesus even encouraged us to weigh the decision to be one of His disciples because it will cost us (Luke 14:25-33). It may cost your popularity, your prejudices, your plans, your hobbies. You may pay a cost in the way you spend your time. But what you gain far outweighs anything you “give up;” you gain true life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German preacher who was arrested during the Holocaust for speaking out against the Nazis, once said, “what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.”<sup>4</sup> Let that sink in. Our redemption cost Jesus His life. Grace was costly, and it can't be cheaply gained. While salvation is a gift, walking in obedience comes with a cost—a cost that is always worth it.



# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

Authentic **faith** will lead us to **obey**, resulting in God's **blessing**.

## FAITH LEADS TO OBEDIENCE

READ GENESIS 12:1-9

### WHAT IS DIFFICULT ABOUT OBEDIENCE? WHAT DID ABRAM'S OBEDIENCE COST HIM?

Obedience is costly. It often demands that we set aside our own desires. A lot of times, it means we don't do what we want to do or what we feel comfortable doing. **Abram's obedience cost him everything—his homeland, his extended family, his reputation, his comfort.** But in exchange for saying yes to God, Abram inherited a blessing unlike any other person who has ever lived—being the father of many nations.

### DID ABRAM DO ANYTHING TO EARN HIS POSITION? WHAT DOES THAT REVEAL ABOUT GOD?

There was nothing inherently special about Abram. In fact, he likely lived in a very pagan culture and took part in idol worship. But God, in His kindness and goodness, chose Abram. **All Abram did was believe.** In the same way, we don't do anything to earn our position with God. God calls us to salvation and offers it as a gift. It's also a gift that God then chooses to use us to grow His kingdom.

### REREAD VERSES 8-9. WHAT DOES IT SHOW YOU THAT ABRAM BUILT *ALTARS* BUT PITCHED A TENT WHEREVER HE WENT? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Once Abram left Ur, he lived a nomadic life until settling in Canaan. Along the way, we're told that Abram pitched tents. Tents aren't permanent structures; you can carry them with you once you're ready to leave a location. But Abram built altars to the Lord—places to worship and sacrifice offerings to God—in several locations. When Abram left those areas, the altars remained. Maybe an interesting truth we can take from this is a lesson in what lasts. Our lives here are temporary. Our homes, our reputations, our material possessions, our trophies—none of these last, and we can't carry them with us when we die. **But when we worship the Lord, when we share the gospel, and when we invest in our relationship with God, we're building something that lasts. We're building the kingdom of God.** This is a great reminder for believers that we're truly just passing through on our way to heaven.

## OBEDIENCE LEADS TO REWARD

### READ GENESIS 15:1-6



#### WHAT WAS THE POINT OF GOD SHOWING ABRAM THE STARS?

Those stars represented God's faithful word. Not only would Abram eventually have a son, but Jesus would be his descendant too. Through people placing their faith in Jesus, Abraham would indeed have numerous spiritual offspring. **While Abram didn't have children yet and this promise must've felt impossible, God used this image of the stars to reassure Abram because He loved and cared for him.**



#### WHY CAN WE TRUST GOD WHEN HE CALLS US?

One of God's most defining attributes is His faithfulness. Paul explains that even if we are faithless, God will remain faithful because He can't go against His nature (2 Tim. 2:13). Ever. We can trust God with all our plans. **When He call us to do something or to go somewhere, we can step out with complete confidence because He simply can't be unfaithful to us.**

#### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO IMITATE ABRAM'S FAITH IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

Abram's bold faith not only affected his family, but it affected the entire world—and all of human history. His yes and his obedience continued what was already in motion to bring about the Savior of the world. Abram became the father of Israel, God's chosen people. He trusted the Lord's word enough to leave every comfort without knowing exactly where God was leading him. **When we boldly say yes to the Lord's call, not only does it affect us, but it also affects those watching us: our family, friends, and peers.** You can faithfully obey God because He can't help but be faithful to you.

## WRAP-UP

### WHAT COULD GOD BE CALLING YOU TO LEAVE BEHIND TO FOLLOW HIM? WHY CAN YOU TRUST HIM?

When God calls us to do something, say something, or go somewhere, we always leave something behind. It may not be a physical home like it was for Abram, but it may mean leaving behind reputations, mistakes, toxic relationships, addictions, or our plans for our lives. Obeying God and trusting in His faithfulness may mean we become unsettled; it may mean huge change; or it could be small change. **No matter what God calls you to do, you can trust Him. God will never lead you to a place where He won't go with you.** Isn't that amazing? The God of all creation walks with believers at all times because the Holy Spirit lives within them! Even though obedience often involves walking away from something, you'll be blessed for walking in obedience to the Lord.