



# *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*



**The Father of the Faithful**

# The Father of the Faithful

**A**fter the Flood, the number of people on Earth began to multiply again. And again they began to turn away from God, forgetting the lesson of that terrible curse. They rejected God's will and instead followed after their own will, just as the people before the Flood had done, and just as Adam and Eve had done. This attitude spread throughout all peoples and all nations.

But God had a plan. He would start a new nation and work with the people of that nation in a special way. He would give them special understanding and truth. He would give them special blessings for obeying Him, and He would use them as an example to other nations. This special nation would become wealthy and powerful and ultimately include millions of people. And God would start it with just one man, Abram.

## **GOD CALLS ABRAM**

Abram was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. He was born about 350 years after the Flood, after the death of Nimrod. He grew up in the center of human civilization, Mesopotamia, an area of

fertile land and great cities. It was also the center of human sinfulness and pagan worship. Abram grew up in a world of advancement that was at the same time full of strife, injustice and evil.

Abram became a man of importance and wealth in his homeland. But at the age of 75, he received a challenging command from God: *Leave your home, your friends and acquaintances and many of your possessions behind, and move your wife and your household to a destination that I will show you later.* God also promised Abram that if he would faithfully obey this command, He would make Abram's descendants into a great nation and would make his name great. He also promised that through him, everyone on Earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

These were not ordinary promises. These promises would change the course of human history—if Abram believed them and obeyed God's command.

How did Abram respond? In your own words, write the answer found in verse 4:

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ILLUSTRATIONS: JULIA GODDARD

Abram leaves his home country for an unknown location.

Abram showed a humble, willing attitude and obeyed God without question. God recorded this in the Bible as an example to you to show the same faith and willingness to obey Him, no matter what. Compared to other individuals in

Genesis, God recorded a more extensive amount of detail about the life of Abram, as well as the lives of his descendants. God wants you to compare your attitude and your responses to Abram's. When the authorities in your life, your parents, give

you a chore, do you demand to know why before you carry it out? Do you forget to do it? Do you obey but complain? Or do you respond with an attitude of obedience and trust, as Abram did?

God wants you to trust and obey your parents so that you learn to trust and obey Him. He is the authority in your life, and He will guide you toward blessings, success and happiness—but you must trust and obey Him. Follow the example of Abram, who became known as the “father of the faithful.”

With his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and their servants, flocks and belongings, Abram journeyed toward a land that God would show him. For him, a new life was beginning—a life that depended completely on God’s promises.

### **UNSELFISH CONCERN**

Both Abram and Lot were wealthy men. Each of them had large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle that needed well-watered land for grazing. Abram’s and Lot’s herdsmen began arguing over pastureland in the Jordan Valley near the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Each group wanted their master’s animals to benefit from grazing this fertile location, but their flocks and herds were too large to share it.

Abram was senior to Lot, and the head of the family. He could have taken whichever land he wanted. Instead, he let Lot choose. Lot chose the Jordan Valley pastures, and Abram willingly took the

less fertile mountainous region to the west of the Jordan River (Genesis 13:12).

God saw this and recognized a special quality of character in Abram: He put the needs and desires of others ahead of his own. This attitude pleased God. He told Abram to look in every direction from where he was standing. He promised that his children would inhabit all of this land, becoming numerous like the particles of dust on the Earth (verses 14-17).

What would your approach have been if you were in Abram’s position? Would you give your best possession to someone else? Abram’s generosity and selfless attitude is another lesson for you today. If you have a giving, sharing attitude, you can trust that God will see that and will bless you, just as He blessed Abram.

What does God think of someone who gives willingly? Read 2 Corinthians 9:7 and write your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **THE GREATEST PROMISE OF ALL**

Years passed. Abram and Sarai expected to have a child, but Sarai still had not become pregnant. The older he became, the more Abram wondered how God would fulfill His promise. *Would God fulfill His promise through my servants?* Abram began to wonder (Genesis 15:2-3). If Abram died before having a child of his own, his oldest servant born in his house would be his heir and inherit his possessions. Would that fulfill God’s promise?



Abram and Lot part ways.

God appeared to Abram and reminded him of the promise. He reassured him that his heir would be his own flesh-and-blood child, not one of his servants. God then said that Abram's descendants would be as innumerable as the stars in the sky. Ac-

ording to God's promise, Abram's descendants were to inherit the land extending from the Nile River to the Euphrates River. God would give vast wealth and great national blessings—that only He can give—to Abram's family (verses 4-5, 18).

Abram knew that these blessings would come long after he died. God also told him that his descendants would actually serve as slaves as “a stranger in a land that is not theirs.” But God said after many years, they would “come out with great substance” and the promised blessings would be conferred on them (verses 13-14).

God had promised that this would all begin with a flesh-and-blood child of Abram. And he and Sarai were now far past the age when people are generally able to have children.

### **ABRAM'S FIRSTBORN**

Abram's wife began to doubt that she would be able to have a child in her old age. Sarai understood what God promised, but she couldn't see how Abram could have numerous descendants forming many nations by having a baby with her. She thought that was impossible and decided to take matters into her own hands.

Sarai reasoned that if Abram had a child with her female servant, Hagar, it would be from his flesh and blood, fulfilling God's promise. Abram agreed to Sarai's plan, and soon after, Hagar became pregnant with Abram's child.

Hagar reasoned that because she was pregnant with Abram's child and Sarai was not, she was special. She felt she was better than Sarai. Sarai resented Hagar's arrogant behavior and saw that God was not blessing her plan. Sarai began to treat Hagar more and more harshly.

Hagar eventually ran away from their household into the wilderness. There, God appeared to her. He told her to go back to Abram's household and submit to Sarai. He also told her that she would give birth to a baby boy, whose name would be Ishmael, meaning “God hears.” He promised that Ishmael's descendants would multiply greatly and become a nation.

Hagar returned, just as God had told her. After a couple of months, she gave birth to Ishmael. Abram was relieved. He thought God's promises were finally being fulfilled. Abram assumed this was the son who would be the father of the nation God had promised.

### **MEMORY TEST**

Who was Noah's great-grandson who led the people to build the tower of Babel?

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Explain instances when Abram showed unselfish concern for others.

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How old was Abram when God told him to leave his homeland? \_\_\_\_\_

### **NAMES CHANGED**

Thirteen years had passed since Ishmael was born, and Sarai still had no children. Abram was now 99 years old, and Sarai



Eventually tension in the family escalates to the point that Abraham is forced to send Hagar and Ishmael away.

was 90. God spoke to Abram once again. He reminded Abram of the covenant that He had made with him and promised even more greatness. God said that he would be not just a father of one nation but “a father of many nations.” He also said that Sarai would be a “mother of nations” and the descendants of Abram and Sarai would include many kings (Genesis 17:4, 16). God said that this covenant would be everlasting! He promised to always be with Abram and all his generations. God also once again made it clear that these promises would be fulfilled through a son born to Sarai and no other woman.

To confirm these promises, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and

Sarai’s name to Sarah. *Abraham* means “father of a great multitude,” and *Sarah* means “princess.” Their new names reminded them of the promises God had made to them.

Abraham prayed to God, asking Him to fulfill the promises through Ishmael. God knew it was hard to wait so long, and reassured him that his son Ishmael, whom he loved, would become a great nation, but His covenant would be with a son born to Sarah, saying, “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed; and you shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.” That son, God said, would be born at a “set time in the next year” (verses 19-21).

### **THREE VISITORS**

Abraham was in his tent one day when he noticed three visitors approaching. He ran to greet these men and showed them hospitality, offering them food and drink. The men accepted Abraham’s gracious offer.

As the men spoke with each other, it began to dawn on Abraham that there was a unique purpose behind their visit. These weren’t just three high-ranking visitors from a foreign country.

“I will surely return to you in the spring,” one of the visitors said, “and Sarah your wife shall have a son” (Genesis 18:10; Revised Standard Version).

Sarah overheard what the visitor said. Even though God had reminded

Abraham repeatedly that He would keep His promise through Sarah, she laughed, when she heard the visitor's words.

By the time the men were about to leave, it was clear to Abraham and Sarah who these three visitors were. Two were angels and the other was God.

Before leaving, God taught Abraham and Sarah an important lesson. He asked, "Is anything too hard for the Eternal?" (verse 14). That lesson is recorded for you to learn today. If God promises you something, do not doubt, thinking it is too hard for Him to keep His word.

### **THE SON OF PROMISE**

Just as God had said would happen, Sarah gave birth to a baby boy in the spring. They named him Isaac, according to God's instruction. Isaac was born when Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100! (Genesis 21:1-5). This truly was a miracle from God.

Finally Abraham had a son from his wife, Sarah. This was the son through whom God would fulfill His promises to make Abraham's descendants numerous, wealthy and powerful and to bless all peoples on Earth.

Have you ever had to wait a long time for something you wanted or needed? Maybe you felt like God was not answering your prayers, or that He was ignoring them. Learn from the example of Abraham: God promised that he and Sarah would have a son, and he waited 25 years for God to keep that promise.



Sarah holds Isaac, the son of promise.

### **MEMORY TEST**

What lesson did God teach Abraham and Sarah before He departed?

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How old was Abraham when Isaac was born? \_\_\_\_\_

How old was Sarah when Isaac was born? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years did Abraham and Sarah wait to receive Isaac? \_\_\_\_\_



## **THE GREATEST TEST OF ALL**

When God had visited Abraham and Sarah along with the two angels, He observed something about Abraham's character. He noticed "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD" (Genesis 18:19). God knew that Abraham would be a father who would raise children according to His way of life. That is exactly what Abraham did with his son Isaac. Abraham was faithful and feared God, but that did not mean he did not have trials.

God tests each one of us today to evaluate our growth and to develop more of His mind and character in us. The life of Abraham was full of difficulties that required him to make hard choices to trust and obey God. His obedience allowed God to develop in him qualities of patience, selflessness and faith. But the difficult trials were not over. The hardest one was about to commence.

One day, God told Abraham, "Take now 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 of which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:1-2; RSV). This was perhaps the hardest thing possible for Abraham to do. This went beyond anything he had been instructed to do in his long life.

Yet Abraham obeyed God quickly and without question.

The very next morning, Abraham, Isaac and two servants packed the necessary

supplies on a donkey and journeyed toward Moriah. Abraham thought about what he was about to do. He did not know exactly why God had commanded him to sacrifice his son, but he did not lose faith in God. Abraham believed that God would fulfill His promises through Isaac and not through some other son or some other way. All he had to go on was God's words, but he believed those words 100 percent. He knew God would somehow uphold that covenant, even after he killed and sacrificed Isaac. Thousands of years later, the Apostle Paul wrote that Abraham knew God could resurrect his son (Hebrews 11:17-19).

On the third day of the journey, they arrived at the base of the mountain that God had told Abraham to go to. The two servants and the donkey stayed behind while Abraham and Isaac ascended the mountain.

Part way up, Isaac asked his father where the lamb for the sacrifice was, recognizing that they had all the supplies except something to offer. Abraham responded in complete faith: "My son, God will supply Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

When they reached the proper location, Abraham and Isaac worked together to build the altar. Abraham then tied Isaac up and laid him on the pile of wood.

Abraham now picked up the knife.

Suddenly the voice of an angel of God called out: "Abraham! Abraham! Do not hurt your son."

Abraham dropped the knife and was filled with relief and gratitude to God.

“Now I know,” said the voice, “that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

God’s plan required a special nation to be founded by an extremely special man. This man’s teaching and his example would influence that nation for many, many generations. If he was a flawed man who dedicated himself to God only part-way, then God would not be able to use the nation that descended from him.

God had to put Abraham through this hardest of all tests. And unlike all the other men around him, Abraham obeyed God all the way. Now God could continue His plan, which would do so much for so many people! This could only come about if God plunged Abraham into the hardest of tests and if, in that test, Abraham chose to trust and obey God.

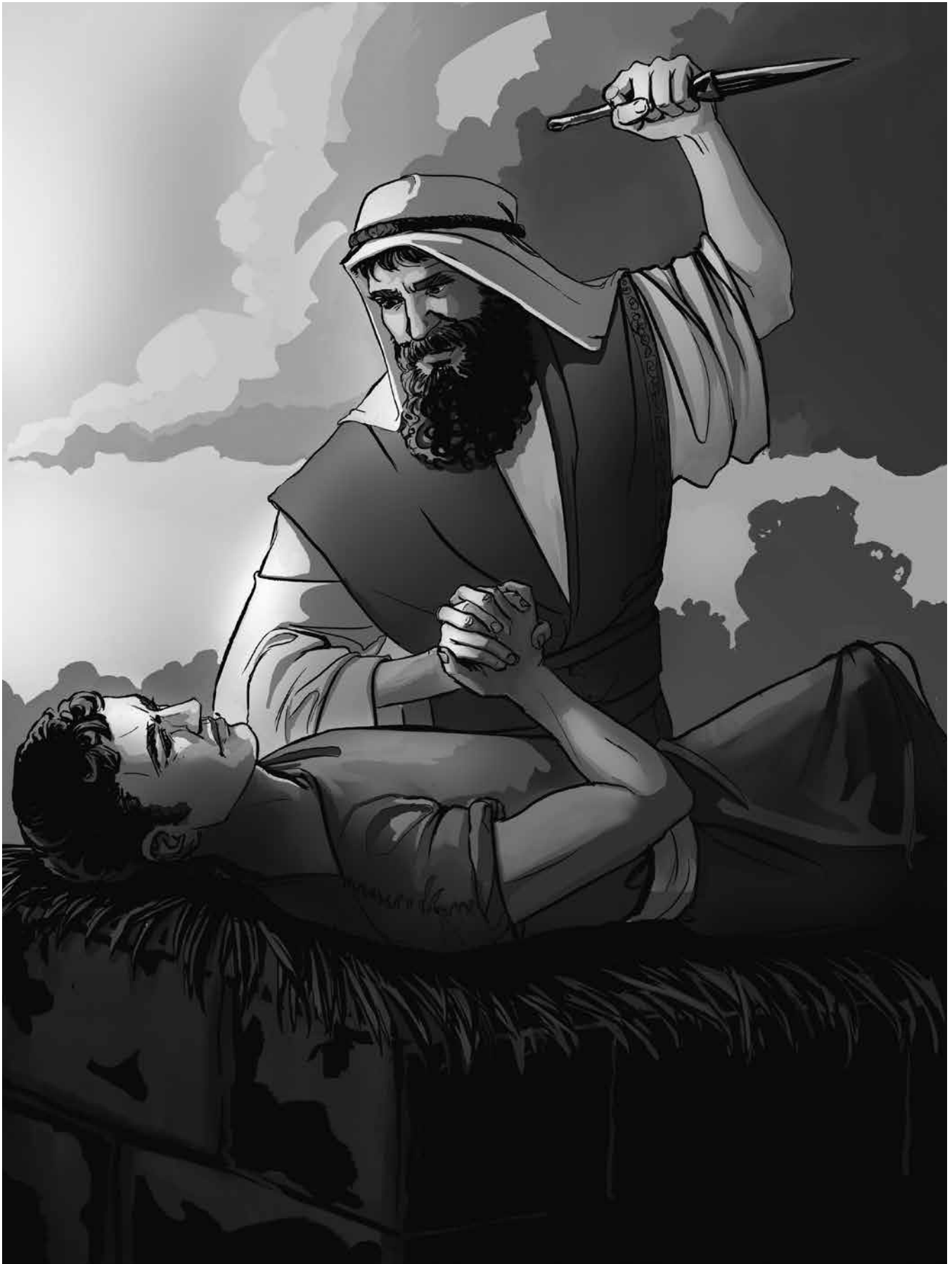
God will also give you hard tests. These tests will show Him and show you what you know, what you believe, and who you are. They will show whether you will trust God and obey Him. In these difficult trials, you can make the same decision Abraham did—and God can then also do great things through you.

Because Abraham obeyed completely, God greatly expanded the historic promises He had given to him. “In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants

shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:17-18).

After a few years passed, Abraham and his family moved to Hebron. Shortly after the move, Sarah died at the age of 127. Along with her husband, God was able to use Sarah to fulfill a vital part of His masterplan. Her commitment to God’s purpose was later recorded among some of the most faith-filled people in the Bible (Hebrews 11).

While Abraham mourned his wife’s death, he still showed a commitment to continue preparing Isaac for the future. Abraham repeatedly proved God’s observation that he would raise his children in God’s way of life (Genesis 18:19). In the next lesson, we will review the final preparations Abraham made to set Isaac up to be a success as the son of promise.



God tests Abraham's faith by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac.

# BIBLE MEMORY The Father of the Faithful

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 15:4-5, 18

Genesis 17:19-21

Genesis 22:17-18

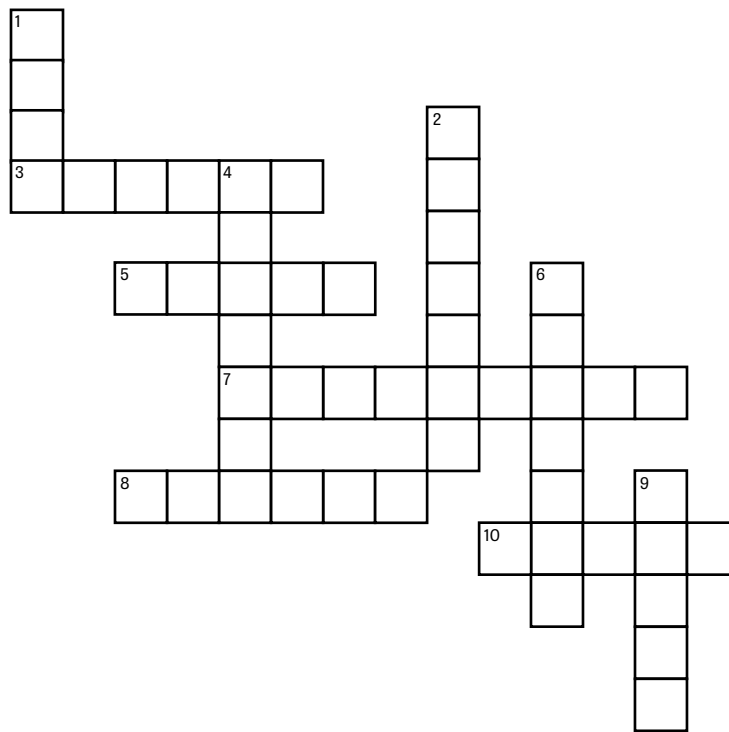
Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19

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## Crossword



### ACROSS

3. Mountain where God commanded Abraham to offer his son
5. Abram's wife
7. God knows that Abraham will teach his children and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Noah's great-grandson, who led the building of the tower of Babel
10. The son of promise

### DOWN

1. Noah's son, Abraham's ancestor
2. Means "God hears"
4. Means "father of a great multitude"
6. God's assurance that He will do something
9. Sarah's handmaid