



# The Story of God | Promise

## Promise | Story

### *Story from... Genesis 11-21*

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how he had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick. They said, *"Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are."*

God saw how the people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of him. At that time, everyone on earth spoke the same language. So, God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then, He scattered them all over the earth.

A few generations later, God made a special promise to a man named Abram. This promise was called a *covenant*—representing the deepest of all agreements between two people. God made this covenant with Abram...

*"I will make you the father of a great nation—famous throughout history.  
I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.  
I will bless the entire earth through your descendants."*

This was an amazing promise that God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family! There was just one problem... Abram's wife, Sarai, was unable to have children. So how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? And besides, they were getting old. Abram was about 75 and Sarai was about 65!

God told Abram, *"Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show to you."*

God led Abram and his family to a land called Canaan. There, God told Abram, *"Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants."*

This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land."

Some time passed, and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child.

Abram asked God, *“What good are all of your blessings if I don’t even have a son? I am getting old, and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants.”*  
God replied to Abram, *“No, you will have a son who will inherit everything that I have promised you.”*

Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, *“Look up into the heavens and count the stars. Your family will be like this—too many to count!”*

And Abram believed what God said, so God called him “righteous” because of his faith.

More years passed and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to be a substitute mother for her.

Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai’s relationship became strained. During Hagar’s pregnancy, she began to despise Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly. Eventually, Hagar and Ismael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abram’s family.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again saying, *“I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means ‘father of many nations.’ Remember this... I will always be your God, and you will always be my people.”*

Then God added, *“I am also changing your wife’s name to Sarah, which means ‘mother of many nations.’ Very soon, she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac.”*

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God’s promise.

Abraham wondered, *“How can I become a father at 100 years old?*

*How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?”*

Sarah thought, *“How could a worn out woman like me have a baby?*

*And my husband is even older than I am!”*

Abraham asked God, *“Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?”*

But God said, *“Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? About a year from now, you will have a son. It is through Isaac that I will pass on my blessing—not through your servant’s child.”*

Sure enough, a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means “laughter.”

The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.

*I've told you a lot so far. Let me ask a few questions...*

### **Promise | Dialogue**

*Remember this is a dialog, not a quiz. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.*

#### **What do we learn about Abraham from the story? About Sarah?**

*God chose him to carry out his blessing. He was old!*

*He trusted God and left his home.*

*Even though he trusted, sometimes he struggled to believe what God had said.*

#### **Where in the story did we see Abraham struggle to believe the promise?**

*Abraham thought he would have to give up his inheritance to one of his servants.*

*Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise and thought "How could this happen...?"*

#### **What do you think it means that God chose Abraham for this amazing promise and blessing, even though he knew at times he would struggle to believe?**

#### **What was God's relationship with Abraham like?**

#### **In the story God declared Abraham righteous because of his faith. What do you think it means to be "righteous"? Was Abraham "perfect", was he without sin or doubt?**

*No. God declared Abraham righteous because of his faith and trust in God. His faith is evidenced by the fact that he obeyed God and moved his family and waited on God's promises. God is the only One who can declare what is righteous!*

#### **What do we call this special promise that God made with Abraham?**

*It was called a covenant, representing the deepest of agreements between two people.*

#### **Where have we seen God make a promise or covenant before?**

*With Cain and with Noah.*

**Where have we seen God keep his promises before?**

**What did God promise to Abraham? Did God keep his promise to Abraham?**

*To make him the father of a great nation, giving him many descendants.*

*To bless and protect him.*

*To bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.*

*To bless all the nations of the earth through him.*

**What does this promise tell us about what God is like?**

*God desires to bless all people.*

*God has chosen a family (nation) to be his blessing and to live in his ways.*

*God will protect and bless his people.*

**Promise | Additional Dialogue**

**How did the story challenge or encourage you?**

**What questions do you have about the story?**

**What can you apply to your own life from this story?**

