

Lesson 1: Genesis 15
God's Amazing Promise

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Introduction

In this chapter Abram had two visions into the future, and used that knowledge to completely trust and believe in what God had told him. He did this not only through his prayers but also his actions to prove he was a devoted man of God. While we read the story, think of some things you do to show your commitment to God.

Progression of Events

The Lord first came to Abram in a vision and told him not to be afraid, because the Lord was his shield, and will reward him greatly. Abram then shows us his fear of not knowing what lies ahead. He makes a statement that God has not blessed him with children, so in his mind it would be inherent that a servant that takes care of his household would inherit all of Abram's possessions. (During Abram's time, the custom was, if a man of the house were childless, the eldest servant would become the heir of the estate). The Lord said to Abram, "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir" (Genesis 15:4). As you can see, Abram was not promised wealth or fame, as this was something he already had. God promised him children. Abram had everything but children, so this would be a wonderful gift to him.

The Lord said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars, if indeed you can

count them." Then He said, "So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:5). Just imagine trying to count the stars or picking up a handful of sand to count each grain of sand. This would be next to impossible. Abram was upset for not having one heir, but God came to him and promised this huge blessing. This shows us when God blesses his people; it is usually beyond our imaginations.

Abram showed his faith through his actions, but it was also his belief that made him right with God. We all can have the "right" relationship with our God by trusting him, but our actions are very important too. Going to church, prayers, and helping others in need, are some examples of Christian actions. We as humans have trouble with trusting people in our lives, as they often break that trust. We carry that fear with us, not realizing God would never violate our trust. We need to know the difference between faith in God and faith of our fellow man.

Abram then said, "Lord God, how can I know that I shall possess it?" While it sounds like Abram doubts God here, he does not. He really just wanted further information. Abram was a man who desired to learn the process God would use to fulfill the promise.

Obedying God's instructions, Abram took three animals, a heifer, a goat and a ram and severed each in half. He also brought a dove and young pigeon, but left them whole. Each of these animals was three years old. Abram sat and watched the sacrificed animals and drove away the

fowls that came down to the carcasses. Throughout the long hours Abram must have thought about how all that God had told him would come to pass. When doubts beset us we must be ready to drive those doubts away just as symbolically Abram shooed the fowl away. From a long day of waiting, God then revealed to Abram the process.

As night approached, Abram fell into a deep dream and God said to him, " Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:13). Wow! Can you imagine how Abram felt after waking up from that dream? God was very serious about the promise He had made. This was not only a huge responsibility for Abram, but God gave him some insight into the future. Just think if we could possibly know what our unborn children would be doing in the future? This shows us how powerful God truly is. God made a covenant with Abram that was very real. God does not always give us a picture into the future like He did for Abram, but He knows what is too much for us to handle. That is where the trust comes back into play. We need to continue just as Abram did, knowing what the future held for him. He still trusted and obeyed God's way of life, not his own way of life. He proved this through his actions and faith.

Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles is a way we look forward to the future. We have faith Jesus Christ is coming to set up His government in the Millennium and rule

this earth. Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles is how we show God we believe in His promise that His Son will return to earth and set up the Kingdom of God.

Questions for Discussion

1. What was the custom of Abram's time if the man of the house was childless?
2. What did God reveal to Abram in his first vision?
3. How many children did God promise to Abram?
4. Who should we have faith in God or man?
5. In Abram's second vision what are some of the events that were to occur to his future generations?
6. Was the covenant that God made between Him and Abram real or not?
7. Did Abram still obey God knowing what the future held for him?
8. Why could Abram believe God?
9. Why can you believe God's promises in the Bible?

Memory Verse

"He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be"
(Genesis 15:5).

JUST FOR TEENS!

Have students read the article below and talk about what consequences this has for our understanding of God's promise to Abram.

Star survey reaches 70 sextillion

Wednesday, July 23, 2003 Posted: 12:29 AM EDT (0429 GMT)

SYDNEY, Australia (CNN) -- Ever wanted to wish upon a star? Well, you have 70,000 million million million to choose from.

That's the total number of stars in the known universe, according to a study by Australian astronomers.

It's also about 10 times as many stars as grains of sand on all the world's beaches and deserts.

The figure – 7 followed by 22 zeros or, more accurately, 70 sextillion – was calculated by a team of stargazers based at the Australian National University.

Speaking at the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union meeting in Sydney, Dr Simon Driver said the number was drawn up based on a survey of one strip of sky, rather than trying to count every individual star.

The team used two of the world's most powerful telescopes, one at the Anglo-Australian Observatory in northern New South Wales state and one in the Canary Islands, to carry out their survey.

Within the strip of sky some 10,000 galaxies were pinpointed and detailed measurements of their brightness taken to calculate how many stars they contained.

A whole lot of zeros

That number was then multiplied by the number of similar sized strips needed to cover the entire sky, Driver said, and then multiplied again out to the edge of the visible universe.

He said there were likely many million more stars in the universe but the 70 sextillion figure was the number visible within range of modern telescopes.

The actual number of stars could be infinite he said.

The universe is so big light from the other side of the universe "hasn't reached us yet," The Age newspaper quoted him as saying.

A Little Experiment!

Materials:

- A cup of sand per group of students
- Copy of lab sheet (next page) or poster size version to complete all together
- Magnifying glasses
- Colored paper
- Pencils

Procedures:

- Break students up into small groups
- Give each group a large piece of colored paper (it will make seeing the grains of sand easier and also help in clean up)
- Pour one cup of sand onto each groups colored paper. Have the students estimate how many grains of sand are on their sheet of paper. Students should record their ideas on the lab sheet.
- Have students count as many of the grains of sand as they can in 5-10 minutes depending on how much time your class has. Have the students record their findings on the lab sheet.
- Discuss findings whole group and talk about how this helps us understand the promise of God better.

Treasures Out of Sand

Have you ever been to the beach and wished that you could bring your castle home with you? Here is a way to make sand creations that you can keep! This project is rated EASY to do.

What You Need

- 3 cups of sand (If you don't have "beach sand," you can buy "play sand" at a hardware store.)
- 1 1/2 cup of cornstarch
- 1 1/2 cup of water
- Newspaper
- Old cooking pot
- Large spoon

How To Make It

- Mix the ingredients together in the pot.
- The next two steps require a grownup. The grownup should cook the mixture over low heat, stirring constantly.
- When it gets thick, take it off of the stove and let it cool.
- Once it is cool, use the spoon to turn it out on the newspaper.
- Now you can make it into any shape you like, let it dry, and keep your creation forever!

Tips

RV wrote in about her experience making these castles:

I just finished making 300 sandcastles with 100 boxes of cornstarch and 300 lb. of sand for a Scouting show held in Corpus Christi, Texas at the Naval Air Station. The sand castles were a big hit. It even made the news that night. I figured out that if the corn starch and the sand are mixed first, it keeps the corn starch from clumping up when the water is added.

I purchased little round glass stones (the ones really used for vases for flowers) and some little colored shells, as well as little American flags (really for cupcakes decorations) for the children to decorate the castles. We even had some parents that wanted to make their own to take home!

Because God said that Abram's offspring would be as numbered as the grains of sand on the beach and the number of stars in the sky, the crafts for today's lesson center around these two things. Before you begin, you may want to ask students if they have ever tried to count the number of stars in the sky or pieces of sand on the beach. If you are doing a sand craft, have the students take some time to try to count the grains of sand. Let them discover that there are too many to count! That will help them understand the immense blessing Abram received.

Natural Sand Art

An easy technique and inexpensive supplies give great results with this summer camp favorite.

This project is rated **VERY EASY** to do.

What You Need:

- Construction paper
- Glue
- Sand

How To Make It

- Give each child a piece of construction paper, and allow them to draw a picture or write words with the glue. *Make sure that they do not put globs of glue in any one spot.*
- Before the glue dries take the picture over to dry sand and with your hand pour sand onto the glue.
- Let it sit for a few minutes and then shake off the excess sand.
- Let it dry flat for about a half an hour depending on how much glue was used.
- *This can also be done with colored sand, but, for those on a budget, regular sand works just as well.*

Counting Sand Lab Sheet

Names of Group Members:

1. Estimate how many grains of sand you think are in one cup! Defend your answer to your group members and record in this box:

2. Now try to count as much of the sand grains as you can. Your teacher will tell you when time is up. Record your count in this box!

3. What do you think about God's promise to Abram now? How did your thinking change after seeing the grains of sand in one cup? Imagine the world's beaches. What do you think now? Record your groups thoughts in this box!

Number the Stars

Little fingers love stickers! This craft allows children to put loads of star stickers on a scene to make a night sky.

What You Need:

- Scrapbooking paper that appears to be a sky (available in craft stores)
- Glittery star stickers
- Cotton balls
- Memory verse cards (printed below)

How To Make It:

- Give students a sheet of glittery star stickers and allow them to stick as many as they'd like onto their sky scrapbooking paper. Remind them that we cannot count the stars in the sky because there are so many!
- Give each student two or three cotton balls. Have the students stretch the cotton to make it look like a cloud and then glue it to the paper.
- Lastly, have each student glue the memory verse card onto the paper.

Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Genesis 15:5	Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Genesis 15:5	Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Genesis 15:5
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Make a Star Snow Globe

This snow globe would remind students of God's promise to Abram and their Feast of 2006!

What You Need:

- Baby food jars (1 per student)
- Glitter chunks
- Large star shapes cut from colored plastic plate
- Glycerin (found at craft stores)
- Glass bonding glue

How To Make It:

- Remove labels from baby food jars. Spray paint lids a color of your choice. This may be done prior to coming to the Feast.
- Students will choose a large star shape and put it in their baby food jar.
- Students will then add glitter chunks to their baby food jar.
- The teacher will pour equal parts of glycerin and water into the baby food jar. You may want to mix this ahead of time so that the craft can move quickly.
- Line the lid's inner rim with glass-bonding glue, close and let dry.
- Students can use the permanent marker to write either the memory verse or "Abraham's Promise" on the lid of the jar.
- Shake it up and watch the glitter float around. Tell the students the glitter can remind them that there are more stars in the sky than we can count and that God promised Abram that his descendents would be that many!