

# **STANDING ON THE PROMISES • by Audrun Siebert**

## **KEY VERSE:**

And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Genesis 21:2

## **FAITH STORY:**

Genesis 21: 1-7

## **FAITH FOCUS:**

These seven verses are the first installment of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham of many descendants. We are told earlier in Genesis that Abraham believed God and that this faith was counted as righteousness.

The journey of Abraham and Sarah to this point in the story of Isaac's birth is racked with doubt. At one point Abraham and Sarah take matters into their own hands. They are so desperate for a son, or at least an heir, that they conceive a son by Sarah's maid, Hagar. This creates a new set of difficult circumstances. When Abraham and Sarah exhaust their own human resources to help God fulfill his promise to them, God once again renews his promise to them through an angel. When this promise is renewed, both Abraham and Sarah laugh, knowing they are both old, well past childbearing years.

God is faithful in keeping his promise. When Abraham is one hundred years old, Sarah gives birth to a son, Isaac.

## **SESSION GOAL:**

Students will examine and understand the promises that God has made to them, and will also consider their response to God's promises.

## **SESSION OBJECTIVES:**

Students will identify God's promises to Abraham and Sarah, and to us today. They will think about which promises mean the most to them at this time.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:**

- 1 Snacks and drinks to be served at some point you choose during the class session.
- 2 Paper and pencils
- 3 Bibles for everyone.
- 4 Newsprint and marker or chalk board.
- 5 Student worksheets for each person.

## SESSION OUTLINE

### **FOCUS: (5 minutes)**

Show the students the snacks and drinks you have brought for them. Promise to serve them sometime during the class period.

**Say:** *Life is built around contracts and promises. We all want to trust people when they make a promise. But life is complicated and things aren't always black and white. Society seems to see more gray areas all the time. Lawyers are busy and our courts are backed up with litigations. Promises aren't what they used to be.*

### **CONNECT: (10–15 minutes)**

- 1 Divide the class into groups of two or three students. Give them paper and pens and ask them to list what they consider to be the top five promises that are most often broken in today's society. (If students need help to get started, ask them to think about political promises made during an election, marriage vows, promises parents make to children, etc.) Bring the groups together and discuss their lists. Make a master list of the top ten broken promises on newsprint or the chalk board.
- 2 Discuss with the whole group why the promises on the list are so often broken—list several possibilities for each broken promise. Next to each promise, also list the different emotions that broken promises evoke in those affected by them.

### **EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15–20 minutes)**

**Transition to the Bible story by saying:** *In the scriptures, God made promises to his people. Sometimes these promises—or covenants as they were sometimes called—were not kept or fulfilled until years later. People of faith believed and trusted God even when it appeared that he had forgotten them.*

Hand out the student worksheets and divide the class into five groups. Assign each group one of the scriptures and ask them to fill in the blanks. When they are done, bring the groups back together.

**Discuss their answers:** Did God's promise ever change? Was God consistent? Did Abraham and Sarah's responses change? Were they consistent?

### **APPLY: (10–15 minutes)**

Make sure each student has a Bible. Assign the passages on the bottom of the worksheet, one per student. (If your class is small, double up on the passages. If it's large, assign passages more than once.) Ask students to discover what the promise or covenant is in their passage, why it's important, and what it has to do with their lives.

Ask students to share their passage and what they discovered. Tell students to listen to the passages closely because they will need to choose a favorite one from the group.

### **RESPOND: (5 minutes)**

- 1 Instruct students to read aloud and listen to the passages one more time. As they listen, they should choose one that they like the most, and circle it on their worksheet. Then have them look up their chosen passage and write it on the worksheet.

**Say:** *Many of the passages you've heard talk about God's promise to us of the Holy Spirit in our lives, salvation, and eternal life. How do you feel about that promise? Have you responded to God's call in your life? If you haven't accepted God's promise of eternal life and salvation, if you haven't decided to follow Jesus, this is a good time to think about that. If you want to talk with me, your parents, our pastor, or another adult about that decision, please do—it's a life-changing decision that you will never regret—you will be forever glad you made this decision.* (Here you may want to briefly tell about your decision to follow Jesus.) Conclude by saying that you have a promise to keep and ask them what it is. (The food.)

- 2 Share the snacks with the class. Close with a prayer.

**Optional:** Challenge students to memorize the passage they choose and wrote on their worksheet.

### **INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:**

In preparation for this class session, read and familiarize yourself with the story of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah as found in Genesis chapters 15 through 21. Give some thought to the fact that this story is interrupted by the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, an episode of Lot's incest, and the story of Abraham's encounter with Abimelech. Why are these stories inserted into the story of God's promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah? One simple reason might be that it gives us a feeling for the amount of time that passed in the main story.

From Abraham's point of view, all of the promises God had made to him were useless if he had no son or heir. Abraham wanted to believe God, but along the way, he lost patience and tried to help God out.

Abraham's first attempt to help God was making Eliezer, his servant, his heir. God said "No, I will give you a son." Sometime later Abraham and Sarah's faith again falters and Sarah gives her maid servant, Hagar, to Abraham to bear a son for them. After the birth of Ishmael, we might assume that Abraham was set. But God said no, he would bless Ishmael, but that he would give Abraham a son through whom he would establish his covenant.

When God again renews his promise to Abraham and Sarah, they literally laugh at the promise because they are too old to have children. God, through an angel, repeats and renews his promise of a son to them.

Finally, in God's appointed time, Sarah becomes pregnant. She gives birth to a son, whom they call Isaac. Abraham is now one hundred years old. Sarah now says, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

God seems to take the unlikely and do the impossible. Praise God for his exceedingly rich and great promises to us. God is always faithful!!

# STANDING ON THE PROMISES • Worksheet

	God's Promise	Abraham/Sarah's response
<b>Gen. 15: 1-6</b>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Gen. 16: 1-16</b>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Gen. 17:1-8</b>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Gen. 17: 15-21</b>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Gen. 21: 1-7</b>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Jeremiah 31:33

Ezekial 37:26

Hosea 2:18

Luke 24:49

Acts 1:4

Acts 2:33

Galatians 3:14

2 Timothy 1:1

Hebrews 9:15

I John 2:25

2 Peter 3:9

Hebrews10:16