

ABRAM AND SARAI: FAITH AND BELIEVING

Team time topic talk

Like Ruth, Abram and Sarai are immigrants who leave their land in the Euphrates, and travel at God's invitation into a new land where they have many adventures. Abram and Sarai covenant with God and, as part of this agreement, are renamed Abraham and Sarah. They become the founders of a special family who bring God's salvation into the world.

Abraham and Sarah are not perfect people. Sarah has a mean and jealous streak, and is incredibly cruel to Hagar, their servant and surrogate mother to Abraham's first son, Ishmael. Abraham is shown to be somewhat devious, several times passing off his wife as his sister for the sake of expediency. He also fails to live up to his responsibilities to his first son, Ishmael, and his mother, allowing them to be driven into the desert and their probable deaths.

But even with their flaws, they believe in God's promises. They are faithful to God, to the point of being willing to sacrifice the most precious thing they have, their son Isaac, in obedience to God's command.

Like many faithful characters in the Bible, they are rewarded for their faith and hope. God poetically promised them descendants as numerous as stars in the sky. This promise has been made a reality, because they have a special place in Judaism as the Mother and Father of the people of Israel. And, as Christians, we are also part of God's promise because we claim them as our own spiritual ancestors. This makes God's promise far greater than they ever could have imagined in their faith and hope.

a) How much do your faith and beliefs inform how you live? How different are your life choices because you are a Christian?

b) Abram and Sarai's faithfulness to God's call and their beliefs led them to places they never expected to go. Think of a time when God has called you into new experiences, and reflect how this brought blessings into your own life.

c) Time and time again in the Bible, God calls us back to the values and beliefs that we commit to, but do not always live out. How can we be more faithful in our private lives and in the life of our churches to our professed beliefs?

Take some time to pray together for God to give us confidence in sharing our faith and our beliefs with the children and families gathered at the holiday club today. Pray that the children will have the confidence to share what they have learned this week with the people they meet and to trust God's promises in every aspect of their daily lives, no matter where God may lead them.

Detectives' den

Arrival activity

Guess how many stars in a jar. Have a jar with lots of star shapes in it, and the team has to guess how many there are. An additional challenge might be to find the passage in the Bible it relates to.

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Detective briefing

Faith and believing: Abraham and Sarah An interactive story, telling of the father and mother of Israel

I'm going to tell you a story, but I need your help.

In this story, there is a lot of laughter.
That's where you come in.





When I say the word laugh or laughter, I need you to laugh your biggest belly laugh.

Let's have a practice.

(Be aware that, similar to Laughter Yoga, the more you pretend to laugh, the more likely it is that real laughter will kick in. This is good, so go with it)

Has anyone ever been to the beach? Show of hands?

How many grains of sand were there on the beach? Didn't you count them?

What a silly idea, trying to count the grains of sand on the beach! Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

What about the stars in the sky? Has anyone every counted them?

How many do you think there are?

Counting the stars in the sky, what a silly

idea! Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Well, this story talks about both those things.

It's about a man called Abram and his wife, who was called Sarai.

They lived long, long ago in the land of Canaan.

Abram was very old. He was even older than (say someone's name in the room, probably the oldest leader) Older than that? Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Abram was 99 years old; Sarai was very old too. And they didn't have any children. Well, not yet, anyway.

Not yet? They can't have children at 99 years old! Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

God had a plan for them both.

One day, God said to Abram, 'I am going to make



you the father of a whole nation. Look at the stars in the sky, count them. This will be the number of your children. This will be my promise to you.'

Abram fell down on his face.

God said, I will also change your name; from this day on you will be called Abraham and your wife will be called Sarah.

Abraham had faith and believed what God said, but how would he have children?

God said to him, your wife Sarah will have a son. My promise is to you and to your son.

Abraham thought, how can I have a baby with Sarah? I am nearly 100 and she isn't much younger herself. It's not possible. Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Sarah was listening a little further away, and when she heard God say that she would have a baby she also thought, ME? A BABY! I'm 90. Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Why did they laugh? **LAUGHTER** Surely they knew that nothing is impossible with God, and God always keeps a promise.

The next year, God's promise came true. Sarah was pregnant at 90 years of age, and she had a baby boy. She called him Isaac.

You know what the name Isaac means? It means 'he will laugh'. **LAUGHTER**

Abraham's family continued to grow, and his descendants were as many as the grains of sand on the beach and the stars in the sky.

God always keeps a promise, and there are promises for you, too.

It's the truth, no joke, but it's always good to laugh. **LAUGHTER**

Bible verse: Jeremiah 29:11 'I know what I have planned for you,' says the Lord. 'I have good plans for you. I don't plan to hurt you. I plan to give you hope and a good future.'



Video

Animation by Bible Stories for Kids www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjXpgYq_NiQ

Detectives investigate

Games: Sorting stars

Stars of different colours are stuck onto plastic balls and placed in a paddling pool. Each team is given a colour to collect, and they must gather as many stars of the correct colour as possible in the time limit.

Craft: Snake bubbles

You will need:

- A plastic bottle
- An old sock
- Washing up liquid
- Bowl
- (Optional: Food colouring)



What you do:

Cut the bottom off a small plastic bottle.

Place an old sock over the open end of the bottle, pulling it right down until there is a flat bit of sock covering the end of the bottle, then turn down the top of the sock to make it secure. If the sock slips, use an elastic band to keep it in place.

To make a rainbow effect, put a few drops of food colouring around the flat end of the sock.

In a small bowl, mix a good squeeze of washing up liquid with half a cup of water.

Dip the sock into the liquid, and then blow through the top of the bottle and watch the bubbles grow through the sock. Think about how the family of Abraham and Sarah spread out from a small beginning, just as God had promised.

Reflection

Even though Abraham and Sarah were quite old, God gave them a very special job to do for him. Sometimes we do the right things, and sometimes we get things very wrong, just like Abraham and Sarah. The good news is that God loves us even when we are not doing our very best; God understands, and that is why all sorts of people can play their part in the mission of God.

- How do you think God is using you?
- Can you think of someone much older than you who has helped you know God and Jesus better?

I wonder if they know what an amazing gift they have given you?

Small group prayer activity

Use a six-pointed star template. Draw a line around the base of the points to make a hexagon. Colour the points with bright colours – you may want to use silver/gold felt pens – while you think about what it means to trust God. Write a prayer in the centre of the



hexagon, then fold the points in to cover it. Place your hexagon into a bowl of water, maybe using some dark blue food colouring in the water to make it look like the night sky. Your stars will open up, releasing your prayer to God.

Recipe: Stuffed dates

Ingredients

Medjool dates
Cream cheese
Chocolate chips
Peanut butter (chocolate spread)
Silver balls or star shaped cake decorations

Directions

- Prior to the session, take out the stones from the dates by making an incision down the middle and removing the stone.
- Each person needs four dates.
- Fill two dates with cream cheese, and sprinkle with chocolate chips to represent the desert stones.
- Fill the other two with peanut butter, and sprinkle with silver balls or star shaped cake decorations to represent the stars.

Detective update

Interviewing the suspect:

MG interviews Abraham and Sarah

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you then?

A and S: I'm Abraham, I'm 99 years old, and I'm his wife Sarah, I'm very old too. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! What's your story then? Why are you laughing?

Abraham: Because we just found out that we are going to have a baby.

MG: What's so funny about that?

Abraham: We are too old to have a baby.

Sarah: And not just one, we have been told that our family will be as big as



the number of stars in the sky.

MG: Have you counted them?

Abraham: No, there's too many.

Sarah: We can't believe it ourselves.
Having a baby at our age?

MG: Who told you you were going to
have a baby? Was it a doctor?

Abraham: Not quite, it was actually God.

Sarah: And we are going to call the baby Isaac.

MG: How do you know it's actually
going to happen, then?

Abraham: I guess we just have to believe.

Sarah: And have faith. If this is God's
plan, then God will help us through it.

Song

Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths

Abraham and Sarah were quite old
They could not have any children, they'd been told
Ishmael did no wrong but then Isaac came along
Who's the hero, who's the villain in this song?



Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions
of the detectives, or
holds a quiz to find out
what they've learned
and what conclusions
they've come to.

Closing prayer



God called Abram and Sarai (come here gesture).
They listened (hand cupped by ear)
And they wandered far (march movement):
Up mountains (hands steepled),
Down valleys (invert steeple),
Over rivers (arms undulate in river motion),
To follow God (point upwards).
They met kings (put hand above head with fingertips down like a crown)
And pharaohs (hand pointing out with back of hand on forehead like a snake)
But it was God (point upwards)
That they trusted (hands crossed on chest).
And God (point upwards) gave them new names:
Abraham (Make the sign for 'dad' by using the index and middle fingers of one hand to tap twice
across the index and middle fingers of the other hand)
and Sarah (To make the sign for mum, use three fingers of one hand to tap twice across the palm of
the other hand).
God (point up) promised them that their children and their children and their children's children
(make cradle with arms and rock)
would be as many as the stars (hands raised with fingers wiggling).
Thank you (Sign 'thank you' by straightening your hand, bringing your fingers to your chin, and
then pulling them away) for Abraham (dad sign) and Sarah (mum sign).
Amen.

