

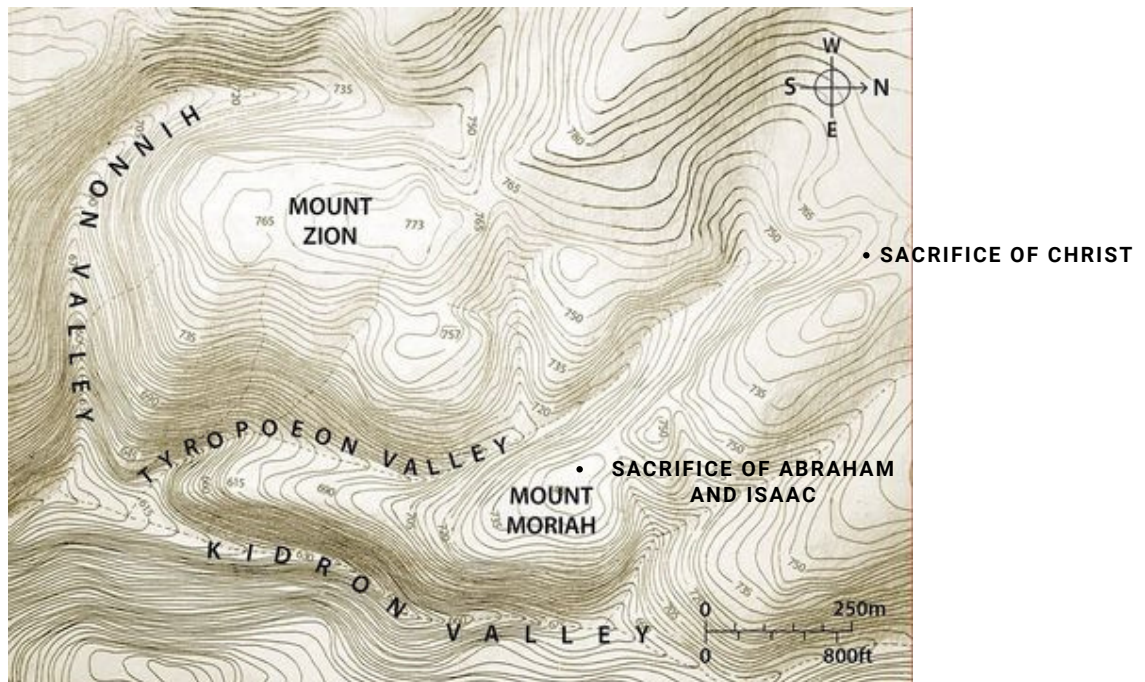


FAMILY CATECHESIS:  
A SESSION ON

*Abraham*

**"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."**

Hebrews  
11:1



**"He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol."**

Hebrews  
11:19



# Catechism of the Catholic Church

**706** Against all human hope, God promises descendants to Abraham, as the fruit of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit. In Abraham's progeny all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This progeny will be Christ himself, in whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." God commits himself by his own solemn oath to giving his beloved Son and "the promised Holy Spirit . . . [who is] the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it."

-vatican.va

## Discussion Questions

1. How can others recognize faith in you?
2. Do you pray at home?
3. Do you pray openly or is your faith more of a private matter?
4. If someone makes a promise, how can you trust them?
5. On the next page is listed the Fruits of the Spirit. How can the Gifts of the Spirit help to nurture these?





But the Fruit of the Spirit is...

love,  
Joy,  
Peace,  
Patience,  
Kindness,  
goodness  
faithfulness,  
gentleness,  
Self-Control

Galatians 5:22-23





## SESSION FOUR

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THE STORY OF ABRAM:  
THREE PROMISES



**READ:** GENESIS 12:1-9

## WHO IS THIS GUY?

Abram seems to be chosen out of the blue to fill this role as the representative of the human race. He himself is Chaldean, from modern day Iraq and is a descendant of Noah through the line of Shem. Why he specifically is chosen might be unclear, but we can see through the fall in Babel that God's people had already forgotten God and their place in this world. But Abraham had not forgotten that God was his Lord and Creator and worthy of praise.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Genesis 10, called the Table of the Nations, names 70 ethnic groups all descendant from the line of Noah. This includes Abraham in that line. When God chose Abraham with which to make a covenant, Abraham was a representative for not just his line after him, but for his whole family. This means that the covenant was not just a covenant between God and a Jewish man for only the salvation of the Jewish people, but rather for *everyone*.



## DO YOU TRUST ME?

At the age of 75, we can assume that Abram was comfortable with his life, he lived among family in the same place he lived for most of his life, doing the things he has always done. But God disrupts this and asks Abram to move to someplace new. To leave the comfort of what he was accustomed to and go into the unknown with only a promise accompanied with zero details of how this was going to play out.



Abram, his wife, and his nephew traveled from Ur to Haran to Shechem then on to Negeb. The distance between these in a straight line is well over 2,000 miles. And that doesn't even complete all Abram and Co. travels.



# YOUR CALL

LISTEN TO THE SONG "INTO THE UNKNOWN" FROM FROZEN 2  
HOW DOES THIS SONG RELATE TO ABRAM'S STORY?  
WHERE IN YOUR LIFE IS GOD CALLING YOU?



## READ: GENESIS 15

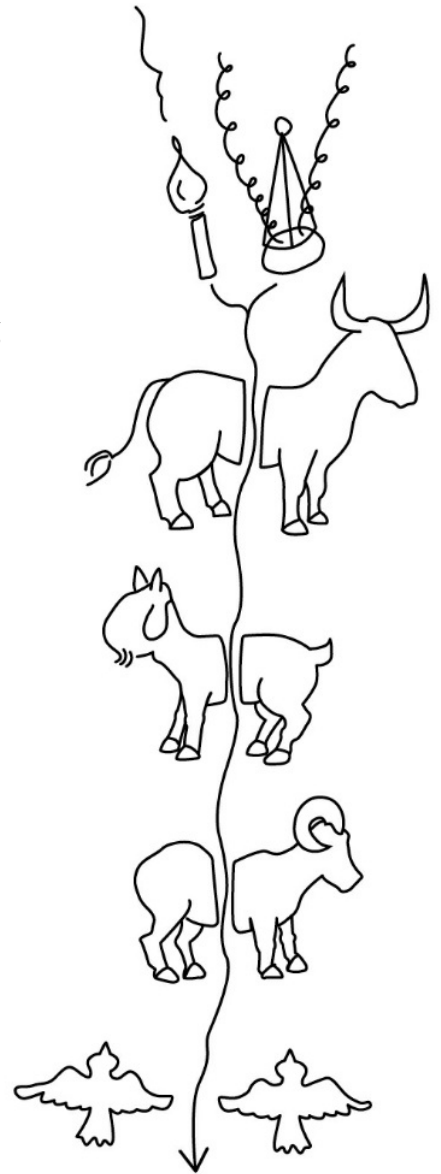
### THE COVENANT OF THE PIECES

Once again, God affirms his promise to Abram. Much has happened since Abram and his family moved at God's command and as far as Abram was concerned, all the land in the world would mean nothing without a child to hand it on to. It wasn't that Abram did not believe God, as a matter of fact, he trusted God whole-heartedly, but he wanted something a little more concrete to hang on to. So God gave him something stronger than a promise. A covenant.

After Abram rounded up all the animals and got them cut and laid out, God put him into a deep sleep, which probably wasn't hard after all that work. When God spoke to him in his dream, it was a way of giving Abram a time table of events so that he would know that God was not only going to keep His word, but how He was going to keep it. It can be noted that God and Abram both say that Abram *"will posses"* the land. After reading about this dream we see that Abram himself does not get the land but his descendants do, which seems to be all the same to Abram.

To make the covenant, or for a very literal translation, to cut a covenant, God signs his name, so to speak, by passing between the pieces of animal. In this way, God came down to a level that Abram would understand and saying "If I break my promise to you, Abram, may I be cut to pieces like these animals."

Abram is not asked to pass between the animals, He knows that Abram, or at least his descendants will not be able to keep any promises yet and so only God himself makes the oath, and with it, we are once again received as the family of God.



# THE COVENANT WITH ABRAM

## GOD'S PART

God comes down to Abram's level to make a covenant that Abram will

1. have lots of descendants (15:5)
2. have lots of land (15:18-21)

which are needed in order to be a great nation making the first promise incorporated into a covenant.

## HUMANITY'S PART

Abram is to trust in God's promises and follow him wherever he leads (12:1, 15:1-6).

**Mediator:** Abram  
**Organization:** Tribe  
**Scripture:** Genesis 15



## REFLECT

*What did you learn in this session that really made you stop and think?*

Often in our lives, there are times when we are asked to do something that can make us a better person that also makes us uncomfortable. What was the last thing you did that you did not enjoy doing that helped you to grow in some way?

*Abram was very concerned that he didn't have a child, but he gave this problem over to God to handle even after he was very old, having faith that God would take care of this for him as promised. What problem can you trust God to take care of for you?*

## DISCUSS

*God made promises and a covenant with Abram (and his descendants), but God didn't do everything for them, we humans were supposed to participate as well. Abram's extended family could not get all that land without first Abram packing up and going "to a place that I will show you". God will take care of our needs but we need to participate as well. How can we do that in our modern lives?*

### **PRAY:**

*Dear St. Joseph, when our Blessed Mother came to you with child, you did not understand at first what was happening, but you heard and listened when the angel of the Lord told you to accept Mary as your wife. You withheld nothing for our Lord Jesus, protecting Him, teaching Him, and loving Him as your own. Please help us to listen and trust in God as you have done and live in the way we are called to live. Lead us to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.  
Amen.*







## **SESSION FIVE**

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### **THE FALL OF ABRAM AND THE RENEWAL**

**READ:** GENESIS 16

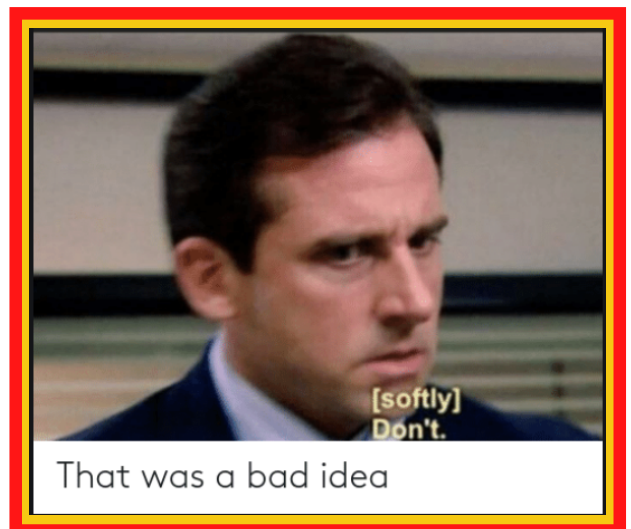
## IT SOUNDED GOOD AT THE TIME

After waiting 10 years, that part of God's promise to Abram that regarded children was still not done and Sarai, at least, was getting nervous. She knew that her time to have children in the usual way was most likely over. During those days, she would have been considered at fault for not providing Abram with a child. In those days, if a man was to have a child by his wife's servant, then also her child belonged to her. So in the mind of Sarai, as well as the legal customs, the child conceived in Hagar would be the child of Sarai and Abram, therefor, she provided her husband an heir.

Things got understandably messy after Sarai's plan succeeded. Since not being able to conceive herself, Hagar looked down on Sarai and Sarai was most likely embarrassed and a little raw to say the least. So she took out her frustrations on who else but Hagar. The one she felt was the cause of her anguish. The abuse got to the point that Hagar was willing to leave a good home and take her unborn child away from a good life and a father who would love him and into a world of uncertainty and possibly even death.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Even though we see some polygamy in the Bible, there is never a time that God condones that type of lifestyle. He does sometimes permit it but it is clear that marriages were to be monogamous and lifelong from the time of Adam and Eve. There is almost a trend in the Bible that where we see men with more than one wife, problems follow.



**READ:** GENESIS 17

It is now 13 years after chapter 16 and Ishmael's birth and this chapter begins by letting us know that even though that whole business with Hagar and Ishmael wasn't what God had in mind, God could forgive this transgression and they could move forward. Once again, God reaffirms his part of the deal by calling to mind his part of the covenant. This time, He ups the ante a bit though and now God is telling Abram that he will be the father of nations and kings. To mark this new event, God re-names Abram and Sarai. From there on out, they are Abraham and Sarah.



Up to now, God has been making all the hard promises drawing us back to Him as family, but now it is time for humanity to get some skin in the game (literally). So God lets Abraham know what will be expected from not just him, but all the males right down the line in order to remain part of God's chosen people. If they refuse they will be cut off like that piece of flesh.

God then follows up with Abraham to tell him that at 100 years old, he would finally get his son from Sarah. Abraham has a bit of a laugh at this idea, but immediately inquires about Ishmael. He clearly loves his son and wants good things for him. Plus he already has a son, it is much easier to believe there are good things for him than to yet-to-be-conceived child of a ninety year old woman and a 99 year old man. God sticks to what he said though, Sarah's child will get the better share. However, God does not deny good things for Ishmael

In the end, Abraham and all the males of his household are circumcised as God demanded of them from the oldest to the youngest of at least 8 days old.

GOD'S PART	HUMANITY'S PART
<p>God promised Abram that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. make of you a great nation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• covenant of pieces (Gen. 15)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ have lots of descendants</li><li>◦ have lots of land</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>2. make your name great<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• covenant renewal<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ ancestor of kings</li><li>◦ father of multitude of nations</li></ul></li><li>• lengthens his name</li></ul></li></ol>	<p>Abraham is asked to respond by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• trusting in God's promises and follow him wherever he leads (12:1, 15:1-6)</li><li>• circumcise all males in his family as a sign of the covenant (17)</li></ul>
<p><b>Mediator:</b> Abraham <b>Organization:</b> tribe <b>Scripture:</b> Genesis 12:1-3, 15, 17</p>	

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The birth the unintended heir, Ishmael, forces God to intervene and clean things up in Gen. 17. God rebukes Abram saying, *"I am God Almighty: walk before me and be blameless"* (17:1) a.k.a. 'Pay attention to me, and clean up your act.'

God then repeats the promise of great nationhood (Gen. 15) and adds to it that Abram is *"to become the father of a multitude of nations"* (17:4) and kings will come from him (17:6).

In ancient times, "a great name" was connected to kings and kings were known as 'fathers' of their countries. So the promises that Abram would be the ancestor of kings and the 'father of a multitude of nations' points to that the promises to Abram would be fulfilled in his descendants.

Another connection with the promise of a great name is that God actually gives Abram a greater name: he lengthens it to Abraham (17:5). Sarai's name is also changed to Sarah.

Abram } Abraham  
"exalted father" } "father of many"

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

**IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT, LOOK UP THE MEANING OF YOUR NAME  
AND/OR ASK YOUR PARENTS ABOUT WHY THEY CHOSE YOUR NAME.**

**WRITE IT DOWN HERE.**



# **God Gives Abraham and Sarah a Child**



**"Bring joy to your servant, O Lord"**  
(Psalm 86:4a).

## REFLECT

*What did you learn in this session that really made you stop and think?*

Was there a time when you decided that a problem was too big for God so you took things into your own hands?

*Can you think of something that you might have done that "seemed like a good idea at the time?"*

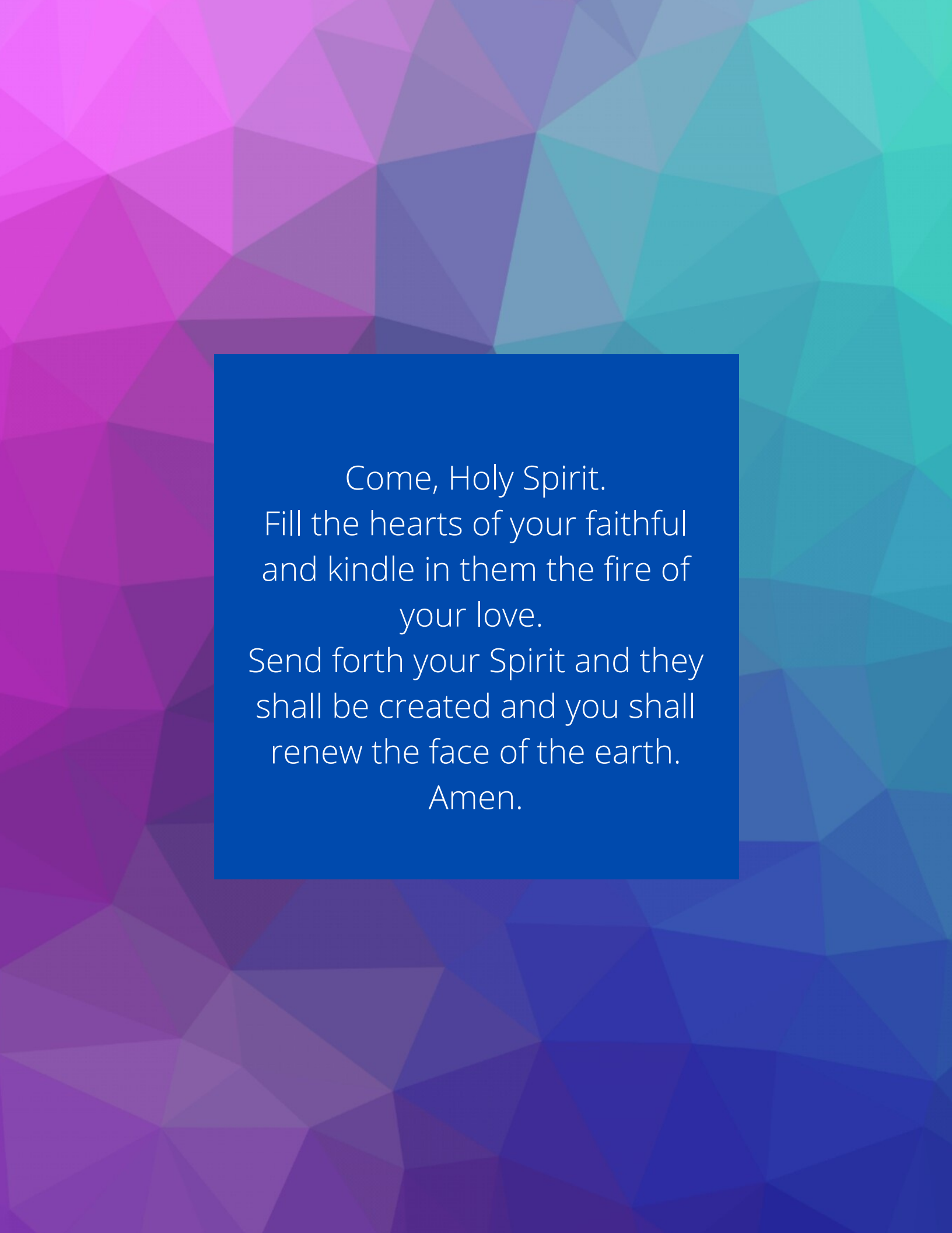
## DISCUSS

*One of the hardest lessons we learn during our stay here on earth is the whole "let go, let God" thing. We are taught from the beginning that we need to do this and that and our parents try to raise us to be independent, reliable adults. But then we are also told to rely on God. These seem very contradictory. How do I do for myself as well as allow God room to work for me? The answer is that God doesn't work for us, He works with us. But we still have to make room for Him to do His thing. How can we best do that in our lives?*

## CHALLENGE

### DO:

Take some time every night for a week and ask God, the Holy Spirit, to help you to see what path He has made for you. Do not make suggestions or put ideas or time frames out there to limit His plan for you. Keep everything open and watch what God, little by little, reveals to you.



Come, Holy Spirit.  
Fill the hearts of your faithful  
and kindle in them the fire of  
your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and they  
shall be created and you shall  
renew the face of the earth.  
Amen.





FAITH LIKE  
**ABRAHAM**



**SESSION SIX**

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**ABRAHAM'S TEST  
AND A PRECURSOR TO SALVATION**

**READ:** GENESIS 21:1-21

## AN EXPECTED BABY IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As God had been promising for the last 25 years, finally Sarah bears a child. A son they named Isaac, which is a play on words for laugh. It was funny to think that after 90 years that either of them would be able to have children. But when we look at how God reveals Himself, sometimes He makes sure that there is no doubt who is responsible because this would have surely been impossible without Divine intervention.

As for Ishmael and Hagar, I know it doesn't look like it now, but Abraham did love Ishmael. The circumstances of a child's birth have no bearing on a parent's love for their child. So It is only with the reassurance from God that Ishmael will be more than okay that Abraham is willing to go through with sending him and his mother away.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Notice that God works in a way that there can be no doubt that His hand is at work for our salvation. He wants us to see how He makes the impossible possible. Of all the scenes in the Bible and salvation history though, this one is one that foreshadows another very strongly. The first glimpse is through the promise and birth of Isaac. Isaac was promised for a long time and finally he came when no one thought it would happen in a way that would have otherwise been impossible. Does this sound like a different familiar story from early in the New Testament?

**READ:** GENESIS 22:1-19

After reading this story, a person really has to take a minute and let everything sink in well. Many thoughts come to mind as it plays out, like Who would ask such a thing from someone? What parent in their right mind would go through with this? to Would my parents do it? And if they did, which one of us would they pick? Among others but that is where my mind went. I assure you though, it will do you no good to dwell on these questions.

The thing to know is, this story is so much more than what it seems. Up to now, God and Abraham have made 2 covenants and they pretty much covered 1)lots of descendants and 2)lots of land. We are still missing 3) universal blessing to the whole human family. So when is this going to be added in? Before God can do that though, he has to make sure that Abraham - and Isaac, too - are up to the challenge. So He calls to Abraham and gives him the plan, or at least some of it.



Abraham does as the Lord commands. Remember here that usually God doesn't reveal the whole plan, He gives one direction at a time. This time, though, Abraham is given a little more. Enough to give him time to think about it. He was asked to sacrifice his only son, whom he waited for for 100 years.

Abraham had something going for him here to help him to go through this task and that is the faithfulness of God Himself. The evidence supplied can easily tell Abraham that this will be okay. Abraham just needed to call to mind that God told him that Isaac was special and would be the son whom the promised blessings would be through, God proved that the boy was special when Isaac was conceived by a 90 year old woman proving that nothing was impossible for God, and Abraham knew the Lord had the power over life and death. Through all the horror at the first glance, Abraham knew that God had a plan that he, Abraham, only knew a small part of it. So even though there was surely some dread about how far this would have to go and the uncertainty of the next step, Abraham knew the outcome would be better than imagined. God had never failed him.

One other thing that is worth a second look is Isaac himself. God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son and he is referred to in this way 3 times in this chapter. The first reason is very obviously because Isaac has an older brother. So is scripture contradicting itself here?

Nope. The Hebrew word *yahid* was the original word used in this scripture and is directly translated as only begotten in a way that means "special" or "unique". We loose that a bit when it was translated. It doesn't mean that Ishmael has no value to Abraham or to God, it simply means that even before Ishmael was conceived, Isaac was the son of the promise and the use of the word *yahid* makes that very clear. We hear this word echoed elsewhere in scripture as well. Look up John 3:16 and see what I mean.



Another thing to notice about Isaac is his age. Scripture doesn't give you an outright age on him at the time, but there are clues. First remembering that Abraham was 100 years old when he was born, then notice that they left the donkeys and the servants at the foot of the mountain so Isaac had to carry the wood himself. If you have ever tried to light a fire with wet wood, you will soon realize that they would need a lot of wood to burn up anything that was a minute ago living. Knowing that, we can take a guess here that Isaac was not a child, but a man, or at the very least, a strong teenager. This means that even after they got up the mountain and Abraham told him the real plan (so far), that Isaac was ready to obey God right along with Abraham. Abraham was an old man, he could not have overpowered his son so it stands to reason, Isaac allowed himself to be bound and used as a willing sacrifice at the hands of his father. Again, John 3:16.

If anyone could come close to understanding how the Father felt during the Crucifixion of Jesus or how Jesus felt offering himself up for the world, it would be Abraham and Isaac.

## THE FINAL COVENANT

God was so moved by Abraham and Isaac's willingness that he swears an oath to Abraham *"by your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice"* (Gen 22:15-18).

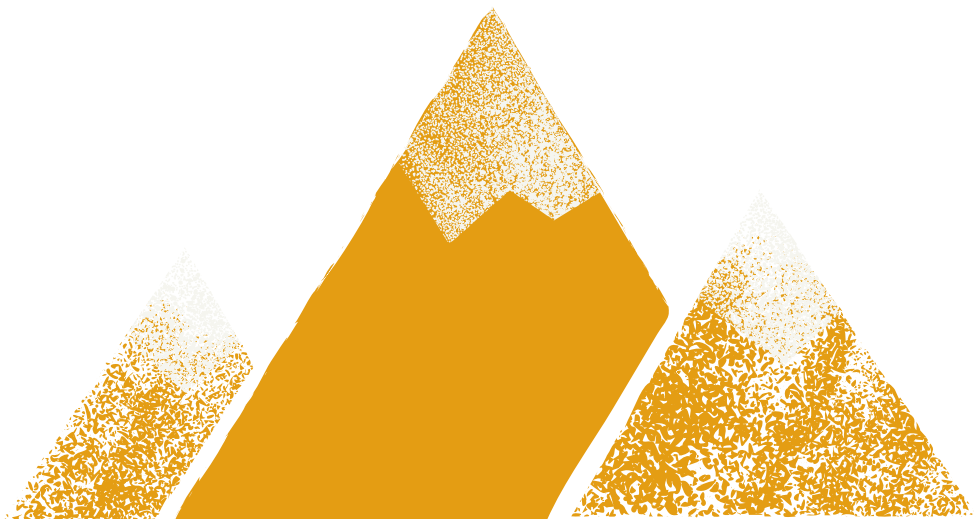
The use of 'seed' could refer to:

- blessing coming to all the nations through Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel
- blessing coming through Jesus, the Lamb of God

Both senses are true and this final form of God's covenant with Abraham is complete with the inclusion of the promise of universal blessing to all nations.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, which is within sight of Calvary near where Jesus died on Golgotha.



# THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

## GOD'S PART

God promised Abram that:

1. make of you a great nation
  - covenant of pieces (Gen. 15)
    - have lots of descendants
    - have lots of land
2. make your name great
  - covenant renewal
    - ancestor of kings
    - father of multitude of nations
  - lengthens his name
3. all nations of earth will find blessing in you

## HUMANITY'S PART

Abraham is asked to respond by:

- trusting in God's promises and follow him wherever he leads (12:1, 15:1-6)
- circumcise all males in his family as a sign of the covenant (17)
- train up his family to do what is just & right by following God's commands (18:16-19)

**Mediator:** Abraham

**Organization:** tribe

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1-3, 15, 17

## REFLECT

*What did you learn in this session that really made you stop and think?*

We talk about sacrifices in the Old Testament a lot, but what does sacrifice now mean to you? How are they the same and different?

*Have you ever had to do something inconvenient for you for the sake of helping someone else?*

## DISCUSS

*On the next page, with the help of your family, write out some similarities between Abraham and Isaac and God the Father and God the Son. Once you sit down and really start thinking, you will be able to find quite a few.*

## CHALLENGE

### **DO:**

The Works of Mercy can easily be called sacrifices of love, this week try to focus on completing one corporal and one spiritual work of mercy.

### **PRAY:**

As a family, pray the rosary using the Sorrowful mysteries. Don't forget to add your intentions for each of the decades.



## ABRAHAM & ISAAC

No one is expecting a baby from Sarah.

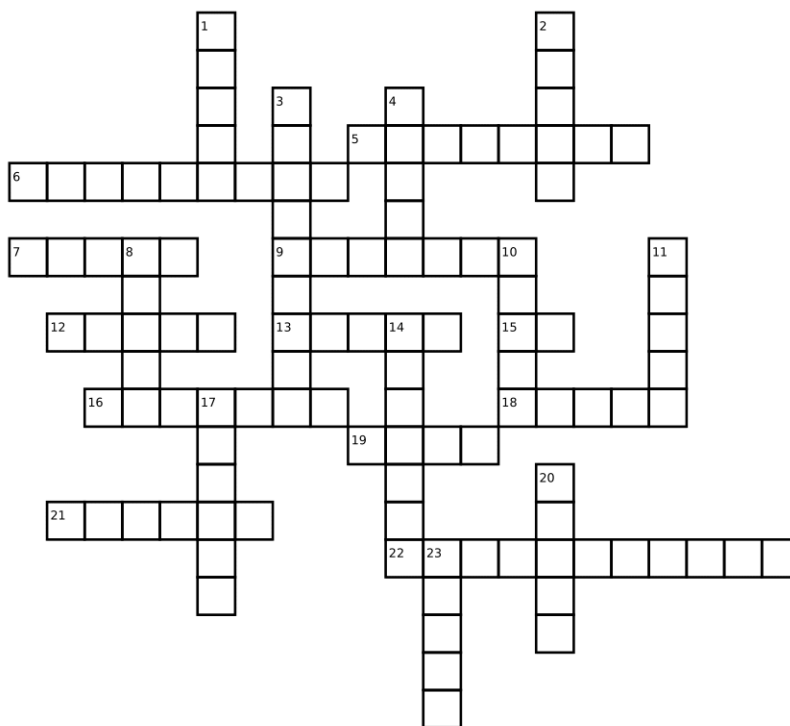
## GOD/FATHER & GOD/SON

No one is expecting a baby from Mary.

### DIRECTIONS

With the help of your family, write out some similarities between Abraham & Isaac and God the Father & God the Son.

# Abraham and Sarah



## Down:

1. An \_\_\_\_\_ called to Hagar out of heaven (Gen 21:17)
2. She cast out Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:9-10)
3. This is another word for burnt offering
4. Lot moved here after he left his uncle (Gen 13:12)
8. He was Abram's father (Gen 11:26)
10. Isaac name means \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen 21:6)
11. Abraham gave Hagar and Ishmael bread and \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen 21:14)
14. His name was changed from Abram (Gen 17:5)
17. Abram was to leave Ur and go to the land of \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen 11:31)
20. He is one of Abram's brothers (Gen 11:27)
23. During the famine, Abram journeyed to this place (Gen 12:10)

## Across:

5. An agreement between 2 parties making them family.
6. Abraham healed this king's wife of barrenness (Gen 20:17)
7. Abram needed \_\_\_\_\_ to follow God's command (Heb 11:8)
9. This person is Isaac's half-brother
12. Hagar was this person's handmaid (Gen 16:1)
13. He was born to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21:3)
15. Abram's hometown (Gen 11:31)
16. A ram was caught in this (Gen 22:13)
18. She was the mother of Ishmael (Gen 16:15)
19. Lot's wife turned into a pillar of \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen 19:26)
21. This is the place Abraham went to sacrifice his son (Gen 22:2)
22. He was the king of Salem who blessed Abraham (Gen 14:18-20)



This is love: not that  
we loved God, but that  
he loved us and sent  
his Son as an  
atoning sacrifice  
for  
our  
sins.

1 John 4:10