



## SESSION FOUR

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THE STORY OF ABRAHAM:  
3 PROMISES



**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.



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

## ABRAM THE ASTRONOMER

After the confusion of languages and scattering of the nations at the Tower of Babel, the people went on to worship multiple gods (i.e. polytheism).

The Bible then traces the genealogy of one family focusing on a man named Abram. But why single out Abram?

According to tradition, Abram was chosen because he was the first to rediscover the one God. Believed to be an early astronomer, after observing the oneness of the stars and the universe he couldn't believe in multiple gods and came to believe in the one, true God (i.e. monotheism).

Abram was oppressed for his belief in one God and so left his hometown, the city of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31).

## THE 3 PROMISES

God appears to Abram and speaks to him telling him to leave for "*a land that I will show you*" (Gen 12:1) then makes 3 promises to Abram:

1. a great nation
2. great name
3. a blessing to everyone.

Why is God blessing Abram's family?

The second promise to make his 'name great' is significant since the rebellion at the Tower focused on making a name for themselves. In the third promise, we see God's plan to rescue and bless his rebellious world through Abram's family.

Although these are just simple promises, later in the story of Abram God is going to affirm each promise and work them into a formal covenant. Just as there is a difference between an engagement ring and wedding ring, promises symbolize a strong hope & firm intention while a covenant symbolizes an unbreakable commitment.



# **GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM:**

**1. I WILL MAKE OF YOU A GREAT NATION**

**2. I WILL MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT**

**3. ALL THE FAMILIES OF EARTH WILL FIND BLESSING IN YOU**

**(GENESIS 12:1-3)**





## ABRAM'S CALL

When God appeared to Abram, he told him to leave for "a land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1). As an old man, Abram set out with his wife Sarai to leave the comfort of his home and go into the unknown with only a promise and no details of how this was going to play out.

Abram and Sarai along with his nephew's family traveled from Haran to Shechem then on to Negeb. Well over 2,000 miles!.

## 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?*



Don't  
you  
KNOW  
there's PART of me  
LONGS to GO  
THAT  
INTO THE  
UNKNOWN



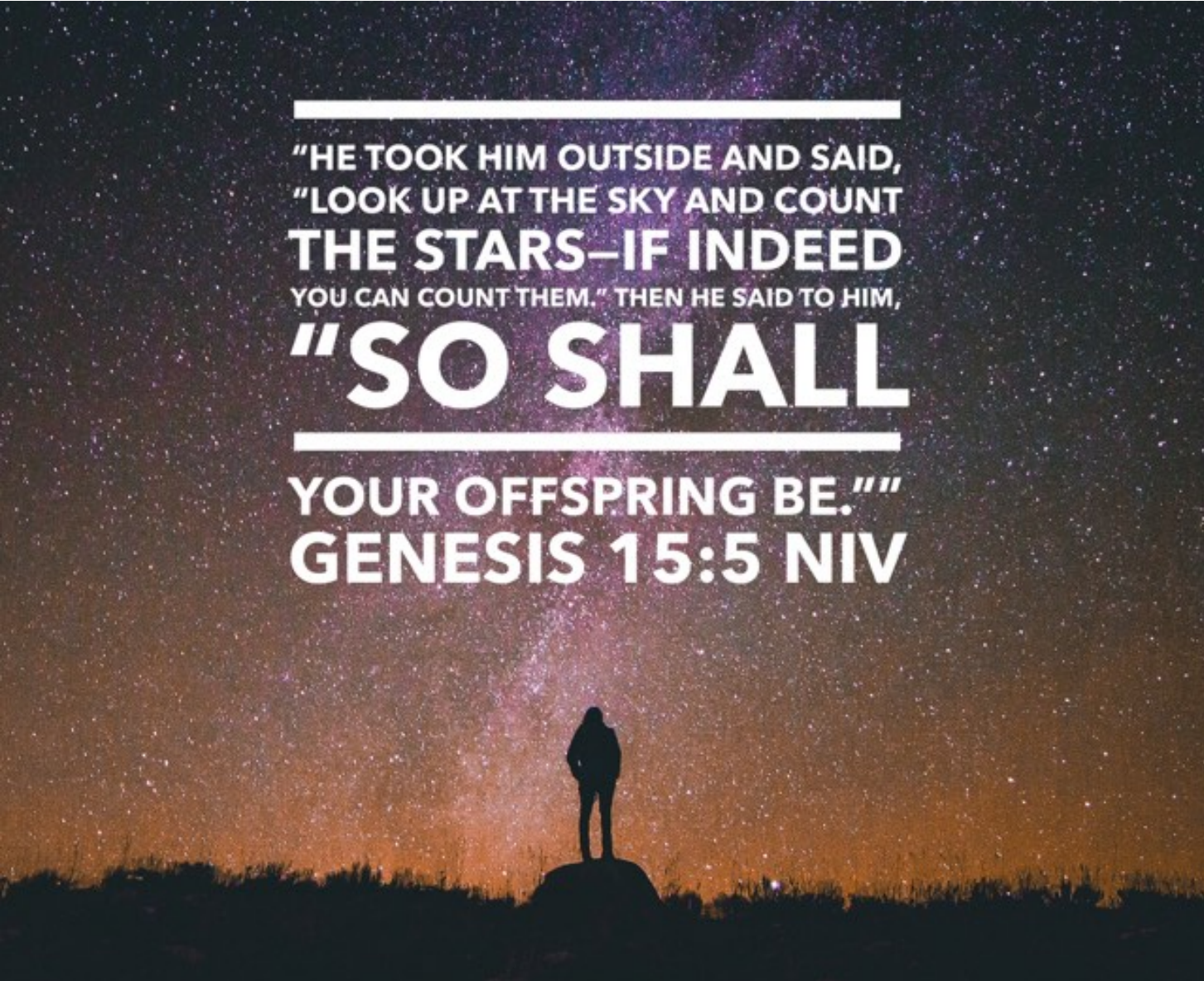


## COUNTING STARS

During his journey, God told Abram that all the land he saw would belong to his descendants 'forever' and that his descendants will be "*like the dust of the earth; if anyone could count the dust of the earth, your descendants too might be counted*" (Gen 13:16).

God came to speak to Abram and encourage him, but Abram says no reward is meaningful if he has no child to be his heir as his wife Sarai is still barren and he has no children, even though God promised them.

God tells him not to worry it will happen in time and his descendants will be as numerous as the stars, but Abram wanted more reassurance.



**"HE TOOK HIM OUTSIDE AND SAID,  
"LOOK UP AT THE SKY AND COUNT  
THE STARS—IF INDEED  
YOU CAN COUNT THEM." THEN HE SAID TO HIM,  
"SO SHALL  
YOUR OFFSPRING BE.""  
GENESIS 15:5 NIV**



## READ: GENESIS 15

### THE COVENANT OF PIECES

In response, God tells Abram to round up a bunch of animals, lay them out, then cut them in half.

After everything gets dark, a torch and firepot appeared then proceeded to move between the animal pieces as God speaks to Abram.

While this may seem superstitious today, the ancient readers would have recognized this as a covenant-making ceremony called 'the covenant between the pieces.'

The act of cutting up and walking through the animal pieces meant "if I do not keep my covenant commitments, may I be killed like these animals" (similar to "Cross my heart and hope to die").

Fire is a sign of God's presence in many places of the Bible (e.g. the tongues of fire at Pentecost) so the torch and firepot represent God's presence.

So the fire moving through the animal pieces was essentially God calling down a curses of death on himself if he doesn't do what is promised. God came down to Abram's human level to take part in a ceremony Abram would understand.

God makes a covenant with Abram and makes him family.

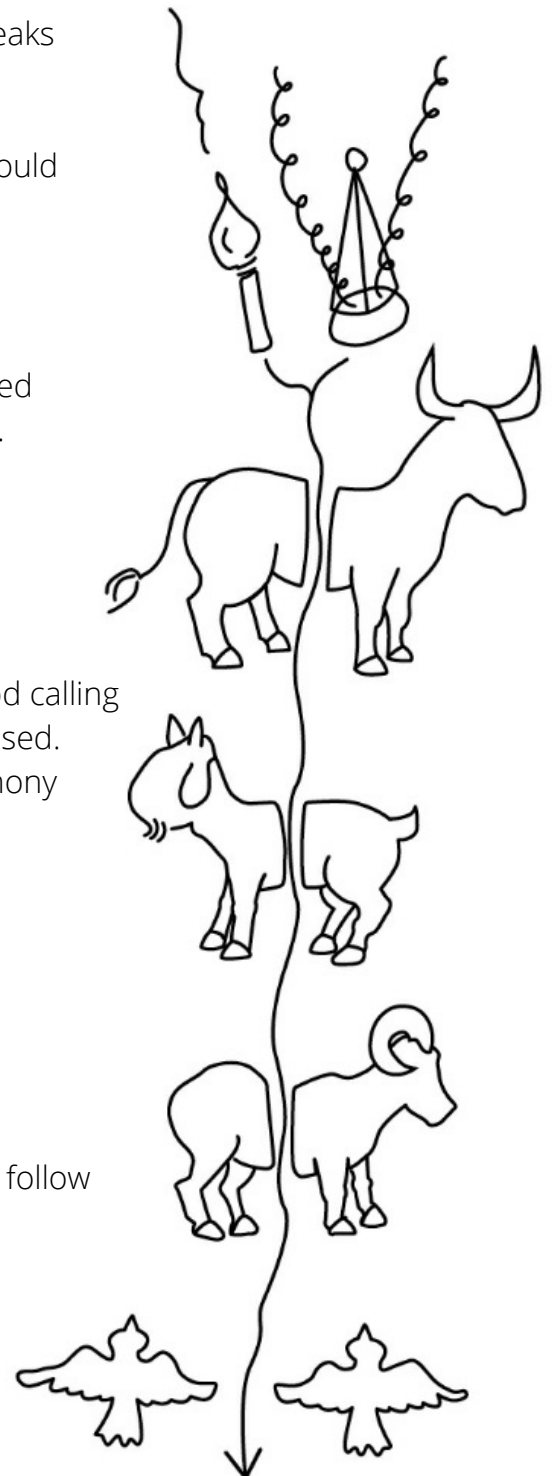
God makes promises that Abram:

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

which are needed in order to be a great nation,

thereby making the first promise incorporated into a covenant.

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





# THE COVENANT BETWEEN THE PIECES WITH ABRAHAM

## 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:** Abraham  
**Organization:** tribe  
**Scripture:** Genesis 15



## REFLECT

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

*According to tradition, Abraham believed in one God because he saw the oneness of the universe. What have you experienced or seen that has supported or proven the existence of God for you?*

*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 as he had faith that God would take care of this 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?*

## CHALLENGE

### **DO:**

Go stargazing and say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the beauty of creation.

### **PRAY:**

Pray to God and ask him to help you go into the unknown.









## SESSION FIVE

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### THE FALL OF ABRAHAM AND THE RENEWAL





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.



**READ:** GENESIS 16-17

## IT SOUNDED GOOD AT THE TIME

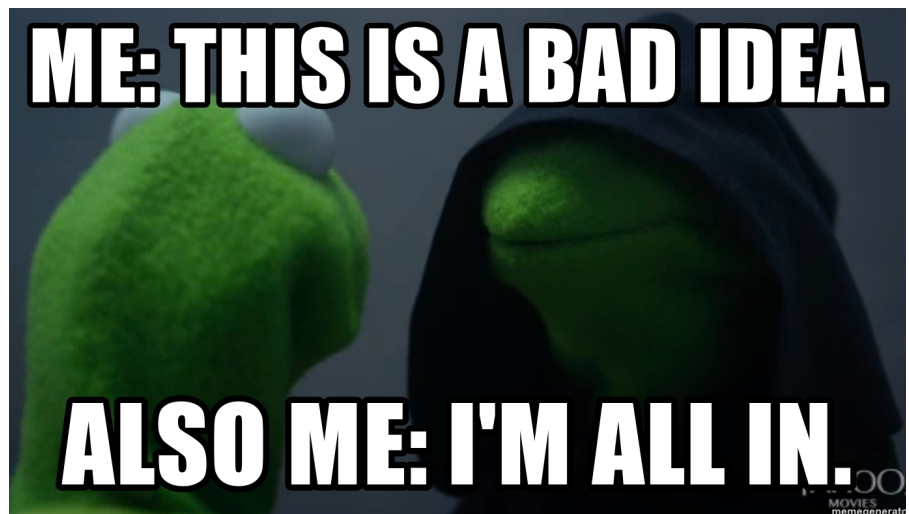
Just as Adam and Noah fell, so did Abram in Gen. 16.

Despite the reassurance God gave Abram through the covenant of the pieces, Abram and Sarai begin to doubt if God's plan to give them children is going to work out the normal way leading them to decided to help God. Abram listens to his wife, Sarai's, bad idea (a parallel with the Fall in Eden) and takes Sarai's maid Hagar as a second wife and surrogate mother, since Hagar's children would belong to her mistress Sarai according to legal customs of the time.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Whenever someone takes more than one wife in the Bible it tends to lead to trouble.  
The Bible is trying to teach a lesson: stick with monogamy.

The plan works in the sense that a son, Ishmael, is born but this son is not the person God was intending as Abram's heir. This led to fighting, arguing, envy, and unhappiness between Sarai and Hagar as well as the rest of Abram's family.





## 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.**

## SKIN IN THE GAME

God then gives Abraham circumcision as a duty to perform as a sign of the covenant, which will mark him and his descendants as God's chosen family.

Although unknown, God may have asked Abram to circumcise as a new way to 'cut' a covenant. Rather than cut animals like in Gen. 15, Abraham here has to cut himself (meaning he really has skin in the game)



### DID YOU KNOW?

You don't make a covenant,  
you 'cut' a covenant.  
Covenant-making ceremonies usually  
involved cutting and blood.  
The blood symbolizes the parties  
now sharing one blood as a family  
AND that if any parties broke  
the covenant then  
"let his blood be shed, just like this  
blood we are shedding now."

## HERE COMES THE SON

Lastly God clears up that the covenant heir will be the first son of Sarah, Abraham's first wife, not Ishmael the son of Hagar, Abraham's second wife and Sarah's maid. However, Ishmael will receive a blessing and will become a great nation himself.

Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac is born in time (Gen. 21), and Hagar and Ishmael were disinherited but taken care of by God (Gen 21:8-21).

After he makes peace with the natives in the land (Gen 21:22-34), Abraham and Sarah should live happily ever after now they have the son they both longed for. But not before Abraham gets the biggest test of his life...



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



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

# 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

## 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)

**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?*

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

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

## DISCUSS

*How do you 'let go, and let God' or let God work in your life rather than take things into your own hands?*

## 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.







FAITH LIKE  
**ABRAHAM**



**SESSION SIX**

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



## READ: GENESIS 22

### THE FINAL COVENANT

At the end of Genesis 21, Abraham and Sarah have the son they both longed for and are living peacefully in the land. The promises of a great nationhood and great name have been worked into the covenant between God and Abraham, but the last promise of universal blessing to the whole human family has not been.

Before he makes this covenant, God wants to see if Abraham-and Isaac-are the right kinds of persons to bring blessing to the rest of humanity.

So *"After these things, God tested Abraham"* (Gen. 22:1).

Similar to his first call to Abram, God calls to Abraham and tells him to take his son Isaac and *"go to the land of Moriah, to a mountain that I will show you."*

There Abraham is to take his 'only son' (or 'only begotten son') Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham does as God commands.

### THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB

How could Abraham even think of killing his own son?

Abraham's actions don't seem so barbaric when we read closely and note that it is Isaac, not Abraham, who is carrying the wood for the sacrifice.

This means Isaac is the stronger of the two as he is carrying the heavy load of the wood.

So we should not see an old man and a child, we should see an old man and a strapping teenager.

So when Abraham binds Isaac and places him on the altar, Isaac must have cooperated.



Where else in the Bible do we see a 'one and only' or 'only begotten' son carrying the wood of his own sacrifice up a hill, there to be sacrificed by his father to God? **Jesus on Calvary!**

## ABRAHAM THE PROPHET

So the description of Abraham as a 'prophet' (Gen 20:7) is fitting as he is the first person to predict Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Abraham hints at the coming of Jesus when Isaac asks where is the lamb for the sacrifice, and Abraham replies "*God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son*" (Gen 22:8).

The natural meaning of Abraham's prophecy is fulfilled in Genesis 22 when the angel of God stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac and substitutes a ram caught in nearby bushes.

In Hebrew, the natural sense of his words is "God will provide *for himself* a lamb for the sacrifice." God provided himself through his Son Jesus, Abraham's descendant, the true "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29).

## 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.





## **DIRECTIONS**

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

### **ABRAHAM & ISAAC**

No one is expecting a baby from Sarah.

### **GOD/FATHER & GOD/SON**

No one is expecting a baby from Mary.

# 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?*

*Sacrifices are an important part of the Old Testament, 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

*Have you ever made a big sacrifice? What was it?*

## CHALLENGE

### **DO:**

The Works of Mercy can easily be called sacrifices of love.

This week try to focus on completing 1 corporal and 1 spiritual work of mercy.

### **PRAY:**

As a family, pray the Rosary using the Sorrowful mysteries.

We encourage you for each decade to add intentions as a family.



