

# Stories of the Hebrew Bible

## Lesson 3: The Call of Abraham

2.5.2017

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**Objectives:** Explore faith that risks being “called” to a new place, trusting in covenant.

**Materials:** flipchart, blindfolds, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor reserved space, lesson attachments.

**Time allotments** suggested and meant to be adapted for **75 minute class**.

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### 1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
  - ▶ What is the most valuable thing that friends and family provide for you?
  - ▶ What does it mean to really trust someone?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

### 2. Silly Fun: “Guess Who Loves You” (5 minutes max)

Put a chair in the middle of the room. Have everyone stand in a circle around the chair. Get a volunteer to be “IT,” who sits in the chair with blindfold over eyes. Shuffle the circle around. Teacher points silently to one of the youth, who then DISGUISES voice and says “Guess who loves you” and “IT” tries to guess the correct identity. Give anywhere between one and three guesses, depending on the size of the class. If “IT” guesses incorrectly, “IT” has to take one more turn.

### 3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

**Teacher reads:** (from uncertain source)

*“Go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is.”*

(from Arianna Huffington, author and Editor-in-chief of *The Huffington Post*)

*“Failure is not the opposite of success; it’s part of success.”*

### 4. Joys and Sorrows (10 minutes): Listening is a precious gift that we offer one another at church. Using the balance scale and the blue (sorrows) and yellow (joys) stones, invite youth to share a joy and/or a sorrow from the past week, as a way of meeting one

another with our lives and *sharing* in community. You will want to set limits (e.g. two stones max per person) so that no one monopolizes sharing time.

Each Sunday, a copy of the congregation's Embracing Meditation will be made available to your class, so that stones can be put in for those whose names are being spoken in the Sanctuary.

#### 5. **Pre-Story Activity: Trust Walk** (20 minutes)

The following trust exercises will require moving into a larger room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (RE staff will note which space has been reserved).

**Activity will begin in the classroom then move upstairs.**

- Teachers take copies of "God Chooses Abraham" story (attachment) as remainder of class will be upstairs.
- Extinguish the chalice, please.
- Teachers should determine course of path to go upstairs, and spread out strategically along the path to help as needed.
- Divide youth into pairs – ideally with someone they do not know as well – and have them lead one another on a trust walk upstairs. One youth will wear a blindfold, trusting the other to lead safely up the stairs. Instruct youth that a teacher will stop them at a halfway point so they can switch roles.
- Teacher sends out one pair at a time, with enough distance so pairs won't run into one another. *Remind youth to use inside voices, respectful of other classes being conducted.*
- Stress that clear, verbal communication and a gentle leading by the arm work best, and NOT grabbing or forcibly directing the other's body.
- Teacher stops pairs at a halfway point, and youth switch roles.
- Circle up for quick reflection when everyone is gathered in upstairs room.

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

- How did the different roles make you feel?
- Which role – leader or follower – did you prefer?
- Were you able to trust your partner? Why/not?

## 6. Trust Fall (15 minutes)

This exercise involves falling toward one's partner in trust, with the option to stop at any point when pairs of youth reach their trust limit.

- Youth pair up with someone of similar height and weight. Youth stand in two rows, facing their partner across from them, about elbow-length away, with hands up and ready to clasp partner's hands.
- When everyone is ready, teacher gives a signal and everyone slowly falls forward toward their partner. Legs should remain straight, knees not bent! Each of the two fallers extends their arms up, palms forward, and make hand contact with their partner falling toward them. (Note: Before the fall, partners agree upon which way they will continue the fall – right or left – if they miss each other's hands.)
- Falling the short distance should be easy for all. Next, participants take one step back, increasing the distance between them, and repeat the trust fall. This is repeated until (1) pairs fail to connect, or (2) choose not to attempt the distance.
- Those who fall or choose not to attempt can cheer and support others until the very last pair reaches their limit.
- Youth circle up for quick reflection.



### Questions for Discussion:

- At what point did you start questioning or doubting whether you could do this? (Hint: most participants begin doubting when the contact point moves beyond their arm's length; i.e. beyond range of control.)
- Prior to doubting, is there a need to really trust? When does trust kick into gear? (Hint: trust is NOT the absence of doubt but a confidence in something greater.)
- What made you doubt or trust your partner? Yourself?
- Was your doubt about intention or ability?

## 7. Story: The Call of Abraham (25 minutes)

Share this background information before reading the story:

- Abraham (originally Abram before name was changed by God) is the founding patriarch of the Israelites, as well as for Muslims and Christians.

- The covenant made with God will be a recurring theme in the stories of the Hebrew Bible. It is this covenant – this special promise of love and trust – that allows the descendents of Abraham to claim their promised land.

Hand out copies of the attached story of “God Chooses Abraham,” and invite volunteers to read portions aloud.

**Questions for Discussion:**

- How does this story relate to our graffiti questions?
- God calls Abraham to leave his home/family and travel to a new, unknown place that God will show. How would you feel about leaving a place/people you know, to risk traveling to a whole new place?
- Think about trust exercises we did. What would make you doubt God’s promise? What would make you trust?
- Abraham and Sarah laugh at God’s incredible promise of a son, a promise that sounds preposterous and unrealistic at their age. And yet a son is born, and their laughter of disbelief turns into a laughter of surprise and joy! Have you ever been surprised or astounded at something unbelievable actually come true?
- Are people who hear the “voice of God” making such promises – those who imagine world peace or have a dream of racial equality – just dreamers and idealists?
- What would it take to trust enough to risk moving to a new place, life, or reality?

**8. Say goodbye until next time:** chalice already extinguished, but say together:

*“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”*

**9. Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- return blue/yellow stones to containers
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheet