

ABRAHAM: FATHER TO ALL BY FAITH

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ROMANS 4:1-25

*Abraham is the father of all who place their trust in Christ.***The STORY**

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Abraham is our example of faith. Paul uses Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish faith, to demonstrate that our standing of righteousness before God has always been by faith and not by works. Paul quotes Genesis 15:4, where, after God told Abraham that his children would be as numerous as the stars, the text simply reads, "Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." Abraham did no work to earn his righteousness. He simply believed God's promise. Righteousness, was God's free gift.

Abraham is the father of all who would believe. The Jews would have believed Abraham to be their father. They even called themselves the "children of Abraham." They also believed that their right standing before God was marked by circumcision. In this text, Paul explodes their thinking. Abraham was counted as righteous before circumcision. Abraham, Paul informs us, is the father of all those who have faith, whether they are circumcised or not. Abraham is the father of all who believe! Later, in the Book of Romans, Paul goes a step further and tells us that God's children are those who are children of the promise by faith, not those who are the natural children of Abraham (Romans 9:7,8). Abraham is not just the father of the Jews, but the father of "many nations" (Romans 4:17).

Abraham believed against all hope. He trusted God's plan. This is a wonderful picture of our need to trust in Christ. Abraham's body was as good as dead just as we are dead, in our sins. There was nothing Abraham could do in his own strength to renew his own body so that he could have children. Likewise, there is nothing we can do to work our way to heaven. If Abraham was going to have children, it would have to be the work of God. If we are to be saved, it can only come by the work of God. Abraham believed that God had the power to do what He promised, and we must believe that God has the power to fulfill His promise of salvation through the work of Jesus on the cross. Like Abraham, we have no other hope. We are hopelessly lost in our sin apart from Jesus.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Paul directly ties the faith of Abraham trusting in God's future redemption with our trusting in God's past work on the cross and through the Resurrection. Abraham's faith was "counted to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:22). In the same way, "It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:24,25).

ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 53:10

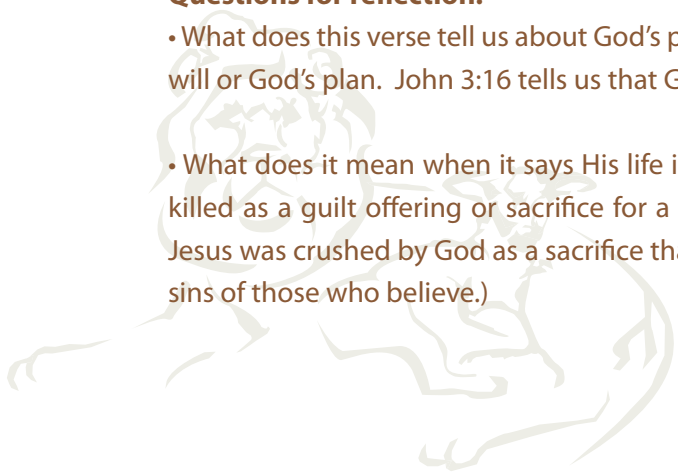
Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the Lamb of God, the guilt offering that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through His blood (Romans 3:25). Jesus did not remain crushed. On the third day He rose again, and the will of the Lord in bringing many to salvation was accomplished.

This wonderful verse, in the midst of Isaiah's prophetic look at the Crucifixion, once again opens our eyes to see the willingness of the Father to crush His Son for our redemption.

Questions for reflection:

- What does this verse tell us about God's plan to offer up Jesus? (This verse tells us that it was the Lord's will or God's plan. John 3:16 tells us that God gave up Jesus out of love for us.)
- What does it mean when it says His life is a guilt offering? (In the Old Testament an animal would be killed as a guilt offering or sacrifice for a person's sins. Those sacrifices never actually took away sin. Jesus was crushed by God as a sacrifice that did take away sins. Jesus' sacrifice paid the price for all the sins of those who believe.)



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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

CREDIT YOUR ACCOUNT

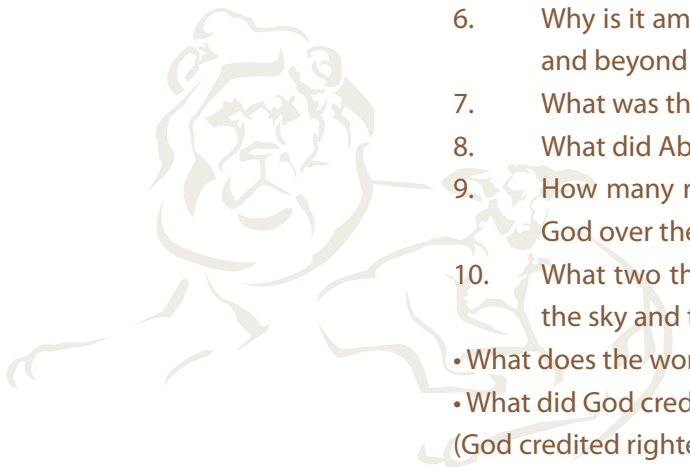
Supplies:

- white board and markers
- slips of paper with the numbers 1- 10 written on them

Use this exercise to help the children understand what the word credited means. After each correct answer say the following: "That answer is correct and one point will be credited to the boys' / girls' account."

Flip a coin to see if the boys or girls will go first. Pick a number at random and ask them the corresponding question. They have thirty seconds to give the answer. If they get it correct, credit their account five points. If they get it wrong, they get no score and the opposing team can answer for three points.

1. What was Abraham's name before he was called Abraham? (Abram)
2. How did Abraham deceive the Pharaoh of Egypt? (He told his wife to tell the Egyptians she was his sister.)
3. What was Sarah's name before she was called Sarah? (Sarai)
4. What is the name of Hagar's son? (Ishmael)
5. What did Abraham sacrifice on the mountain? (He sacrificed a ram. God stopped him from sacrificing his son.)
6. Why is it amazing that Abraham had a son? (He and his wife were very old and beyond the age to have children.)
7. What was the name of Abraham's nephew who traveled with him? (Lot)
8. What did Abraham send his servant out to bring back for Isaac? (A wife)
9. How many righteous people did Abraham settle on in his discussion with God over the destruction of Sodom? Was it thirty, fifty, ten or five? (Ten)
10. What two things did God compare Abraham's future children to? (Stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore)
 - What does the word credited mean? (The word credited means added.)
 - What did God credit to Abraham's account when Abraham believed God by faith? (God credited righteousness to Abraham's account.)



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FAITH

Supplies:

small ball

Use this activity to help your class remember that faith means believing in something that you can't see.

Ask the class the following questions:

- What is faith? (Faith is the belief that something you can not see is true.)
- What does it mean to place our faith in something? (When we believe something is so true that we depend on it for our well being, we can say we are placing our trust in it. We believe and act on that truth.)
- Do you believe in air? (They will likely say yes.)
- How do you know that air really exists? (They might say that they breathe air. Ask them if they can feel air and then tell them to blow on their hand.)
- Ask the class if they believe there is gravity? (They will say yes. Explain that gravity is the force which draws us to the earth. Show them by dropping a ball. Explain to them that we place our trust in gravity every day. People don't go around grabbing on to things that are fixed to the ground for fear that gravity might not work.)

Use these two examples to talk about our faith in Christ. Even though we can not see God, we believe He is real and we can place our faith in Him. We can know He is real by seeing all that God has done around us. The Bible tells us that the creation is evidence of God's existence (Romans 1:20). We also have the testimony of the Bible. We believe in gravity because we learned about it from a reliable source, our school books. We believe in Jesus because we learned about Him from a reliable source, the Bible. God's word is the most reliable source of all.



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ATONEMENT

Supplies:
two apples

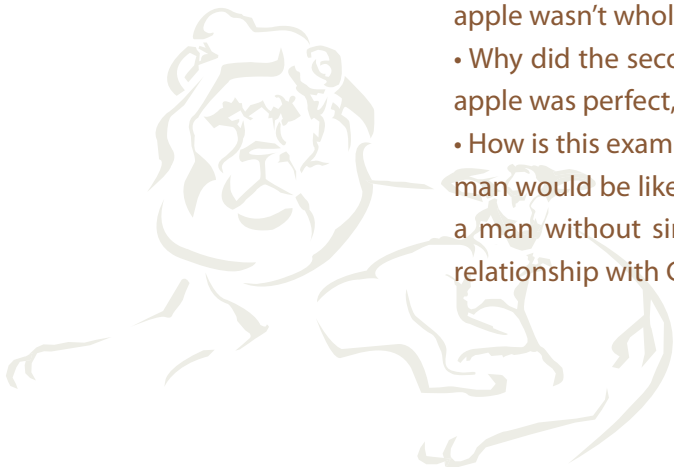
Use this exercise to demonstrate atonement (a reconciling sacrifice). You will need two additional helpers. Place one apple on the top of a file cabinet or on top of some other piece of furniture, out of the way. Once your class is settled and you have read through the passage in Romans, have one of your helpers go up to the apple, take it down, and take a bite out of it. Have the other helper immediately object and start an argument because the apple was his.

Allow the argument to go on for a short time. Then ask them to come in front of the class to explain. After they have explained the situation, have the offending helper say, "Ok, I'm sorry. You can have your apple back." Of course the owner of the apple should object saying that it is no longer any good and that the helper just can't straighten things out by giving back an apple with a bite out of it.

That is when you jump in. Explain to the class that the two helpers are having an argument and need to be reconciled and that you think you have the answer. Tell them that you think you can make atonement for the eaten apple. Pull out the second apple and ask the helper who lost their apple if they would accept your apple as atonement for the apple that was eaten. Have them agree happily and shake hands.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why was the helper upset when their apple got eaten? (The other helper didn't ask first. He just took what didn't belong to them.)
- Did the helper have a good reason to be upset? (Yes. They were sinned against.)
- What did that do to their relationship? (It caused a break in their relationship that needed to be fixed.)
- Why couldn't the relationship be reconciled by just giving the apple back? (The apple wasn't whole anymore. It had been ruined by a bite being taken out of it.)
- Why did the second apple work to cover the loss of the first apple? (The second apple was perfect, like the first, with no bite out of it.)
- How is this example like Christ's atoning, reconciling sacrifice for our sin? (A sinful man would be like offering an apple with a bite in it. Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, a man without sin. His sacrifice was able to atone for our sin and restore our relationship with God.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of Abraham and fill the sky around him with stars. Under each star write a name of a Christian that you know.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

FAITH LIKE ABRAHAM

Supplies:

Paper and pencil

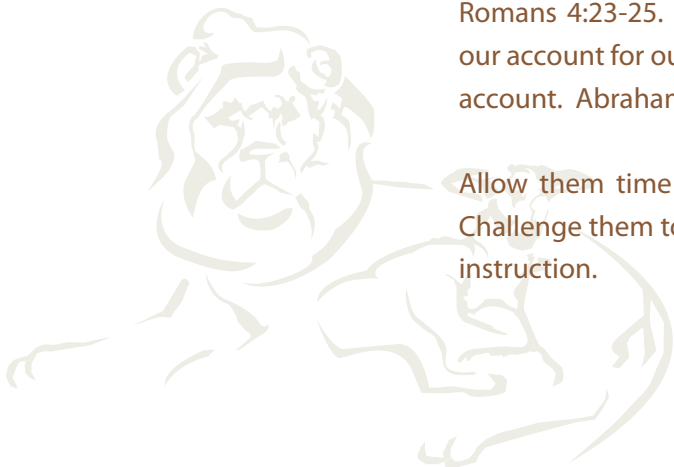
Have your class write an answer to the following questions:

How is our faith like Abraham's faith described in Romans 4:18-21? (We are dead in our sins just like Abraham's body was as good as dead for having children because of his age. Yet we are both called to believe God can do what He promised.)

Why is Abraham called our father? See Romans 4:13-16. (Abraham is the father of all who live by faith in God's redeeming plan. Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. Likewise when we believe in Jesus and His death and resurrection it is also credited to us as righteousness. Abraham is called the father of us all.)

Why are the words "it was credited to him" from Genesis 15:6 important for us? See Romans 4:23-25. (These words apply to us because righteousness is credited to our account for our faith in the same way righteousness was credited to Abraham's account. Abraham looked forward to God's plan of salvation while we look back.)

Allow them time to answer these questions and then discuss them as a class. Challenge them to think a bit for themselves and not simply be feed through your instruction.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Sacrifice of atonement – A sacrifice of atonement was the killing of an animal, in the case of the Old Testament, to restore the broken relationship between God and man caused by man's sin. Those who sin against God cannot have fellowship with God because of their sinfulness and God's need to judge and punish sin. A sacrifice of atonement was a symbolic way of transferring the guilt of the sinner onto the life of the animal. When the animal was killed, the sin was atoned for, so the relationship between God and man could be restored.

Thousands of animals were slain for thousands of men and their sins. Final atonement was never made through the shedding of an animal's blood. These simply pointed forward to Christ, who was presented by God as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. The wrath of God for the sin of man was never poured out on the animals sacrificed. Instead, God stored up His wrath in a wonderful act of forbearance, leaving sin unpunished until His wrath was poured out upon Christ (Romans 3:24-25).

