The standard Youth Sabbath School materials contain a Student Lesson and a Teacher's Guide. In addition to these materials provided by the General Conference Sabbath School Department, the North American Division Youth Department is providing supplemental materials you can choose to add to this lesson. Think in terms of your specific setting and the young people at your Youth Sabbath School. As you seek to involve them in the study and application of the Bible for this week, prayerfully pick and choose the components that will form the Youth Sabbath School for your young people. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as you make your plan and then continue to be sensitive as it guides you during the Sabbath School.

Session 7 Long, Strange Trip (Feb. 16, 2019)

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

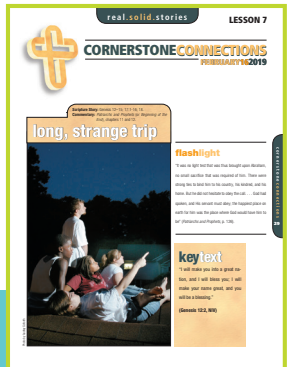
- Genesis 12–15; 17:1–16; 18

OVERVIEW

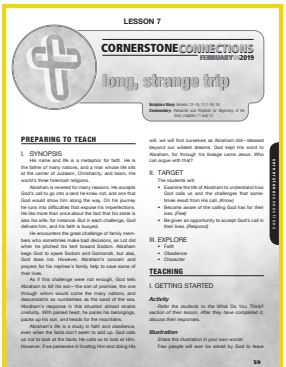
Once Abraham responded to God's call, it began a series of surprising ups and downs that developed Abraham's trust in God. These include:

- Not trusting God with his beloved
- Lot's going to Sodom and his capture and deliverance
- His covenant with God

You can obtain the Student Lesson as well as the Teacher's Guide with a click by visiting YouthSabbathSchoolIdeas.org, which will provide everything you need for your Youth Sabbath School



Student Lesson



Teacher's Guide

Following are additional components that you can pick and choose, use "as is" or adapt to your specific Youth Sabbath School. These supplemental ideas provide more options for this topic. Here's a brief description of the seven supplemental materials:

1. **Opening activity**

An icebreaker or something to get people focused as you begin.

2. **Video clip and follow-up questions**

A short video clip and an idea for you to create your own video on this week's topic, plus a few questions to follow up with discussion.

3. **Music**

It's best if you create your own and choose what's best in your setting. We are not endorsing a particular style or even a specific song. Select songs related to this week's lesson. We'll suggest several different songs with lyrics that relate to the topic for this week. Sing along with a prerecorded track (YouTube is a good source) or better yet, ask youth with musical talent to play instruments and lead the singing.

4. **Bible study guides for Scripture for this lesson**

This is another approach to the same topic found in *Teacher's Guide*, but approached from a different angle. Expect activities to illustrate the topic, followed by some questions.

5. **Application ideas for living out this lesson this week**

Let this spark your ideas to move from talk to action by living out the lesson in practical ways in your life this week.

6. **Youth leader tip for the week**

This bonus is just for the youth leader—a quick tip and an illustration to enhance your youth leadership. You may already know this, or you may learn it through trial and error. Here's a way to get it with a quick infusion.

7. **Trending for Teens**

Here's a collection of trends related to the world of young people as well as the sources of that information. This is to help the youth leader understand the general world of young people today. Since these are general trends, your specific youth may differ.

And here are those seven supplemental materials in more detail for this week's lesson: "Long, Strange Trip."

Opening activity

OPTION 1: CLOSE OR TOO CLOSE?

Show the participants a series of original photographs (you will have to take most of these high-definition photos yourself). For each scene or object that you photograph, have three different versions of it. The first should be a very, very close shot of it. The second is a very close shot of it. The third is just a close shot.

If your Sabbath School has more than four to five people, split them into two teams, such as guys versus girls. Start with the first scene or object in your series and show one team the very, very close photo of it. Give them an opportunity to guess what the object is. If they don't get it right, offer the other team the same opportunity for the same amount of points. If neither individual/team guesses it correctly, show the next photo—the very close photo—and follow the same procedure. If they still can't correctly guess what the object is, show the groups the close photo. If they can't identify what the object is at that point, you can give them the answer (you can have a slideshow with the answers for all 10 objects if you want).

Give out points in the following manner:

- Guessing a very, very close photo right—10 points
- Guessing a very close photo right—6 points
- Guessing a close photo right—2 points

We have provided one set of three pictures you can use for this activity. If you would like to download it, go to the Youth Sabbath School Ideas website to download it as a PDF or PowerPoint or Keynote.

OPTION 2: MAZE MADNESS

Print out copies of the mazes found at this end of this lesson and see how long it takes your Youth Sabbath School participants to complete them correctly. You can make this a contest by giving each person the same maze and having them begin at the same time, or by giving different people different mazes and seeing which people finish which mazes first. You can come up with all kinds of variations, such as having people work in teams of two, starting one group ten seconds ahead of another one, etc.

You can download free mazes of varying difficulty at PrintableMazes.net.

TRANSITION: As we consider today's lesson, "Long, Strange Trip," recall how important something might have been to you when you were a child. For example, some children think they really, really, really need a pony. But that may seem silly to you now. Is it possible that some things that seem very important to you right now might fade in importance as time

passes? We live one moment at a time, but sometimes it's helpful to take a bigger or longer look, especially when your life is like a "long, strange trip."

Video clip and follow-up questions

Create a video clip that illustrates how our journey with God takes many twists and turns that sometimes don't make sense at the moment. Feel free to include not only the positive, but also wrong choices or poor decisions you might have made. This often happens at one single moment. The lesson this week challenges us to take a longer look. Ask someone in advance to create follow up questions.

Or, you can go to YouTube and watch "Do You Believe in God" (3:50 minutes), where a man on the street asks a variety of people whether or not they believe in God and why. The collection provides a variety of responses and indicates where various people are on their own "long, strange trip." You can use the follow-up questions provided or create your own.

1. Which answer in this video caught your attention most?
2. Is there any difference between believing in God and a believing in a higher power or a higher being, and between being spiritual or believing in something positive? If so, what is it?
3. Is it possible to believe in God when you have questions about God? Explain.
4. Consider whether or not you believe in God based on different times in your life. What about when you were ten years old? Fifteen years old? Twenty-five years old? What do you think it will be like when you're fifty years old? What makes the difference?
5. Do you believe in God? Why or why not?

Music

You have options!

1. It's best to do live music in your own setting, even if people are just learning the songs.
2. Tap into Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) to access Christian music legally. Your local church might already be doing this. If not, we recommend that you start. Their website is us.ccli.com.
3. Sing along with existing music. You can type in song titles into YouTube and see how others are doing the same songs you chose. If you need lyrics, you can Google the song title and find them that way.
4. Here are ten songs related to today's lesson, "Long, Strange Trip."
   - Thy Will
   - Jesus Take the Wheel
   - Trust in You

- Cornerstone
- God Is Able
- It Is Well With My Soul
- Where You Are
- One Thing Remains
- I Am Not Alone
- Sovereign

5. "Your Kingdom" is an original song written specifically for Youth Sabbath School. Go to the Youth Sabbath School Ideas website and download the lyrics, download the music, and download the video to learn and teach this song in your Youth Sabbath School. The lyrics have been added to the collection of items at the end of this PDF. Learning new songs usually takes several times before people catch on. You may want to have a few get familiar with it in advance so they can lead the rest of the group.

Bible study guides for Scripture for This lesson — "Reaching Toward Heaven"

This is another approach to the same topic as the Teacher's Guide, but just a different way of looking at it. Expect activities to illustrate the topic followed by some questions.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

- Genesis 12–15
- Genesis 17:1–16
- Genesis 18
- Trusting God's Heart, Part 2—Genesis 12–13.
- Give Me Your Heart—Genesis 14:1–24; Genesis 18:16–33.
- God Helps Those Who (Cannot) Help Themselves—Genesis 16:1–16; Genesis 17:1–27; Genesis 18:1–15.

Trusting God's Heart, Part 2.

(BASED ON GENESIS 12–13)

HERE'S ONE WAY OF STUDYING THE LESSON FOR THIS WEEK

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Video access to YouTube

Most teens who attend church have heard the story of Abraham, but few have read it for themselves. At this point in the story, his actual name is "Abram," which means "exalted father," even though he has no children. It won't be until Genesis 17 that God changes his name to "Abraham," which means "father of a multitude," even he still doesn't have Isaac, the son God promised him.

But before all of this happens, our story in Genesis chapters 12 and 13 reveals a previous challenge—God's call for Abram to leave life as he knew it and set out on an expedition to a new place where God promised to do great things for him and with him.

This week we'll start with a children's version of this story and then compare it to the actual story in the Bible.

Go online to YouTube and type in "Abram Follows God" for a 3:40 kids' version of this story geared for kindergarteners. After showing this simple overview of the story to your Sabbath School, read through the Bible version upon which it is based. Read Genesis chapters 12 and 13—about a page or a page and a half in most Bibles. Then ask questions, such as the ones below.

QUESTIONS

- What did you find in the Bible that you didn't find in the kids' video?
- What messages from this story are more appropriate for teens?
- What messages for kids in this story would still have meaning for teens?
- In what ways is Abram a good role model?
- In what ways is Abram a bad role model?
- Who would you want to be in this story? Why?

Genesis 12 and 13 provide three chapters in Abram's life. The first (Genesis 12:1-9) deals with Yahweh's call for Abram to leave the security of the land and family he knew. The place he would go to was completely unknown to Abram. If Abram's life had been bad, it would be easy to understand why he would want to leave it. If Abram was a restless explorer, it would also make sense that he would want to set out to find a new land. But the only indicator given for Abram to leave was Yahweh's call to start something new and great through Abram. This risk involved the possibility of losing everything he had, although it also involved the possibility of gaining so much more.

QUESTIONS

- What would you have done in this situation if you were Abram? Why?
- What would you have done if you were Sarai? Why?
- Why do you think Lot went with Abram when no other relatives would?
- According to Galatians 3:29, followers of Christ have inherited God's promise to Abram. What does that look like for you?
- What promises has God given to you?
- What would it take for you to believe and take action the way Abram did?
- What should you do the same and what should you do differently if you take God's promises for you to heart?

The second chapter of this part of Abram's life involves two testing points for Abram. It brings up the challenging question of what part we play in God's promises to us. While God gives promises, he doesn't expect us to just sit around like a bump on a log and not be involved or take initiative. On the other hand, we often lack patience and try to move ahead of God's unfolding plan.

After Abram had built an altar and worshiped Yahweh in this new land of Canaan, there was a famine so severe that Abram had to move to Egypt. But there's no indication that Yahweh called him to go to Egypt, nor did Yahweh not tell him to go to Egypt.

While they were on the way to Egypt, Abram began to be afraid that the people there would kill him so they could give his wife, Sarai—who was very beautiful—to the Pharaoh. When they arrived, they decided to tell the Pharaoh that Sarai was Abram's sister, not his wife. No, this part wasn't in the children's version of the story, but it is in the Bible. Do you think this really the way God's promise to Abram was supposed to go? Because he didn't know Sarai was Abram's wife, Pharaoh took her off to his palace and gave Abram lots of gifts in exchange for his "sister."

However, God inflicted horrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his family until it became clear that something was wrong. When Pharaoh found out the truth—that Sarai was Abram's wife—he sent her back to Abram, berating him for lying, and escorted them out of Egypt.

QUESTIONS

- What questions came up in your mind when you heard this story?
- Why did Abram, a man who had showed great faith and trust in God previously, not demonstrate that trust in this part of the story?
- Do you have more faith in God now than at a previous time in your life? What has made the difference?
- Why didn't God stop Sarai from entering Pharaoh's harem?
- Why did God send a terrible plague on Pharaoh?
- Have you ever experienced something frightful or terrible and felt like God didn't intervene, at least at the time?
- What do you do when your friends or family don't respond to your attempts to communicate with them, such as with a text or email message?
- What do you do when God doesn't seem present or active at one time in your life, and then does something that takes you by surprise later on?
- Why didn't God give up on Abram?
- Why didn't Abram give up on God?

The third chapter in the story found in Genesis 12-13 involves the problem of Abram and Lot, Abram's younger relative, becoming too wealthy. Can you relate to that? Their many flocks and herds had grown so large that there wasn't enough room for all of their animals to graze on the same land without getting in each other's way. So Abram took the initiative and talked to Lot about splitting up their camps. He offered Lot first choice of all the lands in Canaan. Lot chose the best for himself, leaving Abram with the areas in the mountains rather than the fertile plains.

QUESTIONS

- Why did Abram give Lot first choice of the lands rather than choosing the best for himself?
- How could God still bless Abram if Lot got the best parts of Canaan?
- Are you more like Abram or more like Lot? Explain.
- When there are conflicts in your life, are you more likely to take the initiative and work out a solution yourself, or are you more likely to wait until someone else does something about it?

- In what ways has God blessed you?
- By Genesis 19, Sodom is destroyed. Do you think Lot would have chosen to settle there had he known that would be the outcome, including losing most of his family?
- What are some good ways to make long-term choices when you have to make a decision right now but don't have any the details about the future?
- What principles or guidance do you get from God when you're making big decisions?

In just these two chapters in Genesis, we have read about three very different segments of Abram's life. The first was about God's call to take a big risk and set out on an adventure into the great unknown. God offered him a long-range promise to bless the entire earth through the blessings he would give to Abram. As spiritual children of Abram, God desires to bless the world through us as well.

But then a famine came to Canaan, and Abram took things into his own hands and botched up his arrival to the Promised Land God had led him to by leaving it for Egypt, a place that would continue to impact God's chosen people for centuries. God intervened and had Abram escorted out of Egypt.

Eventually the material blessings God had given Lot and Abram became too great to handle. Abram made the unselfish choice to allow his nephew Lot to choose any part of the lands they were living in to have for himself. In the short run, this would seem like a win for Lot and a loss for Abram, wouldn't it? But we'll see soon that God continued to have a hand Abram's life. We can always trust in him!

Give Me Your Heart

(BASED ON GENESIS 14:1–24; GENESIS 18:16–33)

HERE'S ANOTHER WAY OF STUDYING THE LESSON FOR THIS WEEK

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Roll of masking tape or a rope or line on the floor
- Heart handout and markers

People have been fighting wars against each other for thousands of years. When they succeed, they then take the people they've conquered and make them join their side to help them conquer others. Sometimes people join forces for protection, and one group of allies will try to conquer another group. Families, partnerships, and coalitions develop.

You can read about this in Genesis 14:1–7. It's a challenge just to pronounce the names and places in this passage—names like Kedorlaomer, Shemeber, Amraphel, Ellasar, Zeboiim, and Ashteroth-karnaim. Who wants to try pronouncing some of these other names in the first seven verses of Genesis 14? Maybe come up with nicknames for each—a name that would be more familiar to you and your group.

The bottom line in this passage is that one group of allies was battling another. In the past, a king named Kedolaomer and his allies had beaten and then enslaved and taxed all the other people in the area. This made life easier and more luxurious for him and his allies, but worse for the people he was oppressing! Verse 4 indicates that after twelve years of this, five

of the kings in this area decided that enough was enough. They joined forces to say no to Kedolaomer and his allies. Number-wise, it was five kings against four.

ACTIVITY: FEELING THE TUG

1. Divide your group into two teams and put a line on the floor to separate them. You'll need some free space, so your entire group might need to move from the Youth Sabbath School room to another room or a hallway or even outside (depending on the weather). This is a tug-of-war game, but instead of using a rope, people use themselves! That's right—someone comes up to the line and tries to pull somebody from the other side over to theirs. (You can use a rope or line on the floor/ground for this; if you don't have one, make a temporary one by putting a long strip of masking tape on the floor.)
2. When a person gets pulled across the line, they now join that new side and must try to get everyone else over the line. If they get pulled back to their original side, they must switch teams again (just walking back to one's original side and staying there is not allowed). This is why the activity is called "Feeling the Tug." As some people are being pulled to one side, they might have somebody from their own team grab onto them and pull them back. If that happens, they might also end up pulling over whoever was trying to hold the person back as well.
3. As long as players keep one foot on their side of the line, they can step across the line to grab somebody on the other side. But the second they don't have at least part of their foot on their side of the line, they have become part of the other team.
4. The larger the group, the more fluctuation there will be. When everyone is on the same side of the line, declare that group the winner (which includes everyone at that point!). If not everyone has been pulled to one side after about 3-5 minutes, call time and see which side has more people on it and declare them the winners.

QUESTIONS

- What did you do during this activity, and what happened to you?
- Were you daring or cautious?
- What did you stand to win? What did you stand to lose?
- What did you contribute to your team?
- If you got pulled to the other team, did you feel like you were then part of that team?
- How much did you "feel the tug"?
- Were the teams fair? Who would you have wanted on your side?
- Which was most important: size, strength, or strategy?

Read about the ensuing showdown between Kedolaomer and his team of four kings against the five revolting kings. You can find it in Genesis 14:8–12. Let's take a look at it. There aren't as many crazy names here, but there are still a few.

Either read the passage aloud to the group or have the participants take turns reading a verse or two at a time.

Here's the result of what happened. The four kings fighting with Kedolaomer beat the five kings allied against him, and he kept them in subjugation. But verse 12 adds a small tidbit that turns out to be a big deal in the story. Lot, Abram's nephew, got captured along with all he owned (remember how he was so wealthy that he had to move away from Abram?). One tiny bit of additional information has also been added to this alarming news—Lot no longer was in the fertile plains of the Jordan River. By this time he had moved into the city of Sodom. So when Sodom lost, Lot lost.

But the story quickly gets a reversal. Let's read Genesis 14:14–16 now. (Read the passage.)

Abram gets word and takes his entire household of 318 people and defeats the victorious four kings, recovers all the loot, and frees those taken as captives. And he chases the oppressors away for good. How did Abram do it, and why was he able to overcome the victorious kings? The Bible describes his strategy, but that still begs the question, how could just 318 people do what five kings and their armies couldn't?

Read the rest of Genesis 14 out loud (verse 17–24). Here's another unusual name: Melchizedek. The only place you'll find him mentioned in the Bible is right here, briefly in Psalm 110:4, and then for a few verses in Hebrews (Hebrews 7:15–28 to be exact, which includes the Psalm 110:4 reference). Let's take a quick True/False quiz about Melchizedek, the king of Salem.

You'll find the quiz, and the answer key, at the end of this PDF. Have your participants take it and then discuss it. Point out not only the information included in it, but the significance that Melchizedek was considered more important that Abram. That's why his priesthood is the one attributed to Jesus in contrast to the priesthood of Aaron, who was a descendant of Abram. This also shows that God works through others besides just the line of Abram, even though the promise given to Abram was that all the nations of the world would be blessed through him. God clearly isn't limited to Abram or his descendants.

TRANSITION: We see God's blessing on Abram in how he was able to overpower the victorious four kings and free the five kings. It seems that the blessing promised to Abram in Genesis 12:1–3 is already starting to be fulfilled. But it also shows that Abram is willing to rescue his own nephew and all those associated with him. Abram's name is becoming well known, and Abram responds by being a blessing to others. We'll see more of his heart for others in our next Scripture segment—Genesis 18:16–33.

Following God's surprise visit to Abram (see Genesis 18:1-8 for a great story in its own right), Yahweh (the LORD in verse 17) shared his intention to come to earth at this time. In other situations supernatural beings have been on earth and have revealed some of their supernatural qualities in a way that humans noticed (Judges 13:17–23; Matthew 28:2–4; Rev 22:8–9). Obviously, in this setting, the supernatural was veiled. This is an example of what people refer to when they quote Hebrews 13:2 about "entertaining angels unaware"—showing hospitality and not even knowing it was Jesus himself (see also Matthew 25:37–40, 44–45).

Read Genesis 18:16–21 to get this shocking information. Divide your group into pairs and have one person play the role of Yahweh (the LORD) and the other play the role of Abram. Have them read these verses and then offer their own paraphrased version, emphasizing their part in the story. Then ask them to try to identify the feelings they would have if they were Abram in this part of the story. What do these verses reveal about God? One thing that seems to stick out is that wickedness can get worse and worse to the point that God chooses to intervene and stop it (see also the story of the Flood in Genesis 6 and 7). Another key finding is that God doesn't like wickedness or rebellion. We also see that God checks things out for himself for verification, and that God chooses to share his plans in advance.

What other findings grab your attention with this short introduction?

Our focus now will be on the interchange between Abram and God concerning Sodom. Read Genesis 18:22–33. Do this with your partner as you continue the role playing of Yahweh/God and Abram.

QUESTIONS

- Was God going to destroy both the innocent and the guilty (verse 23)?
- Would you try to talk God down (from 50 to 45, all the way to 10)?
- When have you tried to barter with God? What was the result?
- When the conversation ended, do you think Abram had "saved" Sodom?
- What might have been in Abram's heart for him to engage God like this?
- What would it take for you to care about those in "wicked Sodom"?
- How often do you pray for those you consider wicked? What is your prayer?

ACTIVITY

Give each person in your Youth Sabbath School a copy of the "My Heart" pages, which you can download. It has two different pages—one with a white heart and another with a red heart. You can use either or both of these. One is for use during Youth Sabbath School and the other is for participants to take home and use as part of their application during the week.

Challenge the youth to ask God for a heart like Abram's heart—one that cares about those taken captive, like Lot and the people who were part of the five kingdoms that had been oppressed for twelve years straight. Ask for a heart like Abram's that engages with God in pleading for those who are wicked. Some people you know who might be considered "wicked" could include you, some of your family members, perhaps some of your friends, and possibly some people you avoid. Some might be people you've never met, but have heard wicked things about.

On your paper heart, write symbols that represent people you'd like to pray for—people like who Abram knew lived in Sodom. This included his nephew Lot and Lot's family members. It included the king of Sodom and the many people Abram had rescued previously. Instead of being angry or denigrating these people, Abram prayed for them. You don't need to spell out anyone's name; just create a symbol to let you know who that person is. Can you think of another? Do you need to put yourself on the heart, too? Feel free to do so if God impresses you to do that. I'll give you a few moments to contemplate the people you'd like to put on your heart—the people for whom you'll pray.

Give participants some time to reflect and to put their symbols on their own hearts. Don't try to impinge on their privacy. Provide plenty of markers, including a variety of colors and sizes and thicknesses. Play some background music while they do this activity. Then lead them in conversational prayer. You can start by saying something like, "Dear God, please give me a heart that cares—a heart like yours, a heart demonstrated by Abram. I can think of many people I would label as "wicked." My prayer is that you will reach them with your good news and free them from their wickedness. And feel free to use me as part of that process. . ." Then, open up the prayer for others to add words or phrases or sentences themselves

SUMMARY:

We see from the developing story of Abram that God's blessing comes on him even in dire situations that we could call emergencies. There are plenty of difficulties in his story, but also supernatural blessings. In the process, Abram demonstrates generosity, kindness, a reliance on Yahweh, and a heart for people that some would label as wicked. We didn't focus on God's actions as much as what God was doing through Abram, including Abram's willingness to engage with God on behalf of the wicked that might be destroyed. This gives us a little foretaste of what Jesus will do during his ministry as well. God shows what he's like in Jesus, but he also gives us glimpses through other people like Abram. This can also happen through other people like you and me!

God Helps Those Who (Cannot) Help Themselves

HERE'S ANOTHER WAY OF STUDYING THE LESSON FOR THIS WEEK

(BASED ON GENESIS 11:1–9)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- "All in the Family" handout
- Pens
- Blindfolds for each participant

Most Americans will attribute the statement "God helps those who help themselves" to some verse of Scripture. According to the Barna Group (Boiling Point, 2003), 75% of Americans surveyed believe that statement can be found somewhere in the Bible. Those who know better are likely to name Benjamin Franklin as the source, since it appears in Franklin's book Poor Richard's Almanac. But in reality it predates even Franklin, supposedly drawn from Algernon Sidney's works. Some claim it can even be traced to Greek proverbs.

Perhaps the idea fits in with a Protestant work ethic of trying hard, doing your part, and being responsible. And there are certainly some verses of Scripture that could encourage these qualities. For example:

- Ecclesiastes 9:10—Do you work with all your might.
- Deuteronomy 28:8—God will bless everything you put your hand to.
- Proverbs 6:10–12—Laziness brings poverty.

- 2 Thessalonians 3:10—If you don't work, you shouldn't eat.
- Colossians 3:23—Work with all your heart, as working for the Lord.

But our passage of Scripture for today presents just the opposite. You could interpret the story of Abram and Sarai and the fiasco that happened when they tried to help God in a way that makes sense to humans to mean that actually, God helps those who cannot help themselves. This isn't a suggestion that humans should do nothing. Rather, it's an acknowledgment that humans are quite dependent on God. As Jesus told his disciples, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Some may argue that they can do many things without God. For example, many people choose to live apart from God. They may work and play and do all sorts of things with no awareness or care for God or anything beyond their own world. They do lots of things. Some claim to have rewarding relationships and success markers based on their talent, prowess, hard work, and maybe even a little bit of luck. But they wouldn't include God in the equation. They point to many people they consider successful and who have no connection with God in any way, and posit that as proof that humans can do plenty without God in their lives.

QUESTIONS

- Do you agree or disagree with the idea that God helps those who help themselves?
- What have you done that you didn't need God's help with?
- What have you been unable to do without God?
- How much do you need God, and for what?

One pattern that Scripture illustrates repeatedly is God's desire to do things with us. He's not so much interested in doing everything for them, nor is he interested in them doing everything without him. His choice is to do it together. That's his relational orientation. That's why God sometimes had people doing very foolish things, such as:

- Moses holding up his hands for a war blessing/victory (Exodus 17:8–13)
- The Jordan River parting when priests walked into it (Joshua 3:14–16)
- Jehoshaphat sending the choir to defeat the enemy (2 Chronicles 20:21–23)

Let's read how Abram chose to help God by helping himself. Read the story in Genesis 16:1–16.

Take turns having people read the passage. You can also have one person recount the story from memory and then read it for a potentially more accurate rendering, as well as the chance to discover more facts and nuances that might have been missing from the person's memory.

QUESTIONS

- Whose idea was it to use Hagar as a surrogate for the child God promised Abram and Sarai?
- How did that work out for all those involved?
- This was a common practice at that time, so why didn't it work?

HANDOUT

Download the "All in the Family" handout and give each participant a copy. You can choose the black and white page/version or the color page/version. As participants reflect on the story in Genesis 16:1–6, have them write in the various geometric figures what comes to mind for them as they put themselves in the shoes of various characters in the story: Abram, Sarai, Hagar, Ishmael, and later God. Don't forget to save a spot for God! Consider the thoughts, questions, feelings, attitudes, and actions each person would have. Take some time to get into the story and the individual characters. You can refer back to this as you read more of the story later in Sabbath School.

ACTIVITY: HUMAN KNOT

Do this activity if you have at least four people in your group. If your group is smaller than that, recruit some other people who are at church but haven't entered a Sabbath School yet, or join the participants yourself. If you have a large group, you may have to make more than one human knot. If you have more than twelve people, divide into two groups of six to seven people. The ideal number is about ten people.

1. Have the participants stand in a circle and grab the right hand of the person across from them. Then have them take their left hand and grab the hand of someone completely different in the circle. Once everyone has done this, pick one person to start a "squeeze sequence," or moving a hand squeeze through the group. This one person should squeeze with just one hand at a time—let's say their right hand. When someone feels the squeeze in their left hand, they should squeeze their right hand—as if they are letting electricity flow through them.
2. When the squeeze comes back to the original person in their left hand, ask if everyone has felt the squeeze go through them. If they didn't, have everyone let go of their hands and start again, making sure to grab at least one different hand than they did the previous time. If everyone did feel the squeeze the second time, then theoretically you have a complete circle that is just tangled up in a human knot. It can be undone again, but it must happen without letting go of the hands of everyone in the group.

If you have less than seven to eight people, it can usually be undone fairly easily. You may need to handicap participants by blindfolding them in order to make it a challenge. A less-intense option is to not allow any talking. You can also set a time limit of 60 seconds to unwind the knot. For a group of more than ten people, it often takes at least 10–15 minutes to come undone.

For this activity and this lesson, it would be good if the participants are not able to get undone in the time allowed. You're wanting to illustrate and have them experience the idea that "God helps those who cannot help themselves." For the group that can't get undone, an outside leader can either give them guidance or even change the rules and "heal" a tight knot by gently breaking a hold and reconnecting without the knot. Consider it a miracle.

QUESTIONS

- How difficult was this for you? What made it easy or difficult?
- Did you need any help?
- Did you do anything that hindered rather than helped?
- Who was the biggest help for the group?
- Where do you see this type of thing happen in real life?

Let's read another part of this developing story—Genesis 17:1–27. This chapter includes three sections. Verses 1-8 describe the renewing of God's covenant with Abram and God's action of changing Abram's name to Abraham.

The second portion includes verses 9–14 and describes the physical symbol of the covenant—the circumcision of all males in Abraham's family. This can be an awkward or embarrassing topic, but it's very real and illustrates that God is not merely tuned in to spiritual topics, but links them to our physical, daily, human lives.

The final portion of the chapter describes the Sarai's name changed to Sarah, and God's promise to provide the child her and Abraham he had promised. Abraham and Sarah seemed to find this increasingly difficult to believe—a very human response to the divine promise.

You can choose to read one section of this passage at a time or choose to read the entire 27 verses without a break, depending on your participants and how they read Scripture as a group.

QUESTIONS

- If your name meant "exalted father" or "exalted mother" and someone changed it to "father/mother of a multitude," and you had no children of your own, how would you explain that to people?
- When have you ever made a covenant with God?
- God renewed his covenant with Abraham. How often do you renew your covenant with God?
- By God naming Abraham, it indicated his ownership of Abraham and his power over him. Would you want God to name you? Has he done so already?
- Why do you think God chose male circumcision as the symbol for his covenant with Abraham and his descendants?
- What changes came to Abraham's family with God's renewal of the covenant?

Return to the "All in the Family" handout and add some more comments to it. Follow it up with a discussion after your participants have added more and given additional thought to it.

If there's still time, continue with the first half of Genesis 18. This next segment of the story involves Abraham and Sarah's three unexpected visitors. The hosts show hospitality in a favorable way, but one can't help but wonder when exactly they came to realize they were dealing with supernatural beings instead of three normal guys.

Read Genesis 18:1–15. Have one person play the part of Abraham, the consummate host. Have another person play the role of God, and a third person play the role of Sarah. Have them act out their parts as they are read.

QUESTIONS

- Why do you think God came to Abraham and Sarah?
- Why did God disguise himself to look like a regular human being?
- What are ways you demonstrate hospitality to others?
- Have you ever entertained angels without being aware of it?
- Why might God have brought up the supernatural birth he promised them?
- The promise was physically impossible. If you were Abraham or Sarah, would you have believed in it? Why or why not?
- God asked the question, "Is anything too hard for Yahweh?" What seems too hard for Yahweh in your life?
- Sarah covered her laughter by lying. When is a good time to lie to God? When is a good time to laugh with God?
- Is this an example of "God helps those who help themselves" or "God helps those who cannot help themselves"?

SUMMARY:

The continuing story of God's miraculous involvement in the lives of Abram and Sarai (now Abraham and Sarah) illustrates the idea that God helps those who cannot help themselves. When we try to do things on our own, we create one mess after another for everyone involved. The human temptation to try to do something on our own results in one calamity after another. However, God not only wants, but eagerly desires, our involvement. We just need to remember that He's God and we're not. We can't do the supernatural things he has planned for us unless we're dependent on him. And he doesn't want to do it without us.

Give each Youth Sabbath School participant their own copy of "Helping God" for their personal application this week. You may want to start this in Sabbath School or invite people to share their responses next week.

Application ideas for living out this lesson this week

Let this spark some ideas for how you can move from talk to action by living out the lesson in practical ways in your life this week.

The following three applications relate to the corresponding three Bible Study Guides above.

A. Apply this lesson to your life this week with your head, heart, and hands.

Head: Think about something God may be directing you to do that you may not want to. (This could include breaking up with someone you know isn't good for you, deciding to stop treating someone a certain way, or even befriending someone you don't feel comfortable reaching out to.) Consider how your decision is likely to impact your present situation, your life a week or a month from now, and your life one year

from now. Then compare that with whether or not you can trust God even if your own desires seem stronger than God's instructions for you. Reflect on God's call to Abram and Abram's response. Then pray for your trust in God to be like Abram's trust in God.

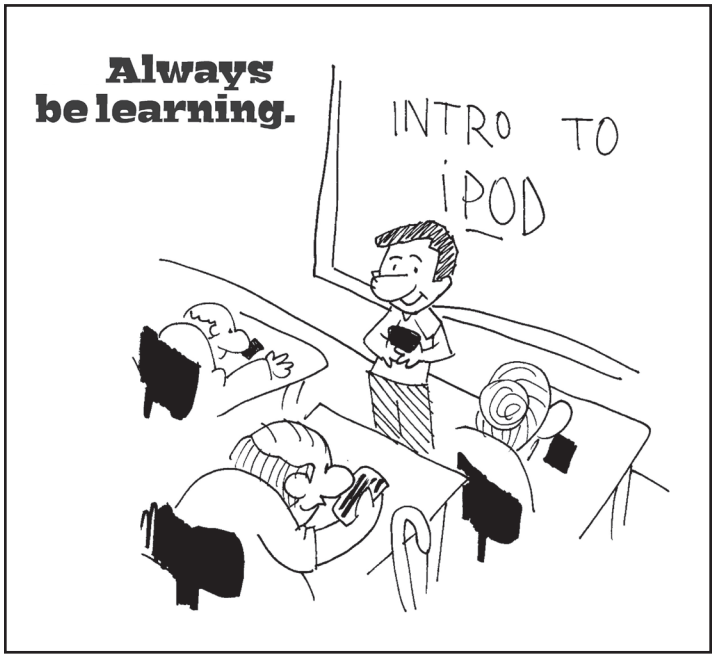
Heart: It's easy to come up with ways to reinforce or rationalize reasons to do what you want to do, even if that's different from what you know God wants you to do. Broaden your perspective by sharing your feelings with a spiritual mentor and ask for their input on what they perceive God would want you to do in the situation you're sharing. Then pray together for God to make his input clear to you, even if it's different from your own initial desires. Ask God to change your desires to match his for you. Then promise to check back with your mentor after one week for feedback and accountability.

Hands: Make a plan to choose God's directions each day this week. As a carry-over from last week's application of trusting God's heart, read a chapter of Proverbs each day of the week and identify God's instructions that have special pertinence to you right now. You can do this on your device or download the one-page tool "God's Directions for Me." Then put your proverb into practice that very day.

B. Tale home the heart you received during Youth Sabbath School. This is the one you wrote symbols on to remind yourself of someone you might consider "wicked," but who God, Abram, and even you could choose to bless and redeem instead. Place this in a private place where you can see it during the week. Let it prompt you to pray again and for this person. In your prayer, ask God to actively reach out to them and to use you as a tool to do it. You can also take home another blank heart and start from scratch again there in another week or two.

C. Take the "Helping God" handout home with you from Youth Sabbath School. Use it to read examples in the Bible of people who did truly amazing things because they were connected to God. None of these examples (and there are many more than just those) could have happened without God helping someone who could not help themselves. On the right column is a set of lines for you to write in some examples in your own life of when you have done things because of your connection with God. Think of examples from the past as well as something in the present or possibly in the future. Include all of these in your prayer time with God this week.

Youth leader tip for the week



This bonus is just for the youth leader—a quick tip and an illustration to enhance your youth leadership. You may already know this idea or have learned it through trial and error, or maybe you just need a reminder. Here it is in a quick infusion.

A BIT MORE

Most young people are in school, placed in a learning environment each day. In addition, they are absorbing new things into their world like a sponge. By the time they enter their teen years, they are creating their own world and eagerly integrating new developments in technology, language, and styles. Adults are more efficient and stay in the groove that works for them. Older adults usually resist change. Those who continue to learn throughout life continue to grow and are more likely to learn from everything, including new developments among youth. Teachers must continue to be learners.

Trending

Here's a collection of trends related to the world of young people as well as the sources of that information. This is to help the youth leader understand the general world of young people today. Since these are general trends, your specific youth may differ.

TRENDING FOR TEENS—SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT

How Prevalent? How prevalent is sexual abuse and assault among teens? A study of over 6,000 youth found that one in four (27%) teen girls and one in twenty (5%) teen boys will have experienced sexual abuse or assault by the age of 17. This was defined by teens who indicated that another person had either 1) made them do sexual things or 2) attempted to force them to have sex of any kind, even if it did not happen.

Peers and Acquaintances. According to the same study, peers and acquaintances were the most common perpetrators of sexual violence. Of those teens reporting abuse or assault, two in three (67%) girls and three in five (61%) boys were victimized by peers, while three in four girls (74%) and three in five (61%) boys were the victimized by (non-family) acquaintances. When family perpetrators were included, nearly all girls (94%) and most boys (73%) knew their victimizer. Most of these assaults did not involve sexual intercourse, with penetration occurring in only 15% of the cases.

Sexting. Sexual abuse can happen in virtual spaces, too. A study of over 110,000 teens (ages 12 to 17) revealed that at least one in four (27%) of them had received sexually explicit texts and emails, and at least one in seven (15%) had sent sexts. More than one in ten teens (12%) had forwarded sexts without consent and roughly one in twelve (8%) reported having their own sexts shared without permission. An analysis of over 460 teen girls' (ages 12-17) accounts of sexting found that two-thirds of them had been asked to send explicit images. A majority of these (92%) described feeling pressured to do so by another teen, ranging from setting conditions of love ("if you love me"), to constant badgering, to making threats, displaying anger, and/or cutting off contact.

Reticence to Disclose or Report. Two out of three teens (66%) did not tell a parent or other adult about the abuse or assault they experienced. Only one in five made a report to the police. In fact, it may take months, years, even decades for young people to share their story. This reticence to tell others is not uncommon among victims of sexual trauma and may be accompanied by fear of retaliation, distrust of adults ("They won't believe me"), or feelings of humiliation, shame, or self-blame.

Long-Lasting Effects. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the effects of childhood or teenage sexual abuse and assault persist into adulthood, making a person more susceptible to a number of physical, mental, and behavioral health challenges later in life. As adults, victims are about four times more likely to abuse drugs, about four times more likely to experience post-traumatic symptoms, and about three times more likely to experience a major depressive episode. The risk of being re-victimized is also greater.

Education and Prevention. Education is one of the best ways to prevent sexual abuse and assault among teens, along with other forms of abuse due to dating violence. While we can never eliminate the possibility of a young person becoming a victim, there are a number of curriculums for teens that may reduce the potential for harm. These offer lessons about respect, consent, healthy boundaries, dating violence, good decision-making, refusal skills, and bystander intervention. They can easily be adapted and incorporated into any youth group curriculum. For examples or sources, visit the Youth Sabbath School Ideas website.

Here are a several resources for starters:

- The Date Safe Project
- Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships
- Love Is Respect
- That's Not Cool
- Teen Sexual Assault: Information for Teens

Awareness, Reporting, and Risk Management. Those who work with teens should be aware of the signs of sexual abuse and assault, know how to respond to incidents when they arise, and be familiar with their state's mandatory reporting laws. Oftentimes, youth workers have a legal obligation to report what they see and hear related to the abuse or assault of a minor. It is also important to take proper precautions as a youth leader to protect the teens in your care and to set appropriate boundaries for them, yourself, and other adult staff. You can Google the following phrases to find out more or visit YouthSabbathSchoolIdeas.org.

The following resources will help you learn more about sexual assault and abuse and to make a plan to protect and care for your teens.

- National Sexual Violence Resource Center
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (includes the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline & Live Chat)
- Futures Without Violence
- End It Now

SOURCES:

- Sexual assault among adolescents: 6 facts (popular read)
- The Lifetime Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault Assessed in Late Adolescence (primary source)
- Teenagers Are Sexting — Now What? (popular read)
- Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth (primary source)
- Teenagers, Stop Asking for Nude Photos (popular read)
- "What Should I Do?": Young Women's Reported Dilemmas with Nude Photographs (primary source)

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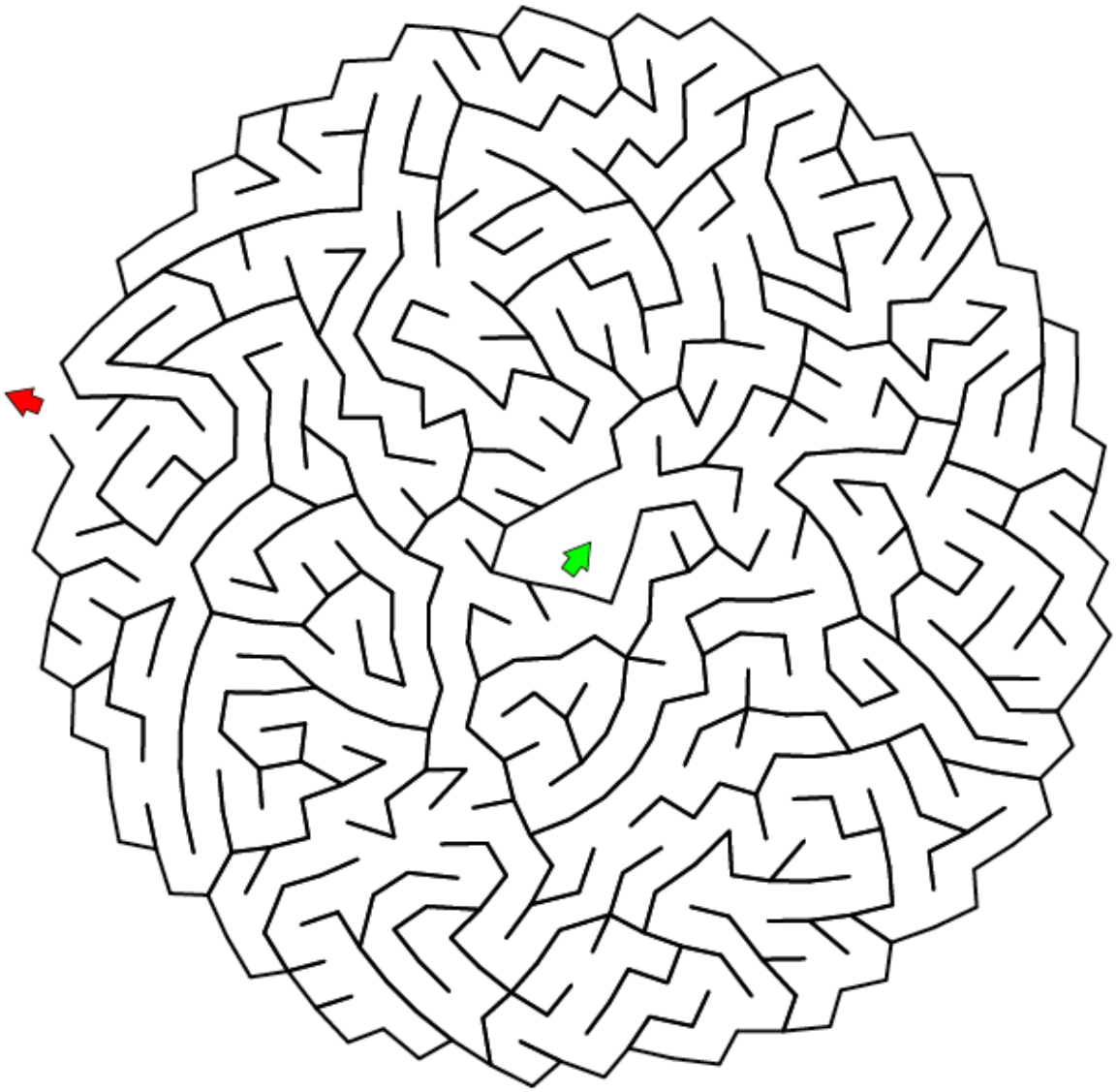

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Your Kingdom

Written by Werner Carrasco
Performed by Allison Padilla

To be in your Kingdom,
To sit by your throne
My heart must be broken,
Remove every stone

To be in your presence
To linger with you
I must see the world
With the Love that you do

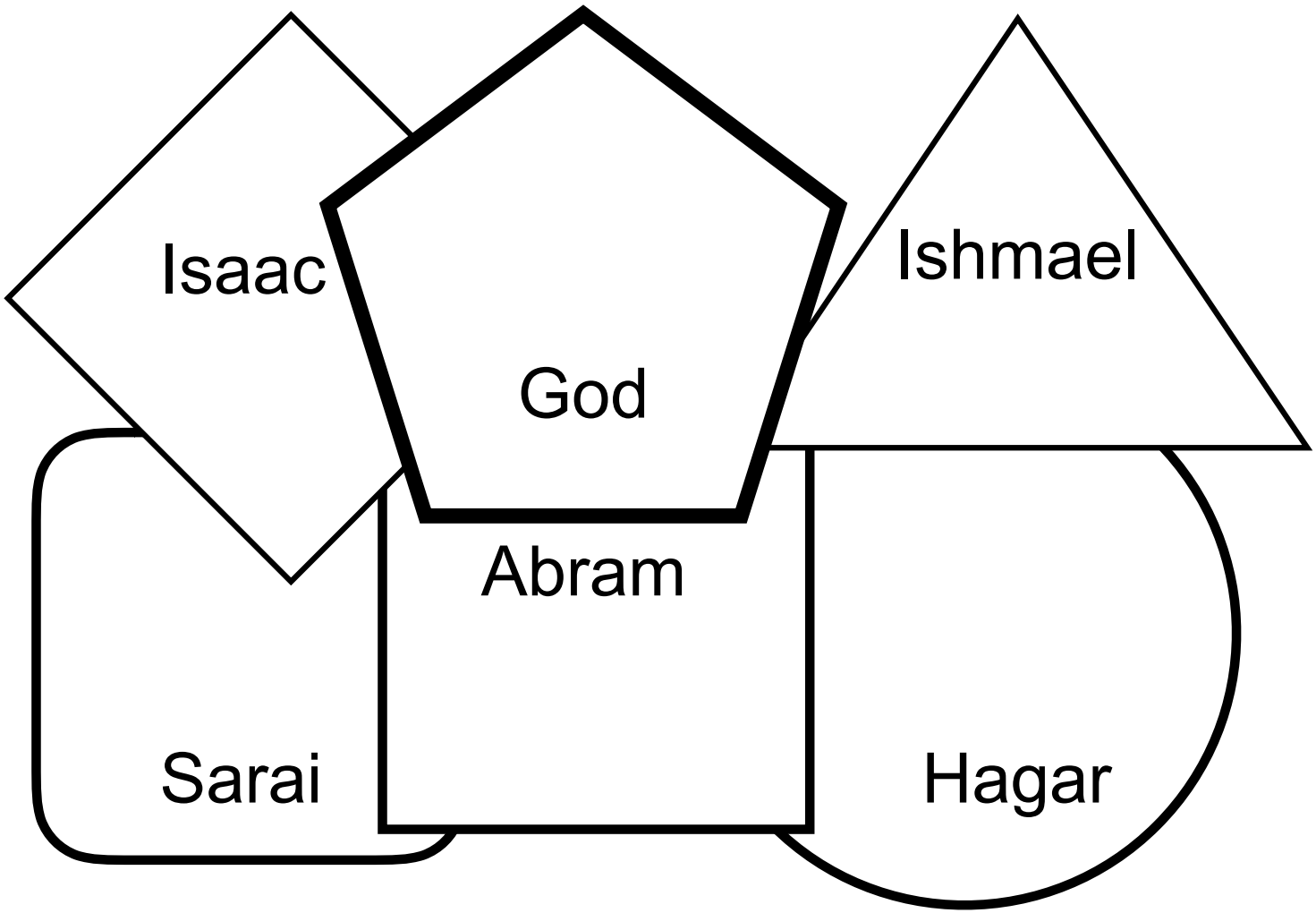
CHORUS
Because your Kingdom
Is never a place,
A mansion or city,
It's greater than that,
To walk with you, Lord
To be by your side
I must see the world,
With the Love that you do

Your home is within me,
My home within You
Your Kingdom is Love
Your castle is Truth

The hungry and hopeless
Together we'll meet
I must see the world
As you also see me

All in the Family

What thoughts, questions, feelings, attitudes, and actions would you likely have had if you had been:



Melchizedek King of Salem

Mark whether the following statements about "Melchizedek" are True (T) or False (F).

____ We know quite a bit about Melchizedek.

____ Melchizedek was the king of Sodom.

____ Melchizedek was considered "higher" than Abram.

____ Melchizedek was a priest of God.

____ Melchizedek corrected the sinful practices of those in Sodom.

____ Melchizedek gave a blessing to Abram.

____ Melchizedek received tithe from Abram.

____ Melchizedek was a priest of the Creator of heaven and earth.

____ Melchizedek was the king of peace.

____ The tribe of Levi and the priests came from Melchizedek's family.

Melchizedek King of Salem (Answer Key)

Mark whether the following statements about "Melchizedek" are True (T) or False (F).

F We know quite a bit about Melchizedek. (Very little; Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:15-22)

F Melchizedek was the king of Sodom. (king of Salem, not Sodom. Gen. 14:18)

T Melchizedek was considered "higher" than Abram. (because Abram gave him tithe—to God)

T Melchizedek was a priest of God. (Gen. 14:18)

F Melchizedek corrected the sinful practices of those in Sodom. (no record of that; he was the king of Salem, not Sodom; and because of its exceeding wickedness, Sodom was later destroyed by God—Genesis 19.)

T Melchizedek gave a blessing to Abram. (Gen. 14:19)

T Melchizedek received tithe from Abram. (Gen. 14:20)

T Melchizedek was a priest of the Creator of heaven and earth. (Gen. 14:18)

T Melchizedek was the king of peace. ("Salem" means "peace," so the king of Salem was the "king of peace.")

T The tribe of Levi and the priests came from Melchizedek's family. (The tribe of Levi came from Jacob, a descendent of Abram, not Melchizedek.

God's Directions for Me

For each day, include a Proverb for that day of the month
(For example, for the 12th day of the month, choose a proverb from Proverbs chapter 12)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sabbath
Prov. __:__	Prov. __:__	Prov. __:__	Prov. __:__	Prov. __:__	Prov. __:__	Prov. __:__
# Today ___	# Today ___	# Today ___	# Today ___	# Today ___	# Today ___	# Today ___

Put a number for each day, 1-10 for your heart's condition to God: 1 = super soft to 10 = super hard