

## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### Share Your Story

Following God's leading in the midst of challenges is a struggle every believer will face. Fear of the unknown or lack of confidence in your abilities are two of many reasons why we may be reluctant to follow God fully. Consider sharing your personal journey of following God to encourage your learner's faith and foster trust in God.

### Check on Visitors

Everyone wants to feel welcome whether they are visiting a church in person or virtually. Make a point to acknowledge visitors. If teaching virtually allow a little time for all students to greet each other. If teaching in person allow time at the end of your class for guests to introduce themselves. Collect their contact information for follow-up and to invite them to come back.

## LOOK BACK

Remind learners that last week's session taught us that our confidence and faith is strengthened as we trust God more. Putting your faith and trust in anything other than God can only lead to sorrow and regret. Invite learners to share a specific experience from their application of "Live It" (p. 57) this week.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

To introduce the lesson, give each student a sticky note and a marker. Ask them to write down something they fear. Explain that the fear can be a specific thing or situation. Invite learners to post their notes in a designated place on a wall, central to everyone's view. Review the notes and explain that fear is something everyone experiences. No matter what level of fear you may experience it can have a crippling effect if left unchecked.

Yet as Christians, we can trust that God will be with us and help us through any circumstance we may face.

**TRANSITION:** Read **The Point: "Trust God when you are overwhelmed with fear"** and **The Question: "How does trust in God help us overcome fear?"** to transition into the session.

## Focus on God Not Fear

// Genesis 12:10-13

**READ:** Invite a learner to read Genesis 12:10-13.

**REVIEW:** Using highlights from last week's session, remind students of the initial call from God to Abram. Summarize the blessings that God promised to Abram and his willingness to obey though he didn't have any detailed instructions. According to verse 9, Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev. There he faced two crises: the Canaanites lived on the most fertile land, and there was a severe famine in the land. In fear, Abram fled the famine to Egypt.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Invite a learner to read "Digging Deeper" (p. 61) to provide a visual explanation of the land Abram was about to settle on. Also use **Pack Item 7** map to identify some of these locations. Ask the question that follows.

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins "Abram's response should not ..." (p. 60) to discuss the fear of Abram.

**ASK:** "Something caused Abram to fear then respond irrationally. When has fear driven your actions? Can you identify what caused your fear?"

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary (p. 136) to provide insight to the new challenges that caused Abram to fear. Set the context of the verses.

**ASK:** "What action did Abram take revealing his lack of trust in God?"

**DISCUSS:** Lead learners to discuss how decisions driven by fear can have a negative impact on us. There is no record of Abram seeking direction from God regarding the situation. Abram's fear for his life was a result of not trusting God.

## THE POINT: TRUST GOD WHEN YOU ARE OVERWHELMED WITH FEAR.

### Our Fear Impacts Others

// Genesis 12:17-20

**READ:** Invite a learner to read Genesis 12:17-20, then read the paragraph that begins “When Abram arrived ...” (p. 61) to discuss what took place when Abram arrived in Egypt.

**ASK:** “What situations have led you to take matters into your own hands instead of relying on God?” Allow time for learners to discuss. Then ask: “Has any of those decisions had an impact on someone else’s life?”

**GUIDE:** Note that too often we look at our circumstances and forget that we have an all-powerful God who loves us and is on our side. At times we can be in such a rush to get out of or be afraid of our circumstances that we forget to stop, pray, and ask God for direction in solving the problem. Remind learners that there is no problem God does not know about, no problem He does not understand, and no problem He cannot fix.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Invite a learner to read “Did You Know?” (p. 63). Explain that fear was a major motivation for the oppression many African Americans faced.

**ASK:** “How should believer’s respond to attacks made by people who are driven by fear? How should you respond when those attacks are made by other Christians?” Note: These are real questions for which your learners are seeking answers. Prayerfully prepare for this part of your discussion.



PACK ITEM 8

**EXPLAIN:** Use the paragraph that begins “Here’s an important truth ...” as well as “Abram’s fear-induced lie...” (pp. 61-62) to discuss how fear can affect us and those around us.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary (p. 137) to explain how merciful God was toward Abram even in the midst of his mistrust of God.

### Overcome Fear in God’s Presence // Genesis 13:1-4

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 136) to discuss how the consequences of Abram’s decision could have been different.

**READ:** Invite a learner to read Genesis 13:1-4, then use the commentary (p. 137) to set the context for the passage.

**DISCUSS:** State that after his rebuke by Pharaoh, Abram returned to the place where he had last called on the name of the Lord. Abram’s fear took him from his place of worship, drove him to sin, and caused him to lead others to sin. Discuss with learners how responding in fear can impact your decisions. Then ask learners to describe a time when God helped them to overcome their fear. “What was the outcome?”

**EXPLAIN:** Point out that Abram traveled back to Bethel, in a sense, to return to God. When Abram traveled from Haran to Shechem he built an altar when he arrived there (Gen. 12:6-7). He did the same thing when he traveled from Shechem to the land between Bethel and Ai (Gen. 12:8). In both cases, it was Abram’s way of worshiping God.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary on p. 137 to give insight to the word “LORD” (v. 4). Explain the meaning and the relevance it had on Abram’s renewed commitment to the Lord.

**ASK:** “How do you recover after experiencing a spiritual defeat?”

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “Abram went back...” (p. 63). Discuss the different reasons why Abram may have chosen to go back to where he first built the altar.

## CLOSE THE SESSION

**PACK ITEM:** Invite learners to record examples of fear and faith on **Pack Item 8: “Fear or Faith?”** poster. Then go back to the sticky notes on the wall where learners wrote out their fears. Explain that we all will face fearful circumstances, both small and insurmountable. Today we have studied an amazing story of what happens when we don't trust God in the midst of our fears. Emphasize that in this life we will encounter all sorts of challenges that will cause us to fear. We must allow these challenges to increase our faith and reliance on God. Invite learners to work through “Live It” (p. 63) this week.

**PRAY:** Close in prayer, asking God to strengthen every believer's faith and ability to trust Him in challenging times. Ask Him to help us to be witnesses of His faithfulness around us.

## OBJECT LESSON

Display a picture of a stop sign.

**ASK:** “Why are stop signs used? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a stop sign posted?”

**EXPLAIN:** Point out that stop signs are designed to notify drivers that they must come to a complete stop to make sure the intersection is clear of vehicles and pedestrians before continuing past the sign. In the same manner, we should stop and seek the Lord when facing any circumstance. God cares about everything we go through and desires that we seek Him for direction.



## COMMENTARY

### GENESIS 12:10-13

**Verse 10.** Abram had set up an altar east of Bethel (Gen. 12:8). He had reached the land where God told him to go. Now he was ready to settle down, but Abram faced two problems. First, the Canaanites had the most fertile land and the best sources of water. Second, there was a famine in the land.

There is no record that Abram prayed about what to do before going to Egypt, though he only planned to stay there temporarily. Abram was still trusting God while he faced this apparent delay to the fulfillment of God's promise, but he also resorted to deceptive behavior, showing that his faith was far from perfect.

**Verse 11.** “When he was about to enter Egypt,” he encountered a new fear. He thought his life might be at risk in Egypt because of his wife's beauty. He figured the men would want her and so kill him. Abram said to Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are.” Then he asked his wife to do something deceptive, revealing his lack of trust in God to protect them.

**Verse 12.** Abram correctly saw the problem he faced. While Genesis 1:27 declares that both male and female are made in the image of God, thus indicating they have equal value before God, women were often treated more like property in the ancient Near East. Abram's fear for his life was the result of not trusting God, and based on what he did next we can assume he continued to rely on his own understanding.

**Verse 13.** Abram's solution to his predicament was that Sarai should tell the Egyptians she was his sister. The statement would have been technically correct (20:12), but it was still deceptive. He told her, “Please say you're my sister.” Why did he want her to say this? It was “so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account.” How would things go for Sarai if she said that? Did it matter

that she might become another man's wife? Abram did not seem to be very concerned about that. Abram let fear rob him of his confidence that God would protect him. As a result, he would learn a painful lesson.

## GENESIS 12:17-20

**Verse 17.** Pharaoh's officials saw Sarai and took her to Pharaoh. As a result, Abram received many material possessions. It was probably at this time that Sarah acquired Hagar, and his wife's ownership of her would later cause relational strife. Also, the great wealth Abram obtained may not have been a blessing, since he and Lot would eventually have to part ways due to their excessive possessions. God desired Abram to be a blessing to others, but the deception of Abram would not be a blessing to Pharaoh; rather, it would bring severe plagues upon Pharaoh and his household.

We might wonder why Pharaoh was struck by the Lord with "severe plagues" when he was not the one who had practiced deception. Despite the practices of the day, God's design is monogamy—one man plus one woman in marriage—not polygamy. Whatever Pharaoh understood to be allowable, he went against God's design for marriage. God was not unjust to strike Pharaoh and his household with plagues.

**Verse 18.** Moses, generally understood to be the writer of Genesis, did not disclose how Pharaoh determined that Sarai was the wife of Abram, but she may have told him after the plagues struck. It is also possible that Pharaoh simply figured it out for himself by noting that the timing of the plagues was concurrent with his receiving Sarai. Of course, God could have revealed it to Pharaoh. In any case, Pharaoh realized it was inappropriate for him to have Sarai.

**Verse 19.** At this point, things could have gone badly for Abram, but again, God was gracious to him. Pharaoh simply returned Sarai to him and told Abram to leave Egypt. It could be that Pharaoh realized he could be punished by One greater than himself and chose to send Abram away with all

he had given him so he could have relief from the plagues and avoid further judgment.

**Verse 20.** Pharaoh ordered his men to send Abram away, and "they sent him away with his wife and all he had." Again, God's grace and providence were at work in this event. Pharaoh could have treated Abram very harshly, but he allowed Abram to keep what he had acquired. God watched over Abram and his family even though Abram relied on his own wisdom instead of trusting God to protect and provide for him.

## GENESIS 13:1-4

**Verses 1-2.** Abram returned to the parched desert called "the Negev," yet despite his disobedience to God, God graciously allowed him to not lose his family or possessions. God even increased his possessions so that he became "very rich in livestock, silver, and gold." Abram likely considered his wealth a great blessing, but his abundance of possessions would soon complicate his life.

**Verse 3.** Just as he had traveled by stages to the Negev (12:9), Abram now went back by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been. He went back to where he had been before, the site he probably should have never left. However, his journey to Egypt was not without purpose. He had learned to trust God more deeply, and he had learned he had a much greater need for God's guidance than he thought.

**Verse 4.** Abram returned "to the site where he had built the altar" and began to call "on the name of the LORD." God called Abram to this promised land, and there is no indication he should have left it for Egypt. Yes, he would have faced a famine if he had stayed. And, yes, it would have been difficult. But if the Lord wanted him there, He would have provided. Even so, as Abram turned away from following the Lord because he feared famine and feared for his life, God was teaching Abram He could be trusted. Abram had to learn the hard way to stop trusting in himself and put his life in the Lord's very capable hands.