

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Prayerfully Prepare

Prayerfully prepare to teach this session. Be honest with yourself about your thoughts, your motives, your beliefs, and your experiences as you study and apply the material. Ask God to reveal His truth to you so that you can humbly teach the session with confidence and authority.

Share the News

Locate news stories or articles about some of the different crises that happened in 2020. Summarize the stories and have selected learners read them prior to your introduction. This will deepen their understanding of the level of uncertainty we all faced during those times.

LOOK BACK

As you begin this session invite learners to reflect on last week's session. Invite a volunteer to share a relational conflict they may be experiencing. Ask if the session provided any guidance toward a resolution of the conflict. Allow learners time to share. Also invite volunteers to share how their application of "Live It" (p. 69) helped.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Invite volunteers to read some the news stories from 2020 that you brought to class (see "Before You Teach" on this page). Ask them on a scale of one to ten with ten being very high and one being not at all, where would they place their uncertainty level at the time of these events. Invite discussion.

GUIDE: Share some of your 2020 experiences. Especially talk about the events that created uncertainties. Read the first three paragraphs in this session (p. 72) to further discuss the uncertainties of last year. Ask learners how they were able to manage their uncertainties.

DID YOU KNOW?: Use "Did You Know?" (p. 75) to discuss what we learned from the uncertainties of the 2020 pandemic. Ask the question that follows.

TRANSITION: To transition into the session read the title of this session as well as **The Point: "Trust God when you don't have all the answers."** Then read the **The Question: "What helps us to trust God during uncertain times?"**

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Trust God When Uncertain

// Genesis 15:1-5

READ: Invite a learner to read Genesis 15:1-5, then repeat "After these events" and provide an overview of the events of the previous chapters. Explain that after Abram rescued Lot and received a blessing from Melchizedek, the Lord made a covenant with him and confirmed the promises He had previously made to Abram.

EXPLAIN: Point out that before God made the covenant with Abram, He addressed his doubts and fears by making another promise: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great" (v. 1).

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 144) to discuss further this promise to Abram. Explain that God not only reminded Abram of His promises but gave Abram some descriptions and names for Himself.

ASK: "What does it mean to be a shield?" As learners provide their answers write them on a board. Discuss their descriptions and relate them to God being a shield to all believers.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 144) to explain that Abram did have faith, but he didn't understand how God's promise could happen since he didn't have an heir. Point out how Abram poured out his heart to God and how God still assured him of His promises.

THE POINT: TRUST GOD WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS.

OBJECT LESSON: Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 144) to illustrate how a GPS may create uncertainty that can impact our faith.

READ: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “Picture Abram squinting ...” (p. 73)” to discuss God’s encouragement to Abram.

Trust God in Righteousness

// Genesis 15:6

READ: Invite a learner to read Genesis 15:6.

RECAP: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “Earlier, in verses 2-3 ...” (p. 73) to discuss Abram’s belief in God despite not having any evidence of God’s promises.

ASK: “What do you think it means to have your faith credited as righteousness?”

READ: Invite a learner to read Romans 4:1-5, 23-25.

PACK ITEM: Focus attention on **Pack Item 9: “Genesis 15:6”** poster and invite a volunteer to read it once again. Distribute **Pack Item 10: “Word Study of Genesis 15:6”** handout and use it along with the commentary (p. 145) for this verse and “Keywords” (p. 71) to discuss its meaning and point out how Paul explained what Abraham’s faith revealed about salvation in Romans 4:1-5,23-25. Explain that we cannot work to have right standing with God. The righteousness of God is given or imputed to us through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Re-read verses 23-25. Explain that this is huge!!! It’s our basis for salvation!

READ: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “If we believe...” (p. 74) to discuss on what our relationship with God should be based.

ASK: “If your salvation was measured by the amount of work you do for God; how much work do you think you would have to do?”

SUMMARIZE: Read the paragraph that begins “Uncertainty in our faith ...” (p. 74) to affirm we are made right by our faith in Christ alone.

DISCUSS: Invite learners to share what this knowledge does to their uncertainty level.

Trust God to Work on Time // Genesis 15:13-16

READ: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “God responded to ...” (p. 74) to discuss the way God made an oath with Abram. Then invite a learner to read Genesis 15:13-16.

DIGGING DEEPER: Invite a learner to read “Digging Deeper” (p. 73) to discuss visions in the Old Testament to shed light on Abram’s vision of the sacrifice and covenant God made with him. Lead a discussion on the statement at the end.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 145) to point out that God gave Abram an earnest promise. Abram would have descendants who would own the promised land.

ASK: “How are you able to take comfort in God’s word even in the midst of severe trials?”

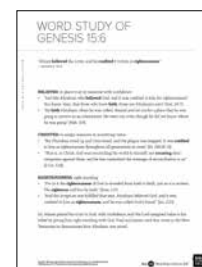
DISCUSS: Use the paragraph that begins “While God confirmed ...” (p. 74) to discuss God’s will. Explain that it was God’s will that allowed the Hebrew people to eventually be enslaved by the Egyptians. These can be the hardest times for the believer, not understanding God’s will for trials and suffering.

SAY: “The natural reaction is to ask why? God does not always give us the answer. However, He did in Abram’s case. God allowed Abram to see the coming tragedy and gave him the promise of ultimate victory.”

SUMMARIZE: Use the paragraph that begins “We must strive ...” (p. 75) to affirm God’s timing. Explain that God will never fail to keep His promises because He cannot fail.



PACK ITEM 9



PACK ITEM 10

CLOSE THE SESSION

Invite learners to read “Live It” (p. 75) silently. After reading, ask them to think about a recent circumstance that challenged their faith in God.

ASK: “How has this session changed your view of God’s faithfulness in times of uncertainty?”

SAY: “It would be nice to have all the answers to life’s uncertainties, but life in Christ requires faith. Encourage learners to consider and pray about areas in their lives they are having difficulty trusting the Lord, and apply “Live It” (p. 75) to help them.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to increase our faith in Him as we go through times of uncertainty.

OBJECT LESSON

Invite learners to access their “GPS” app on their cell phones and describe some of its features.

DISCUSS: Invite learners to share the functions of a GPS. Share that some GPS apps give driver alerts, live traffic information, parking information, and voice direction all in real time. These systems provide a lot of comfort, especially when traveling to unknown places. All you have to do is follow the instructions and you will arrive at your destination, even when the way doesn’t look clear.

EXPLAIN: Point out that God desires that we follow His direction. Even though the paths He chooses for us to take may not seem clear, we can trust that He will not lead us in the wrong direction.

SAY: Whenever you use your GPS give thanks to God and commit to trust His direction for your life.



COMMENTARY

GENESIS 15:1-5

Verse 1. Abram was empowered by God to win a military conflict, but he still did not fully understand that God keeps His promises. However, God had a message for him again. “The word of the LORD came to Abram.” God told Abram that He was his shield. God would be his protector, his defender, and there is no more excellent protector than the Lord. Then God told Abram his reward would be “very great.”

Verse 2. The promise of God that he would have far more descendants than he could count and for his descendants to occupy the land depended on the birth of a child. Of course, Abram was childless. So Abram spoke to the Lord, addressing Him as Lord God (“Lord Yahweh”). Abram said to the Lord, “What can you give me, since I am childless?” Abram was asking a question; he was making a point and complaining at the same time. He was childless, and he pointed out “the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.”

Verse 3. Abram said to God, “Look, you have given me no offspring.” Abram complained that God made these marvelous promises to him, but God had not given any offspring to him, so how could these promises be kept? Abram said to God that “a slave born in my house will be my heir,” speaking of his servant, Eliezer.

Verse 4. Eliezer was a faithful servant, but God had other plans. The Lord told Abram that “one who comes from your own body will be your heir.” God was calling Abram to continue to trust Him. Faith calls us to believe despite what our circumstances are telling us.

Verse 5. God took Abram outside of the tent and told him to “Look at the sky and count the stars” if he was even able to count them. Then God told him, “Your offspring will be that numerous.” God graciously promised it would not be possible to count the number of Abram’s descendants.

God did not rebuke Abram for his questions; He consoled him with fresh promises.

GENESIS 15:6

Verse 6. Abram heard God's promises and "believed the LORD." He still did not fully understand how God would keep these promises, and he did not need to know. He needed to rest in God's faithfulness, confident that God would do what He said He would do.

Abram's obedience was not perfect, but God "credited" Abram's faith to him "as righteousness." In other words, Abram was righteous because God declared that to be the case. He imputed righteousness to him, which means God declared him to be in a right standing with Himself, free from the guilt of sin.

Genesis 15:6 only contains five words in the Hebrew, but it is one of the most significant verses in the Old Testament. Paul taught that salvation was by grace through faith, and not by works. He pointed out what Abraham's life revealed about salvation in Romans 4:3, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness." In Romans 3:24, Paul wrote that all who sin are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." James also cited Genesis 15:6 in his letter (Jas. 2:23), but some would argue he was in disagreement with Paul. In James 2:17, he states, "Faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself." James went on to say that faith without works is useless, that Abraham was justified by works in offering Isaac on the altar, and that "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (v. 23). He concluded by saying, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (v. 24).

To summarize, Paul spoke about how salvation is activated; it is by faith. James spoke about how faith is demonstrated; it is by the works of one who loves God. James said a faith that does not result in works is useless (Jas. 2:14-17). Paul likewise said that one is saved by faith for the purpose of good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

GENESIS 15:13-16

Verse 13-14. In Genesis 15:7-12, God made a binding covenant with Abram and assured him of the fulfillment of His promises. Abram cut in half a heifer, a goat, and a ram, then along with these laid out a dove and a pigeon. However, birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and he had to drive them away. Abram then went to sleep. A covenant was more substantial than just a contract, and the dead animals were a reminder that those who broke the covenant deserved the same fate as those animals (Jer. 34:18-19).

God spoke to Abram and told him his descendants would be enslaved and oppressed in another land for four hundred years. Yet God promised He would "judge the nation they serve." Abram's offspring would come out of the land of bondage, and they would "go out with many possessions." That is what God said would happen and it did (Ex. 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36).

Verse 15. What about Abram? What would happen to him? God had a gracious promise for him. Abram would not have to endure abuse in Egypt. The Lord promised him a long life. He would be buried at a good "old age" and would go to his ancestors in "peace," which could just be a figure of speech, meaning that he would live a peaceful, abundant life and then die (Gen. 25:8).

Verse 16. The word for generation is used more than one way in Hebrew. It may refer to people who live in a particular time. Moses referred to his fellow Israelites as "a devious and crooked generation" (Deut. 32:5).

God's covenant with Abram highlights His amazing grace. It was common when two parties entered into a covenant for both to walk between the severed animals; however, we read in Genesis 15:17 that only "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals." The fire pot and torch represented God; this solemn agreement was unilateral. Just as God credited Abram with righteousness by grace through faith, so He would fulfill these promises by grace and not by any works on the part of Abram.