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God Calls Abraham

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9

Theme: God calls us to follow Him in faith, even when we don't know the way

High School (Ages 15-18)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"Faith as a Radical Choice: God's Call to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-9)" Abraham's call in Genesis 12 isn't just a historical footnote, it's a theological model of how faith requires sacrifice: leaving certainty for mystery, family for obedience, and self for God's unspoken vision. Here, God doesn't offer guarantees but demands trust, challenging Abraham to surrender to an unknown destiny, a call that echoes the disciples' later refusal (Matt. 8:22) and the apostle's own wrestling (Rom. 4:18-19). Theologically, this passage critiques cultural comforts (like Abraham's "good enough" life in Ur) while affirming that true following isn't about results but intentionality, a posture that transforms disciples into witnesses, even when the path is unclear. Real-world application: Volunteers might explore how modern "calls" (e.g., vocational, spiritual, or relational) often demand the same: leaving behind familiar maps for God's unseen directions. Discuss how faith isn't just belief but alignment, and how discipleship, like Abraham's, may require unlearning what we thought we needed. (Encouragement for teachers: This lesson thrives on tension, between God's sovereignty and human agency. Start with: "What does it look like to obey when you don't 'get' the destination?")

Bible Story

Title: God's Call: Abraham's Faith and the Unseen Future (Genesis 12:1-9)

The story begins not with grand promises but with a simple command: "Go." God's voice, though silent in human ears, still spoke to Abraham, then known as Abram, when he was seventy-five years old. The call was radical, no destination was specified, only an unspoken "Go." Many would have hesitated, but Abraham's obedience was not born of fear but of a deeper trust. God did not ask for his loyalty to remain in the land of his ancestors (Harran) or to worship idols; He demanded a radical departure from what was familiar. This was not just a physical journey but a spiritual one: leaving behind comfort, security, and the cultural norms that shape identity. For high school students grappling with questions of purpose, God's call to Abraham challenges us to ask: Where do we put our security, our

status, our plans, or the unseen future He holds? The story is not just about leaving Ur but about choosing faith over certainty.

God's promise was conditional: "I will make you a great nation" (v. 2), a word that echoes through Scripture as a seed of hope. Abraham's faith, though small at first, was tested by the barrenness of his life, no heir, no legacy. Yet God's word persisted. This passage forces us to confront how we respond to promises we can't see. Many modern believers (and even skeptics) demand tangible outcomes before committing to divine plans. But God's faithfulness is not measured by our performance but by His own character. Abraham's journey mirrors our own: where do we trust? In the visible (social media, career milestones, relationships) or the invisible (God's promises, His sovereignty)? The real-world lesson here is that faith is not about luck but about choosing, every day, to believe that God's plan is better than our own.

Abram's faith grew when he left, when he took Sarah, Lot, and all they had and followed without a fixed goal. The Bible does not praise him for his wealth but for his willingness to obey. This was not about materialism but about surrender. The passage ends with Abraham settling in Canaan, a land that was still unclaimed by the nations. Yet God had already promised it (Genesis 15:18), and His faithfulness was not delayed but established. This story is profound for young adults because it shows that God's promises are not conditional on our success but on His own nature, steady, unchanging, and full of love. Where we are today (or where we could be) is not always the best answer; God's path is often the one that transforms us.

Ultimately, Abraham's story is about more than geography or ancestry, it's about theology. God calls us to trust Him not because we deserve it but because He is worthy. For high schoolers wrestling with identity, doubt, or the weight of expectations, this lesson offers a counterculture: instead of chasing success, ask, Who do I follow? God's call to Abraham was not about what he was but what he could become, a father of nations, a man whose faith would define generations. The real-world application? When life feels uncertain, do we cling to what's familiar or step into the unknown, trusting that God's plan is greater than ours? This is not just a story about leaving; it's about learning that faith is not passive obedience but active trust, even when the path is unclear.

Key Verse

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 12:2 ("I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you") speaks of God's sovereign promise to Abram, not as a conditional guarantee but as a declaration of divine intention. At its core, it reflects God's purposeful agency in shaping history through individuals, merging theological depth (e.g., covenantal theology and providence) with practical challenge: how do we trust in God's promises when human limitations and cosmic struggles complicate their fulfillment? Real-world application: The verse forces us to reconcile divine sovereignty with human responsibility, God's blessing often arrives through our obedience, suffering, or broken circumstances, demanding faith in an unjust world. For high schoolers, this may challenge assumptions about "success" (e.g., material wealth, status) and invite reflection on how God's purposes are often hidden until revealed in unexpected ways.

Activities

Activity 1:

Students analyze God's call to Abraham (Genesis 12) by designing a visual "journey map" of his obedience, uncertainty, and trust, connecting biblical themes to modern decision-making.

1. Contextualize the Call (2 min)
2. "Read Genesis 12:1, 9 aloud. How does God's command to 'go forth' differ from Abraham's initial hesitation (v. 7)? Jot down 1, 2 key questions the group identifies as they explore obedience vs. fear."
3. Divide the Journey (5 min)

4. Group 1 (3, 4 students): Draw Abraham's starting point (Ur) and his first reaction (e.g., family's resistance, doubt). Label with theological term (e.g., "covenant faithfulness" or "provision" from Gen. 15).
5. Group 2 (3, 4 students): Sketch God's promise (e.g., land, descendants) and how Abraham responded (e.g., packing with uncertainty). Add a real-world parallel: "How might this apply to a teen choosing a school, career, or faith path?"
6. Theological Anchor & Reflection (5 min)
7. Share: "Abraham's journey mirrors God's call to all believers, often requiring faith beyond logical outcomes (Heb. 11:1). Discuss: What 'Canaan' (promise) do you fear stepping into today?"
8. Each student writes one personal question in the margin for discussion.
9. Art as Testimony (3 min)
10. Glue their maps together on the poster board. Add a final line in bold: "God's call isn't about perfect answers but faithful steps."
11. Theological Tie:
12. Covenant Theology: Abraham's faith anticipates God's unconditional promise (Gen. 15:5).
13. Real-World: Encourages teens to weigh biblical principles (e.g., trust vs. fear) against modern temptations (e.g., social media validation, academic pressure).

Activity 2:

A structured debate where students argue for or against Abraham's faith being "perfect" or "unconditional," using Scripture and modern ethics.

1. Prep the Debate (3 min)
2. Assign roles to 4, 5 students:
3. Defenders of Abraham's Faith (3 students): Argue his obedience was trustworthy (e.g., Gen. 12:4; 15:6).
4. Critics of Abraham's Faith (2 students): Argue his hesitation (e.g., Gen. 12:7) or lack of family's participation disqualifies his faith (James 2:17).
5. Moderator (1 student): Keeps time and asks clarifying questions.
6. Round 1: Scripture (5 min)
7. Defenders: Cite passages where Abraham acted on God's call (e.g., leaving, setting out). Argue, "Even doubt was part of his faith, Gen. 11:31 shows his family's disobedience."
8. Critics: Point to Gen. 12:7, 9's pause and ask, "Was his faith conditional on family's trust?"
9. Round 2: Real-World Ethics (5 min)
10. Defenders: Use modern examples: "Like a teen leaving home for college, Abraham's move required courage, was his trust justified?"
11. Critics: Reference hypothetical scenarios: "What if God called someone to a dangerous mission? Would we excuse fear?"
12. Wrap-Up: Theological Question (3 min)
13. Moderator: "Does Abraham's example justify or challenge our own faith? Write 1, 2 sentences to share with the group on the back of your card."
14. Class discussion: "How might this debate inform how we judge our own faith journeys?"
15. Theological Tie:
16. Hebrews 11 Connection: Abraham's faith was "by faith... went forth" (Heb. 11:8), not flawless but trusting.
17. Real-World: Encourages critical thinking on faith and doubt, e.g., "When God calls us to step out (e.g., evangelism, leadership), what 'Canaan' are we risking?" (cf. Gen. 15:13).

Discussion Questions

- Here are four intellectually engaging, open-ended discussion questions that explore the themes of God's calling, faith, surrender, and purpose in Genesis 12:1-9, while inviting students to reflect on their own lives and real-world applications. Each question encourages critical thinking, theological reflection, and personal integration of the lesson:

- 1. Faith as Trust in the Unknown

- "Genesis 12:1 tells us that God said to Abraham, 'Go forth from your country and your kindred...' But what does it mean to trust God with a life you've never fully planned? Abraham didn't know where he was going, how he'd survive, or what God's ultimate purpose for him was. How does this passage challenge or inspire you about trusting God with your own future, especially when it feels uncertain, risky, or 'unfair'?"

- Theological Connection:

- How does this passage reflect themes of covenant loyalty (e.g., God's faithfulness vs. Abraham's obedience)?
- If you had to describe one way you've experienced trust in God, even when you didn't fully understand the plan, how would you explain it?

- 2. Surrender vs. Control: Freedom in Obedience

- "Abraham didn't just listen to God; he left everything behind. Some might call this reckless, others courageous. Do you think Abraham's obedience was purely out of fear, or was there something deeper, like a desire to follow where God led? How does this story challenge our modern tendency to 'plan everything' or demand guarantees before committing? What would it look like to surrender one area of your life to God's will today, knowing you might not get to decide all the details?"

- Real-World Application:

- Where in your life do you struggle with trusting that God will provide, even when you don't see the path?
- If God asked you to 'go forth' from something important (a job, relationship, habit, etc.), how might you respond? Why?

- 3. The Paradox of God's Plan

- "God told Abraham to leave Canaan (home) for an unknown land (Canaan), yet the next verse says, 'I will make you a great nation.' This seems contradictory, why would God ask someone to leave their familiar place toward their future destiny? How does this passage reveal the tension between God's long-term purposes and human comfort? Do you think God ever calls people to 'give up' something they love (a goal, dream, or identity) to fulfill something greater? How might this story encourage or challenge you about letting go for God's good?"

- Theological Connection:

- How does this align with other biblical promises of God's sovereignty (e.g., Psalm 139:16, Jeremiah 29:11)?
- What's a 'Canaan' in your life, a place you're called to leave behind, that feels both painful and necessary?

- 4. Legacy and Identity in God's Story

- "Abraham didn't just move because God told him to; he became the father of nations. The story of his call sets up the rest of Genesis, how his faith shaped the world. How does this passage challenge you to think about your own 'legacy'? What does it mean to live in such a way that your actions ripple into the lives of others? If you had to name one 'Canaan' in your life that God might be calling you to 'leave behind' for His purposes, how would you describe that journey?"

- Real-World Application:

- What's a 'call' (big or small) you've felt to serve God beyond yourself? How has that looked in your life?
- How might you, in your own way, be called to 'become a father/holder of the promise' (like Abraham) to someone else? (E.g., mentorship, creativity, service.)

- Follow-Up Considerations for Discussion:

- Debate/Reflection: Some argue God's call is universal (for all people), while others say it's specific to certain individuals. How would you reconcile these views?
- Creative Response: Write a short poem, song, or letter from Abraham's perspective as he leaves Ur, explaining his faith in God's plan.
- Modern Parallel: Compare this story to a real-life 'calling' (e.g., a missionary, artist, scientist). How is the principle the same?
- These questions encourage students to grapple with theology, ethics, and personal agency while keeping the discussion grounded in their own lives. Would you like any tailored further to specific cultural or theological backgrounds?

Prayer Focus

"Lord, in the darkness of our doubts and the weight of questions, 'Why call us when our lives feel small, our futures uncertain?', open our eyes to the same divine call Abraham heard: not as a promise of comfort, but as a challenge to trust in the God who shapes history through the ordinary, the fragile, and the unanswered. Teach us, as He called him, to bear witness to Your work, not with polished answers, but with the courage to follow, even when the path is not yet clear. Grant us wisdom to discern Your voice among the whispers of doubt, and mercy to embrace the uncertainty that precedes purpose. May our study of Genesis remind us that truth is not found in final answers, but in the obedience that seeks them with humility. Amen."

>> Missions Spotlight

Abraham's story is central to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Missionaries working among Muslim communities in Central Asia often begin with Abraham, a figure all three faiths honor, to build bridges to the Gospel.

-> To the Cross

God promised Abraham that 'all peoples on earth will be blessed through you' (Genesis 12:3). This blessing is Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham through whom salvation comes to all nations.