

ABRAHAM & SARAH

THE ORDINARY PATRIARCHS

re:form

ANCESTORS

PREPARE

KEY PASSAGES

Genesis 12:1-9 | God Calls Abram

Genesis 12:10-20 | Abram and Sarai in Egypt

Genesis 16 | Hagar Bears Abram's Son

Genesis 17 | New Names, Everlasting Covenant

Genesis 21-22 | Sarah Bears Abraham's Son

WHAT'S BEHIND ALL THIS?

Okay, let's admit it right from the start, the story of Abraham and Sarah is enormous! Like all stories, theirs had a plot made up of crisis, climax, and resolution. But these are the ancestors of our faith we're talking about and it seems they had more of everything—crises, climaxes, even descendants. They're a big couple to tackle. Consider yourself warned.

Throughout the narrative, God shares a fascinating relationship with Abraham and Sarah. God moved them around endlessly and made promises that didn't seem to be fulfilled. God even gave the couple a son, followed by the confusing request to offer this son as a sacrifice.

As if their complicated relationship with God wasn't enough, this couple's personal relationships were filled with self-propelled misadventures: telling lies, arguing with God, attempting to speed up God's work, and more. It's fair to say that, although they did their best, they were far from a perfect, faithful pair.

In reality, Abraham and Sarah were like most people. They had their doubts and sought ways to take things into their own hands. This second-guessing got them in trouble. More importantly, however, their story helps us see that even in our doubts, questions, and quarrels, God always keeps promises and God always loves us.



CONSIDER THIS

“As your faith is strengthened you will find that there is no longer the need to have a sense of control, that things will flow as they will, and that you will flow with them, to your great delight and benefit.”

Emmanuel Teney, American professor of psychiatry

Tear here for easy use!

CONSIDER THIS

Invite older adults to join your conversations as you discover together what's ordinary and extraordinary about Abraham, Sarah, and your lives today.

WHERE ARE TEENS AT?

- Entering high school brings great change to the lives of teens. New activities, new classes, new buildings, and new friends can feel like a whole new world. Like Abraham and Sarah, high school youth are moving into a new world. They can be unsure of where they're really headed. They may be learning to trust in God, but they'll have plenty of questions along the way.
- Most teenagers hate to be told what to do, so the idea of God telling Abraham and Sarah they have to do some really strange things may chafe a bit! Their story can shed light on how guidance from God—like that from authority figures, such as parents or teachers—is filled with good reason and promise, even when it's hard to see what lies ahead.
- Getting to know the characters of Abraham and Sarah is a great way for teens to affirm the place of elders in the world around them. Some teens have never experienced a personal relationship with a senior adult, while others may have very close relationships, perhaps living with a grandparent or other older adult.

ENCOUNTER

15 MINUTES

Make sure you've got the obvious stuff for this session—*re:form Ancestors* video (DVD or download), *Anti-Workbooks*, Bibles, pens or pencils, paper, tape, etc.

VIDEO

1. SET UP

Abraham and Sarah were called by God to do a lot of things that may have seemed pretty . . . well, weird. Play an old-fashioned game of Simon Says. Encourage the person calling out actions to have her or his followers do some strange and goofy stuff. Then talk about what they were more comfortable doing—the normal stuff such as clapping hands and stomping feet, or the weird stuff such as an upside down chicken dance.

2. WATCH

"Abraham & Sarah: The Ordinary Patriarchs," Chapter 3

3. UNPACK

- What surprised you about the life of Abraham and Sarah?
- What kind of relationship did they seem to have with God?
- What promises seem the most unlikely? Why?
- What happened when Abraham and Sarah tried to do things on their own?

WHAT ABOUT THE BIBLE?

Ask if any of the teens in your group know the meaning of their name or why it was given to them. Ask for volunteers to read Genesis 17 aloud. Invite teens to consider why God changed Abraham's and Sarah's names. Did anything change other than their names? Encourage teens to take turns looking up their own names in the baby name book or online to learn more about their meanings.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What surprised you about your name's meaning?
- How big of a role does your name play in your identity?
- What would it be like to have your name changed?

DEFINITION

pa-tri-arch
a respected and experienced senior male who is the head of a family or group

GET THIS STUFF

Book of baby names and meanings and/or access to the Internet.

BACK IT UP

"This was the first time the word *circumcision* had been used, let alone the act."

re:form Ancestors DVD

CONSIDER THIS

"The Holy One desired to distinguish His people by means of a sign fixed upon their bodies, to set them apart in a physical sense from the other nations, just as they are distinct from those nations in a spiritual sense."

Sefer Hachinukh, a late 13th-century Spanish presentation of the 613 *mitzvot*

ENGAGE

25-30 MINUTES

Choose 1, 2, or all 3 activities from pages 10–11 of the Anti-Workbook for your Engage time together.

1. DEAR DIARY

Where's this going? Youth reflect on Hagar's confusion, fear, and dismay, and Sarah's jealousy.

Hagar and her son Ishmael seem to get the short end of the stick in Abraham and Sarah's story. Sarah makes decisions she regrets. Parts of their lives were disappointing and confusing. Help youth dig into the possible inner thoughts of these women and look for ways God continued to care for them. Ask teens to read the Bible verses in the AW and write what they think the women might have been thinking. As teens write, encourage them to consider how they have felt during a few disappointing moments of their own.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- How do you relate with Hagar's emotions?
- How was life disappointing for Sarai?
- History tells us Hagar's son Ishmael went on to start a great nation—he's an important Islamic ancestor! So, did Hagar and Ishmael get cheated?
- In what ways can you relate with the way Hagar and Sarai were helped by God even in less-than-ideal circumstances?

2. LITTLE WHITE LIES

Where's this going? Teens consider how taking something into your own hands can create difficulty in the long run.

Ask teens to recall parts of the video when Abraham and Sarah didn't trust God's plan would happen unless they helped a bit. Thinking someone needed to take control of the situation, they made a plan to help. Ask how that help tended to get them in trouble.

Invite teens to have fun exploring the lies Abraham and Sarah told about their marital status by doing a little truth-twisting of their own. Have each teen look at the AW statement. Then help add clarity to the meaning by rewriting it—changing it just a little. Ask teens to pass their books to the left and rewrite the rewritten statement. Continue until the blanks are filled. Were the revisions helpful or did they cloud the initial meaning?

BACK IT UP

"Sarai suggested Abram bed with her handmaiden, Hagar, to expedite the process."

re:form Ancestors DVD

CONSIDER THIS

Ishmael is mentioned often in the Qur'an and is recognized as an important prophet and patriarch of Islam.

BACK IT UP

"Pharaoh fell for their ruse. Proving even *too* effective."

re:form Ancestors DVD

CONSIDER THIS

Though they had their doubts, with God's help, Abraham and Sarah leave Egypt with even more than they owned before! Check out Peter Menzel's book *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* to learn the different kinds of material goods owned by families throughout the world.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- Abram and Sarai trusted God when first called to leave home. They packed everything and left. What changed when they entered Egypt?
- Why do people lie? Do lies always lead to trouble?
- How can small untruths have large consequences?
- God's promises were kept even when Abraham and Sarah interfered. What does this say about God?

3. GERIATRIC PARENTING AND YOU

Where's this going? Youth consider how the fulfillment of God's promises rests on God's power rather than the ability of the recipients.

"I will make of you a great nation" (Genesis 12:2). As they got older and older, Abraham and Sarah had trouble believing God would keep this promise. Then along came Isaac. Imagine a couple of 100-year-olds raising a baby! They had years of wisdom, but there may have been some difficulties. Ask teens to name a few complications Abe and Sarah may have met when baby Isaac was born. What parts of parenting do they think is challenging? Ask them to record their responses in their AW.

Invite teens to experience a few problems that may be experienced by people whose vision is failing or whose muscles aren't responding as well as they used to. Let teams of youth put a few pebbles in their shoes, then don large pairs of work gloves and sunglasses smeared with petroleum jelly. Each team races to change a baby doll's diaper despite their blurred vision, unstable hands, and uncomfortable feet. Consider having a relay race between 2 teams. The first team to change 1 diaper per teammate wins!

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What was God thinking in waiting so long to give Abraham and Sarah a child?
- How did God's timing work—or not work—for Abraham and Sarah in the end?
- Does the fact that a promise is outlandish make it any less of a promise? Any harder to keep?

GET THIS STUFF

Large work gloves.
Sunglasses. Petroleum jelly.
Small pebbles. Disposable
diapers. 1 baby doll per team.

CONSIDER THIS

More than 6.5 million children in the U.S. live in households maintained by grandparents or other relatives.

Generations United, 2011

RESPOND

15-20 MINUTES

GET THIS STUFF

Instruction manual.

DEFINITION

cov-e-nant

an agreement that brings about a relationship between God and God's people

CONSIDER THIS

"If all else fails, read the instructions."

Unknown

CAPTURE IT

Use a digital camera, camcorder, scanner, web cam, or audio recorder to capture group conversation and individual pieces of work. Upload them to the re:form Gallery or ask teens to do so.

REGROUP

Find an instruction manual for something a bit complicated to build or use—do-it-yourself furniture, a car, computer, phone, whatever! Look over the manual together. Ask why the manufacturer took time to write down all the instructions. Ask why we're given *dos* and *don'ts* for things we use. What difference does it make to know how things will work before we get started? What happens when we stray from the manual and try to go our own way? Give teens an opportunity to dig in to the difficulties Abraham and Sarah might have had when they didn't trust that God's instructions were all they needed.

SHARE

Close the session with an opportunity for youth to share what they have learned about the character and how that connects with their life. Identify aspects of their work and recall points of discussion that can serve to recap the session for youth.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What made Abraham and Sarah ordinary? Extraordinary?
- How are you like (or not like) Abraham and Sarah?
- Talk about a time when you went with a gut feeling. What happened? Were your instincts on track? Can the Bible be compared to an instruction manual? Why or why not?
- How important is it to follow God's commands? How important is it to follow our hearts?

SEND

Gather teens in a circle, inviting them to think about the promises God made to Abraham and Sarah. Tell them promises from God are covenants. This means there's some responsibility on both sides. Hold hands, put your arms around each other's shoulders, or just stand side-by-side in your circle for a few moments of silence. Invite teens to reflect on promises God keeps and promises God asks that they keep. Close with a prayer thanking God for keeping promises and for giving amazing gifts to even the unlikeliest of people.