

SESSION 8

Abram's name change



AIM: To trust God to keep his promises

Switch ON...



Welcome your group with
ONE OR MORE
of these activities

Remember

5 MINUTES

WHY to think about keeping promises

WITH Xstream 8

- 1 Give each child a copy of *Xstream 8* and ask them to look closely at the pictures on pages 2 and 3. There are pictures of ten objects which are reminders that someone has made a promise.
- 2 Now ask the children to turn the page over and, in pairs, write down all the objects they can remember.
- 3 Share your answers, and then look at the collage again. Chat about the objects, in particular, the name badge. Say that you'll be finding out how people's names remind them of God's promises.

READY
TO
USE!

Drama

10-15 MINUTES

WHY to think about keeping promises

WITH scripts from *Web resources (optional)*

- 1 In groups of three or four, challenge the children to produce a one-minute drama about a promise; it could be about being made, being kept, being doubted or being waited for. If they would prefer to work from a script, some are available at *Web resources*.
- 2 Watch the dramas and discuss questions such as: 'Have you been impatient waiting for a promise to be kept? When is it difficult to trust someone? How long would you wait for a promise to be kept?'

Promise worship

5 MINUTES

WHY to know that God's nature is to keep promises

WITH a box containing names from *Web resources cut into strips*

- 1 Sit in a circle. Ask: 'Who is God? What is God like?' After some thinking time, invite the children to call out their ideas.
- 2 Explain that the box contains some names or descriptions of God from the Bible. Pass round the box, asking children to take a name and read it out (with help if needed).
- 3 Ask the group to suggest why a God like this would keep promises. Share experiences of God keeping a promise or answering a prayer.

Bible cards

5 MINUTES

WHY to encourage Bible reading

WITH Bible card 8

- 1 Review the Bible card readings and mini activity from Session 7. This is a great way to get to know the children better, encourage them to read the Bible and provide consistency between sessions.
Card 7 readings: Genesis 16:7-14; Genesis 32:24-30
Card 7 mini activity: Ask God to meet with you this week. Find a quiet place on your own to talk to him.
- 2 Give out Bible card 8 and encourage them to read the Bible passages and do the mini activity at home.
- 3 Look at page 7 for more ideas on how to get the most out of the Bible cards with your group.

Into the Bible...

Genesis 17

Choose ONE of these two



Star promises

20 MINUTES

WHY to trust God to keep his promises

WITH Xstream 8, SU Bible Timeline

1 Look at the stars

Invite the children to look at the second picture on the *SU Bible Timeline* and guess how many stars are in the picture. (They could try counting them.) Now ask them to guess how many stars are in the whole sky. Explain that God promised Abram and his wife Sarai that they would have that many descendants (grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great grandchildren, and so on).

If children have attended previous sessions on Abram, ask whether God's promise for Abram has come true yet. Children may mention Ishmael (from Session 7). Explain that Ishmael was the son of Abram and Hagar, Sarai's slave. God's special promise was for Abram and Sarai to have a child. Explain that Abram knew God's promise and remembered it whenever he looked at the stars – but after 24 years, it still hadn't come true. He and Sarai didn't have a child of their own. Now that Abram is 99 years old and Sarai is 90, it doesn't look hopeful.

2 New names

Introduce the drama on page 5 of *Xstream 8*. Children can act this out in groups of four. Alternatively, stay together as one group. Ask for volunteers (confident readers) to read the parts of 'God', the 'Commentator' and 'Sarai'. The other children will read the part of 'Abram/Abraham'. (You may need to help them read the stage directions.)

After reading the drama, ask why it was difficult for Abram to keep believing that Sarai would have a baby. Find out what Abram and Sarai received to help them remember God's promise (new names). Say that their names were then changed to Abraham and Sarah.

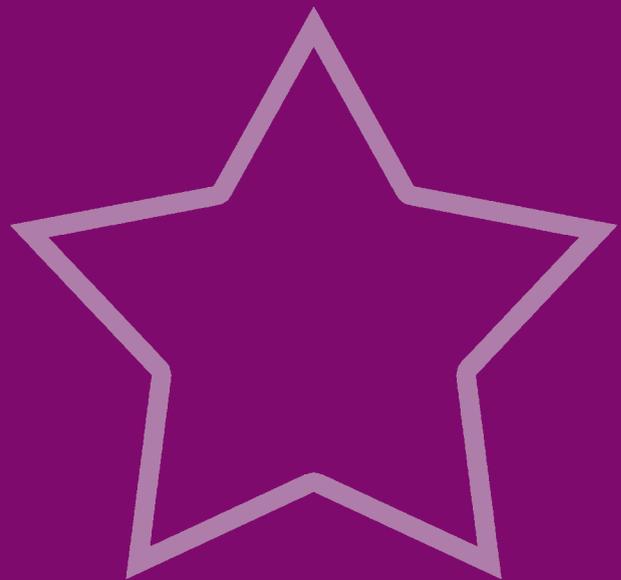
3 Faith acts

Now ask the children to look at the third picture on the *Bible Timeline* again and tell who those people are. Explain that they are the descendants of Jacob and his 12 sons, who went to live in Egypt at the time when Joseph saved the country from famine. Jacob was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham and Sarah.

Look along the *Timeline*. Say that Abraham became the father or ancestor of the Jewish people. Ask a child to read Genesis 12:2. Say that God's promise includes your group today. One of Abraham's descendants was Jesus; and Jesus made it possible for everyone to become God's children.

4 Stargazing prayers

Organise the children into groups of no more than six. Invite each group to lie down, with their backs on the floor (as if they are stargazing) in a star formation, with their heads close together, but not touching, in the centre of your 'star'. Ask them to count imaginary stars going up to 25 in unison. Say that this is the number of years Abraham waited for God's promise to come true. Now invite the children to make up their own prayers, thanking God for keeping his promises and asking for patience to wait for God to do things in his own time, even things that seem impossible.



main activities

Letters of promise

20 MINUTES

WHY to trust God to keep his promises

WITH *SU Bible Timeline, several sets of fridge magnet letters, two metal trays, page 51 (also at Web resources) on card for each pair of children*

1 Names and places

Divide the children into two groups. Give each group at least two sets of fridge magnet letters and a tray. Ask each group to choose a reader.

Place the *Timeline* at one end of the room. Explain that you will point to a person on the *Timeline*. The reader needs to work out who it is and run to tell their group. The first group to make the name in magnetic letters on their tray gets a point. Spelling isn't important! Finally, point to Abraham. For extra points, challenge the groups to make the name that Abraham was known by for most of his life (Abram), and the name of his wife (Sarai). Keep these two names. Put the other letters aside.

2 Step forward

Explain that the *Bible Timeline* shows Abram about 25 years after he had been hearing from and trusting God. Say that Abram didn't always find it easy to trust God. Give each pair of children a copy of page 51 (also available at *Web resources*) and a pair of scissors to cut out the cards; place them face down and choose five random cards each.

Ask the children to stand 2 metres from one end of the room, holding their cards. Stand about 5 metres away from the children. Explain that the cards show events in Abram's life. As you read each event, the children holding that card should decide if Abram was trusting God. If so, they take a step forward. If he was not trusting God, they take a step back. After reading all the events, say that even when he was trusting God (moving forward), Abram still needed something to remind him of God's promises.

3 Ah - now I see!

Sit in a circle. Ask the children to place their cards on the floor or table so that they form two letters - 'a' and 'h'. Explain that, in his journey of 24 years, Abram was trusting two special promises from God - that he and Sarai would have a baby, and that they would own their land. It still hadn't happened. Then Abram heard God speaking again.

Invite a child to read Genesis 17:1,2. Ask the children to suggest what Abram will do. Then get another child to read Genesis 17:3 silently and show the group what Abram did. (He bowed down with his face to the ground.) Explain that this was Abram's way of worshipping God. It was as if Abram was saying, 'Ah! Now I see that this really will happen.' Take the names 'Abram' and 'Sarai' (made earlier). Ask a child to add the letters 'a' and 'h' to turn Abram into Abraham and another child to turn Sarai into Sarah. Explain that God gave them new names as a sign of his promise. Abraham meant 'father of many nations', Sarah meant 'princess' (because her descendants would be kings). Whenever they called each other by name, they would remember God's promise to them.

4 His promise to me

Ask the children to find the letters of their name and place them down the left side of a sheet of paper. Encourage them to write a word to describe God, starting with each letter. For example, for RACHEL: Real/ Almighty/ Carer/ Healer/ Everlasting/ Love. Pray for each other to remember, whenever they write or hear their name, that God keeps his promises.

Living the life...



Choose activities to help your group put it all into action



Trust in God

5-15 MINUTES

WHY to remember to trust in God

- 1 Split your group into four groups or pairs, and give each group one phrase from the *Learn and remember* verse (Proverbs 3:5,6). Challenge them to invent a way of helping everyone to remember their phrase. Encourage them to do something really creative, perhaps using a beat box, or body letters, or whatever they think will help everyone remember their phrase.
- 2 Get each group to present to the others their way of remembering their phrase, starting with the group with 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart', and working through the verse in order.

I promise...

10 MINUTES

WHY to remember that God keeps his promises

WITH Xstream 8, scissors, glue, laminator or clear sticky plastic (optional)

- 1 Encourage the children to talk about promises God has made to them. Chat about ways of reminding themselves of God's promises. Look at the promises printed on page 5 of *Xstream 8*.
- 2 Help the children to follow the instructions on page 4 of *Xstream 8* to make an ID card. They can choose one of the promises to stick onto the back of their card. (If possible, laminate the cards or cover with clear sticky plastic.)
- 3 As a group, thank God for his promises. Encourage them to share 'something I will do for God' from their page. Pray for his help to carry them out.

Promise

5-10 MINUTES

WHY to remember that God keeps his promises

WITH paper craft (available at *Web resources*) printed onto thin card for each child, scissors

- 1 Chat with the children about their experiences of God's promises - for example, promises they are waiting for God to keep to them. Ask a child to find and read John 3:16. Say that God's big promise is for everyone who believes in him to live with Jesus.
- 2 Show the children your ready-made 'reminder'. Give each child a copy of the paper craft and help them to cut carefully along the solid lines of pieces A and B.
- 3 Weave B through the slots in A as shown. Say the promise together as you change the question mark into the cross.



Learn and remember

'Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the LORD in everything you do and he will show you the right way.' Proverbs 3:5,6

Write the verse onto several large footprints (available at *Web resources*). Spread them across the floor. Children say the verse as they step across. Turn a footprint over. Children follow the steps again, remembering the words that are hidden. Continue until all footprints are upside down.

There is a PowerPoint of this verse at *Web resources*. It is also part of a song called 'Trust in the Lord' on the *Bitesize Bible Songs* CD, which is available to download from www.scriptureunion.org.uk/music.

Extra ideas

Invite an older Christian couple to your session. Get the children to devise and ask them questions about their experiences of trusting God to keep his promises.

Research the names of your group members on a site such www.behindthename.com.

In a small group, provide small self-adhesive stars and black paper for children to make their names with the stars, and write Bible promises between the stars with metallic pens.



- 1 Obey God when he tells you to move to a new country.
- 3 Become afraid of the people living around you.
- 5 Let your nephew Lot choose the best land.
- 7 Give one tenth of your treasure to God's special servant.
- 9 Pretend that Sarai's slave Hagar is your wife.

- 2 In the new country, make a special place to worship God.
- 4 Pretend your wife is your sister.
- 6 Rescue Lot when he's taken prisoner.
- 8 Hear God's voice and believe that his message is true.
- 10 Let Sarai treat Hagar badly.