

SESSION 1

LEAD IT: MIDDLE SCHOOL



GOALS

Through this session students will...

- Trace the origins of the nation of God's chosen people, the Nation of Israel.
- See how God calls a group of people together for a purpose.
- Learn how Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were faithful to God's call.
- Be challenged to see that God is calling them as well.
- Begin to consider what things God might be calling them to as a group.

MATERIALS: Group

- Whiteboard and markers
- Supplies for building an altar (review the options under Putting Into Practice)

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Session 1 Scripture sheets
- Student journal pages for Session 1
- Bible and pen (Students should bring their own Bibles. You can decide if you would like them to use a physical Bible or a Bible app like, "YouVersion.")

Several Weeks Out:

Begin advertising the new study. Perhaps take advantage of social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook. Mass invites are a great first contact, but try to make subsequent invites more personal. As you make these contacts be clear about important meeting details such as location, start and end time, and what to bring.

One Week Out:

Send out reminders as well as a challenge to students to familiarize themselves with the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Perhaps include some key chapters for them to look at such as Genesis 12, Genesis 26, and Genesis 28. Consider including a list of questions for students to meditate on prior to the meeting such as "Do you think that God has a plan to use this group? If so, how?"

Spend some time prior to the study to recruit a team of people to pray for you and your group throughout the series. Give them an overview of the curriculum and some topics you will be covering. Consider asking parents, church leaders, and others to join you in praying for the next 8 weeks.

SESSION INTRO

Prayer

After your group has gathered, open your time up in prayer. Pray that as you delve into this study that God would reveal Himself to the group. Pray that God would show you through His Word what it looks like to be faithful to Him, and how He is also faithful to fulfill His promises to us. Pray that God's Spirit will open your hearts and move in the group.

Open

Open your time with the following discussion.

Share in your own words:

I'm going to give you some fictional characters and I want you to explain the beginnings of their stories. For example, if I were to say Superman, you could explain how Superman's father, Jor-El, sent his son to Earth to save him from the destruction of their world Krypton. You might include that he grew up on a farm, had an earthly mother and father (the Kents) and gets his powers from Earth's yellow sun. Got it? Here we go:

- Katniss Everdeen (The Hunger Games)
- Darth Vader (Star Wars)
- Frodo Baggins (Lord of The Rings)
- Batman
- Harry Potter

How does knowing the origins of these characters allow us to better understand them?

What are some real life origins stories that you can think of?

Here are a couple if your group gets stuck: origins of the United States as a nation, the Civil Rights movement, your church, etc.)

The Bible contains some of the greatest origins stories ever recorded. What are some origins stories that are mentioned in the Scriptures?

Use a whiteboard to record the group's responses. If your group gets stuck, here are a few responses to get them started.

-the world

-sin

-the sacrificial system to atone for sin

-God's law

-God's chosen people

-Jesus ministry

-Jesus' first followers

-The church

Why do you think God included these stories in His Word? What do these stories show us about God's people? What do these stories teach us about God?

DIGGING IN

Share with your group that throughout the course of this study you will be focusing on three groups in particular: God's chosen people, Israel; Jesus' disciples; and your group. Understanding the stories of Israel and the disciples can give us great insight into what God requires of us as well as what He desires for us.

Have students read Genesis 12:1-5 from their Scripture sheet. (In most cases InWord includes the Scripture verses with the student pages or on separate Scripture sheets. However, you may prefer to have students look up Scripture using their own Bibles. With middle school students we recommend reading the passages as a group.) Invite students to look for the following as they read the passage:

- **Anything God told Abraham to do.**
- **Anything God said He will do.**
- **Abraham's response to God.**

While students are reading, draw the chart below on the whiteboard without the answers. You'll be working as a group to fill in the information.

After the Scriptures have been read work together to fill in the appropriate boxes in the student journal pages.

Abraham	Isaac	Jacob
God tells him to: <i>-leave his country, people</i> <i>-go to the land I'll show you</i> God says He will: <i>-make him a great nation</i> <i>-bless him</i> <i>-bless those who bless him</i> <i>-curse those who curse him</i> Abraham responds by: <i>-he left country, people</i>	God tells him to: <i>-do not leave the land you're in</i> God says He will: <i>-be with him</i> <i>-bless him</i> <i>-give him all this land</i> <i>-will confirm the oath He gave to Isaac's dad, Abe</i> <i>-make his descendants numerous as the stars</i> Isaac responds by: <i>-he stayed</i>	God tells him to: <i>-actually, no real instructions here</i> God says He will: <i>-give him and his descendants the land he is lying on</i> <i>-descendants will be as numerous as the dust and will spread in all directions</i> Jacob responds by: <i>-built an altar</i>

Explain to your group that years after Abraham's call, as the fulfillment of a promise that God made to Abraham, Abraham and his wife gave birth to a son, Isaac. As the years passed God continued to honor the covenant that He made with Abraham through Isaac.

Read Genesis 26:1-6 together as a group. After reading, continue recording responses for Isaac's interaction with God. As before, encourage students to record responses on their journal pages.

Share in your own words:

As you may have guessed, God's promise to Abraham did not end with Isaac. Isaac had two sons of his own, Jacob and Esau. You may remember that Jacob convinced Esau to trade his birth right (normally an honor given to the oldest heir) for some food. He then proceeded to deceive Isaac into granting the birth right to him instead of Esau. Many years later God came to Jacob in a dream and reaffirmed the promise that he had made to Abraham many years before.

As a group read Genesis 28:13-19. Work as a group to fill in the last column about Jacob's encounter with God.

TAKING IT INWARD

Take this opportunity to encourage students to think about the Scriptures that they just read. In comparing the three stories, have them discuss the following questions:

What do these three scenes teach you about God?

- God comes to us with a plan*
- God initiates the contact*
- God orchestrates events*

What do these three scenes teach you about following God?

- We are to listen for God's plan*
- We are to act on what we hear*

DIGGING DEEPER

On the student journal pages under the section titled "Israel's Growth" you'll see three Scripture references. These Scriptures record the stories of Jacob and his family crossing into Egypt, their growth while in bondage in Egypt, and ultimately the nation of Israel's journey out of Egypt. Invite students to read these passages from their Bibles and write down any reference to the size of Jacob's family at the time they crossed into Egypt, and then the size of the nation of Israel at the time of the Exodus. To help them understand the first Scripture, you may want to remind students that God changed Jacob's name to Israel.

Read the passages one at a time as a group. Ask students to write down the numbers asked for on their journal pages (these are also noted below).

Genesis 46:27

What was the size of Jacob's family?

70

Exodus 12:37

What size was the nation that Jacob's family had grown into?

600,000 men, not counting women and children

Exodus 1:6-10

Under what circumstances did they experience this growth?

While slaves in Egypt.

TAKING IT INWARD

Share in your own words:

In the same way that God accomplished His plan through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: God still brings people together, forms them into a group, and orchestrates the events that call the group to action. Bottom line, God still chooses to work through us and is looking for groups of people who are willing to respond to His call.

Below are several questions designed to help your students internalize and apply the truth they've explored in this session. Depending on the attention span of your group, you may want to select three or four questions rather than respond to the entire set.

Think of some groups that you are a part of, perhaps an athletic team, a club you've joined, or even a group of friends. How did the group get started? How has the group changed over time? What is your role in the group?

When you learned about this Bible study series, what made you decide to participate in the series?

God has brought this group together for a purpose. What do you think God might want to do through our group?

Looking at the events we have done as a group over the past three months, would you say that these events are helping us accomplish this calling? If so, in what ways? If not, what do we need to do to refocus?

What kind of role do you feel like you will play in accomplishing God's plan for the group? (Hint: nobody here is without a role.)

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Share in your own words:

Throughout Scripture, when God showed up and did something amazing, His people built altars to help them remember what God had done. In fact, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all built altars to the Lord on separate occasions where God had appeared to them. (Genesis 12:6-7, Genesis 26:23-25, and Genesis 35:1-7.)

While altar making isn't a common practice these days, the idea of commemorating what God has done for us certainly is a great idea since we are by nature forgetful people. But here's the thing: let your group decide.

Do you believe that God is at work in our group and is calling us to do something for Him?

Would it be appropriate to build an altar to God to commemorate His work?

This activity can captivate the creative and artistic students in your group. You can provide some materials to build the altar (some suggestions are listed below), or you can encourage students to bring something to build the altar with the following week. This activity can be a powerful reminder of the group's commitment to pursue God's call.

Altar Ideas

- Jacob used the items that he found around him to build his altar. Have students search your meeting area for meaningful items to use in building the altar.
- Set up an altar building time and encourage students to bring items from home to assemble the altar. These can be practical items like wood or stones or duct tape, or it can be something symbolic, like something that they are giving up to pursue God's call.
- Consider organizing a scavenger hunt for items to use in the altar. Some examples might be items left in the church van after a youth trip, work supplies from last year's mission trip, etc. You could also be creative and get some adults from your congregation involved and "hide" different altar building supplies at their homes and give students riddles or hints as to where each piece can be found. Use your creativity here.
- Give each student a stone. Have them personalize the stone (you can use markers, paint, craft supplies, etc.) and put their names on the stone. Use the individual stones to create the altar.

Close out your time together with prayer. Among other things that you pray for, pray for the group's willingness to follow God's call and to be faithful.



