

Week 1

ABRAHAM AND THE PROMISE

What you need for Week One

- » **Candles and Wreath:** You may need to buy these at a store that specializes in crafts or religious items.
- » **Object Lesson:** Pebbles – These will be used to build a pile of stones like an altar somewhere on the table, so you may also want a plate or a flat board of some kind to stack the pebbles on.
- » **Food:** Some kind of edible seeds (perhaps sunflower seeds or some kind of nuts)
- » **Prayer:** Pray for God to use this time to bring blessing to your family.
- » **Devotional Preparation:** The leader should read the devotional ahead of time, including the text – Genesis 22:1-18.

Week 1 Devotional

Introduction: This is the first week of Advent. Advent is an ancient Christian custom that celebrates the incarnation – when the Son of God took on human form. Each week of Advent we will light a candle and have a short devotional time to help us remember what God did for us by sending His Son at the first Christmas.

To start, we will learn a quick overview of the Bible using your right hand. Hold your hand up and turn it toward your face. Starting with your pinkie and moving toward your thumb label each finger as follows:

- » Pinkie – 2000
- » Ring – 1500
- » Middle – 1000
- » Pointer – 500
- » Thumb – 0

These numbers represent years. Do you know which major Bible character was alive during these years?

- » Pinkie - 2000 - Abraham
- » Ring - 1500 - Moses
- » Middle - 1000 - David
- » Pointer - 500 - The Exile (This is an event.)
- » Thumb - 0 - Jesus (Actually, there is no year zero. The timeline goes from 1 BC to 1 AD and Jesus was probably born in 2 or 3 BC.)

Each of these four Bible characters is connected to a covenant. These four covenants are called the Promise, the Law, the Anointed One, and the New Covenant. If you take the first letter of each covenant name, it spells the word PLAN. In the four weeks of Advent, we are going to look at each of these covenants and learn more about God's PLAN for bringing hope to the world.

Have each member of the family review the date, character, and covenant connected with each finger.

Light the Candle: (If you're doing this with children, you might want to have the oldest child light the candle). This is the candle of hope. It represents the promise of the coming of Jesus to bring hope to a world living in darkness.

For our purposes, the candle will also represent the Promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 22:18, "Through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed." God's Promise teaches us that He loves us and that His heart's desire is to bless us. He made the world and all that is in it. He cares about every nation and every person on earth.

Pass out the rocks/pebbles. (Give each person at least two.) Go around the table and have each person place a rock on a plate until a small pile is formed. As the person places their rock on the pile, they should recall a promise from the Bible that means a lot to them or one thing for which they are thankful.

Read Genesis 22:1-18. (You might have different members of the family read different sections.) The story of Isaac's binding provides us with a model of how God would one day bring His blessing to all nations. Here are a few ways in which this story foreshadows the crucifixion of Christ.

(1) Isaac was Abraham's son, "his only son whom he loved." In the same way Jesus was God's only Son, and He loved Him very much.

(2) Abraham took Isaac to the hill country of Moriah. The city of Jerusalem is located in the hills of Moriah. Thus, Isaac was placed on an altar in the very same hills where Jesus was placed on a cross. This was no accident. God was pointing us to Jesus by what happened to Isaac.

(3) A ram was used as a substitute for Isaac. This reminds us that Jesus died as a substitute for us. He brought blessing to all people by making salvation available through His death.

Pass out seeds or nuts. These seeds represent the promise to Abraham that it would be through his “seed” that all nations on earth would be blessed. That seed was Jesus. Through Jesus every nation on earth has been blessed. Today, you can find people in every nation on earth who worship the God of Abraham because of Jesus. Do you know which nations had the fastest growing churches in the world in the early twenty-first century? The answer might surprise you. (India and Iran)

Prayer Time. Encourage each person at the table to pray for either a missionary that they know or someone who needs to know Christ. Is there someone the family wants to invite to Christmas services? Pray for that person or family as well.

Sing. Pick a favorite Christmas carol and close by singing. Suggested: “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus” – or let the kids pick a favorite.