

The Promise: For All the Families of the Earth

A study curriculum based on the musical *The Promise*

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Description Statement for *The Promise: For All the Families of the Earth*

“...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:32b)

The ancient story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and their children, Ishmael and Isaac, forms the bedrock of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths. In Genesis 12-25, God makes promises to bless the family of Abraham. What promises does God make? Who is included in the family? How is this family called to share the blessings of God with “all the families of the earth”? Why is this foundational story relevant to our lives today in our divided world?

This 6-session study will ask these questions and more by exploring *The Promise*, a musical based on this family’s story. Engaging our Biblical imaginations, we will study the Genesis passages, read excerpts of the script, and hear selected songs with lyrics. We will also listen to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim voices (the “Abrahamic” faiths) who tell similar and different versions of the story.

Throughout the study, we will follow the family as they journey toward God’s promise: into faith and doubt, conflict and hurt, famine and fruitfulness, dry lands and lifegiving water, cries and laughter, oppression and freedom. We will see them blessed, tested and broken. We will ask if this family might be restored and dwell together. And along the way, we will encourage one another to seek God’s blessings for our global family tree - that all the families of the earth might live in reconciliation.

Scope and Sequence

Sessions will include:

- o Bible Study: selected Genesis texts and background information
- o Setting the Stage/Musical Highlights: song selections and script excerpts
- o Interfaith voices: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions
- o Discussion questions
- o Suggestions for prayer and action

Session 1: On the Journey: Promise and Blessing (Genesis 12:1-9)

We meet Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. God comes to Abraham, and tells him to go to a new land. God makes promises to Abraham, including descendants as many as the stars. The family begins the journey, each character responding with trust and doubt, resolve and resistance.

Musical Highlights: *Journey*

Session 2: Dry Lands and Water (Genesis 12:10-20; 16:1-15)

The family encounters challenges and crises: dry lands of famine, barrenness, thirst, and broken promises. Sarah makes a plan for Hagar to give birth to the promised child. Abraham makes a deal with Pharaoh to exchange Sarah for food; Sarah abuses Hagar; and Hagar runs away to the desert. There, Hagar finds water, God hears Hagar, and God makes promises to Hagar. Hagar names God and returns to give birth to Ishmael.

Musical Highlights: *Dry Lands; No One Hears Me; You Have Heard My Cry*

Session 3: Laughter and Counting Stars (Genesis 15: 19; 17:1-22; 18:1-15; 21:1-7)

God continues to make promises to Sarah and Abraham for a child. They laugh at the promise. Abraham vows to keep the covenant and count the stars. Sarah gives birth to Isaac and rejoices.

Musical Highlights: *Laughter; Covenant; Sarah's Lullaby*

Session 4: Family Tree and Broken Branches (Genesis 21:8-20)

The family grows and settles. The brothers grow up together, playing and working side by side. But conflict deepens, and Hagar and Ishmael are sent away. The family tree is broken.

Musical Highlights: *Family Tree; Broken Branches*

Session 5: More Dry Lands and More Water (Genesis 21:8-20)

In the wilderness, God hears Ishmael's cries, shows Hagar water, and promises a nation with a multitude of descendants. Years later, we meet the families, on separate journeys, making plans and holding on to God's promises.

Musical Highlights: *Water from the Ground; Reprise of Journey*

Session 6: New Tree, New Well (Genesis 23-25)

Ishmael and Isaac come together to bury their father. They recount their family tree and past hurts. They wonder if their families could dwell together by the spring and pray for God to bless them for good.

Musical Highlights: *New Tree*