

## The Baby Named Laughter

## Introduction

Good morning and welcome to the month of July for summer Sunday school! Today we continue learning about Bible stories found in the Old Testament. Do you remember at the end of June learning about Abraham and Sarah? Let's continue hearing more about their story using our "Good Shepherd" written by Rev. Brenda Stobbe. This month we will learn continue to learn about Abraham, Sarah, and their family. As a reminder, this curriculum helps our children continue to grow cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually in their relationship with God.

A note for parents/guardians – Your job as the parent/guardian is to facilitate your child(ren) through this lesson. Enjoy watching & listening to the story all together, talk through the wondering questions (please try your best to not answer these questions - let your child(ren) truly wonder – some questions we don't have answers to anyway), and help guide them through the activity they choose for the day. Not answering the wondering questions might be the most challenging part of this curriculum, but that is how we help them grow.

Here is what's included in this lesson:

- **What's Going On** - similar to the parent overview section in our previous Sunday school materials which provides background to the Bible story.
- **The Bible Story** – time to watch and read the Bible story lesson.
- **Wondering Questions** – available for both our younger and older friends.
- **Daily Activities** – interactive ways to help your child dive deeper into our weekly lesson.
- **Prayer**

## What's Going On

*The Good Shepherd children's curriculum has a section called "Teacher Helps". This section will help give you our parent/guardians a deeper background to today's story.*

### **Teacher Helps** (written by Rev. Brenda Stobbe)

The thrust of this story is that we worship a God who keeps God's promises. Abram left his homeland to go where God told him. The promises God made to Abram were many. They included land, wealth and heirs. But in this story, we share the sadness, disillusionment and lack of hope that Abram experienced, even after his name was changed to Abraham when the covenant and promise of an heir had been restated in Genesis 15:4-6. Then, comes the rather confusing visit of the three strangers. We are not told that any of these three are God, but about halfway through their presentation we are suddenly hearing the voice of the Lord. I have tried to tell this story as faithfully as possible, simply naming the voice of the Lord, without explaining the conflict.

The lesson taught to Abraham, Sarah and all of the people of God is that nothing is impossible when God is in the picture. The extreme ages of Abraham and Sarah in this story make the barrenness of Sarah a certainty that cannot be changed. But in the womb of a 90 year old barren woman God placed the promise of a nation. Notice that it is not Abraham's son by Hagar who is allowed to be the heir. It must be Sarah's son. Abraham is not the only one of God's people to be a factor in the promise. Sarah is to be the mother of the promised heir, as God said. And Abraham can try all he wants to work his own destiny. Here it is Yahweh who will decide which child will carry the promise of a great nation with him. And the child will be the son of Sarah.

The laughter of Abraham and Sarah when the birth of the child is promised in this story is not joyful laughter, but rather skeptical and derisive laughter. This laughter is the laughter of the

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ridiculous and probably produces tears of pain and frustration rather than joy. But the laughter of Sarah after the birth of the child, when the heir is named Isaac, or laughter, is what we call the Easter laugh. It is the laughter that finally accepts the impossible as reality and opens new possibilities for life. It is pure joy and tends to cause those around to smile, even if they don't know what caused the laughter.

Note that we do not have a story in the Good Shepherd room regarding God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. That story is not appropriate for the broadly graded classroom we call for in this program. If there are children in the room that ask about the story, tell them that you will talk with them about that after the story presentation is finished and you are free to be with them one on one. Be sure to emphasize as you read the story together that God provided a way for Isaac to be spared. We don't know why God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, we just know God arranged for Isaac to be spared.

The wondering questions begin with a wonderment about how God's voice sounded. This is a verbalization of a very common wonderment of children. They wonder what God looks like, how God sounds and all the other concrete characteristics they know about other people. The most difficult thing to teach young children is the concept of God as a spirit. Spirit is a conceptual word and children do not think conceptually until they are about 12 years old. So, we allow them to wonder how God's voice sounds. All answers are as valid as the others since none of us really knows the answer.

After wondering about God's voice, we wonder about Sarah's laughter. It will be interesting to see if any of the children, now or later, pick up on the kind of laughter Sarah hid behind the tent flap.

The final wondering question allows for the difference in laughter that Sarah may have experienced as she proclaims, "God has made laughter for me." Children may be able to share their laughter and joy at the birth of a sibling or close friend's child. The covenant made with Abraham is the earliest covenant in the Bible. This is really the beginning of the history of the people of God. The promise to Abraham included land, wealth and an heir. By the end of this story Abraham has all three. Newness and hope has come from barrenness. And with God nothing is impossible.

## The Bible Story

*Please watch the story, using the link provided. The Bible lesson has also been provided too if you would like to read the story.*

- **Watch the Story** (*Biblical adaptations written by Rev. Brenda Stobbe*)  
Together, watch the children's story time found on Manchester UMC's website under Children & Families: Sunday Morning: <https://manchesterumc.org/sunday-morning/>
- **Gospel Lesson - Genesis 18:1-15**  
Encourage your elementary kiddo(s) to find & read this story in the Bible. Assist as needed and take turns reading if you would like.

## Wondering Questions

*"Wondering Questions" are open ended discussion questions. Parents/Guardians, try as hard as possible to NOT answer these questions for your child(ren). ☺*

**Wondering Questions for Children** (*written by Rev. Brenda Stobbe*)

1. I wonder what the Lord's voice sounded like?
2. I wonder what Sarah's laughter sounded like?
3. I wonder if Sarah laughed after her baby was born?

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**Wondering Questions for Older Children** (written by Rev. Brenda Stobbe)

1. How do you think Sarah and Abraham felt about God's promise when they got to be really old and still didn't have a baby?
2. There are many kinds of laughter. In your experience you have heard laughter that makes you hurt, the kind that makes fun of someone. You have also heard laughter that makes you want to join in with the ones laughing. When Sarah heard the words about the baby, she laughed. Which kind of laughter was this?
3. Sarah and Abraham were so old it HAD to be God who had created the baby. Have you ever felt like there were times when you did something and you don't know how you did it? Have you considered that maybe God had a hand in it?

## Daily Activities

### All Ages

Please find the attached puzzles, activities, and coloring pages. These can be used by all students participating in today's lesson.

### All Ages – Wait and Go (aka Red Light, Green Light)

*What you need: no supplies necessary*

**SAY:** During our Bible story today, we learned that Abraham and Sarah had to wait a very long time to have a baby. Can you remember how old Abraham was when Isaac was born? How old was Sarah? According to our Bible story, Abraham had to wait for 100 years and Sarah had to wait 90 years before having a child. Wow...that is a LONG time!

**ASK:** Do you know anyone that is 100 years old? Have you ever had to wait for something?

**SAY:** Sometimes it can be very hard to wait when we really want something. Today, we are going to practice waiting. Let's play a game called "Wait and Go." Have you ever played the game Red Light, Green Light? This is the same game, so let's play together as a family as we practice learning to wait!

- As a family play **Wait and Go** (aka Red Light, Green Light). Play for as long as you would like and then take time to talk about how it felt to wait for the leader of the game to say "Go."

Activity adapted from: <https://ministry-to-children.com/abraham-sarah-preschool-lesson/>

### Preschool/Early Elementary - God Cares about Our Families!

*What you need: a printed copy of the "God Cares About our Families" sheet OR you can use a blank piece of paper to add the title and circles just like the provided copy, scissors, yarn/string, and crayons/markers/colored pencils. Optional: hole punch*

- Give your child(ren) a copy of the "God Cares about Our Families" sheet or their own paper.

**SAY:** In today's lesson, we were reminded that that God knows and cares about each of us and our family. Let's take time to remember all of the people in our family and celebrate how uniquely loved we are by each other and by God.

- Ask your child(ren) to write the names of each person in your family (this can include immediate, extended, and friends that you consider family – everyone can be included!).
- You can always print another piece of paper OR get a blank piece of paper and add circles.
- If names are too challenging for younger friends to write, have them draw their family members and parents/guardians can help add names. Don't forget to decorate the circles with anything special that represents each family member.

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- Once all circles have been filled in, cut out the circles, punch a hole in the top of each one, and string them on a necklace using yarn (or whatever you have available at home).
- Hang this in a room where you will remember to pray and thank God for these special people in your life!

Activity Adapted from: <https://www.sunday-school-center.com/support-files/lg6-lesson-6-isaac-the-son-of-promise.pdf>

### Elementary – I Can Talk to God

*What you need: a printed copy of the “I Can Talk to God” prayer cards OR simply copy the ones I have shared with you on your own piece of paper, scissors, yarn/string (or something to help keep them together – you could even staple them when you are finished), and a pen/pencil*

**SAY:** In today’s story the Lord said “Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord to do?” This part of the story reminds us that God can do incredible things. However, we need to remember to talk to God and be in a relationship with God. Our activity today reminds us that we can always talk to God, anywhere, any time, and about anything!

- Handout the “I Can Talk to God” to your child(ren). The first page provides them with prompts but the second page your child(ren) has to create prompts themselves.
- Together as a family OR have your child(ren) do this activity independently, and come up with how you/they can talk to God.
- Once all boxes have been completed, cut-out the squares and connect them all together as a key ring or like a book.
- Use this book throughout the week as a reminder of how/when/where you can talk to God!

### 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Graders – Genesis 18:1-15 (Diving Deeper – Bible Study)

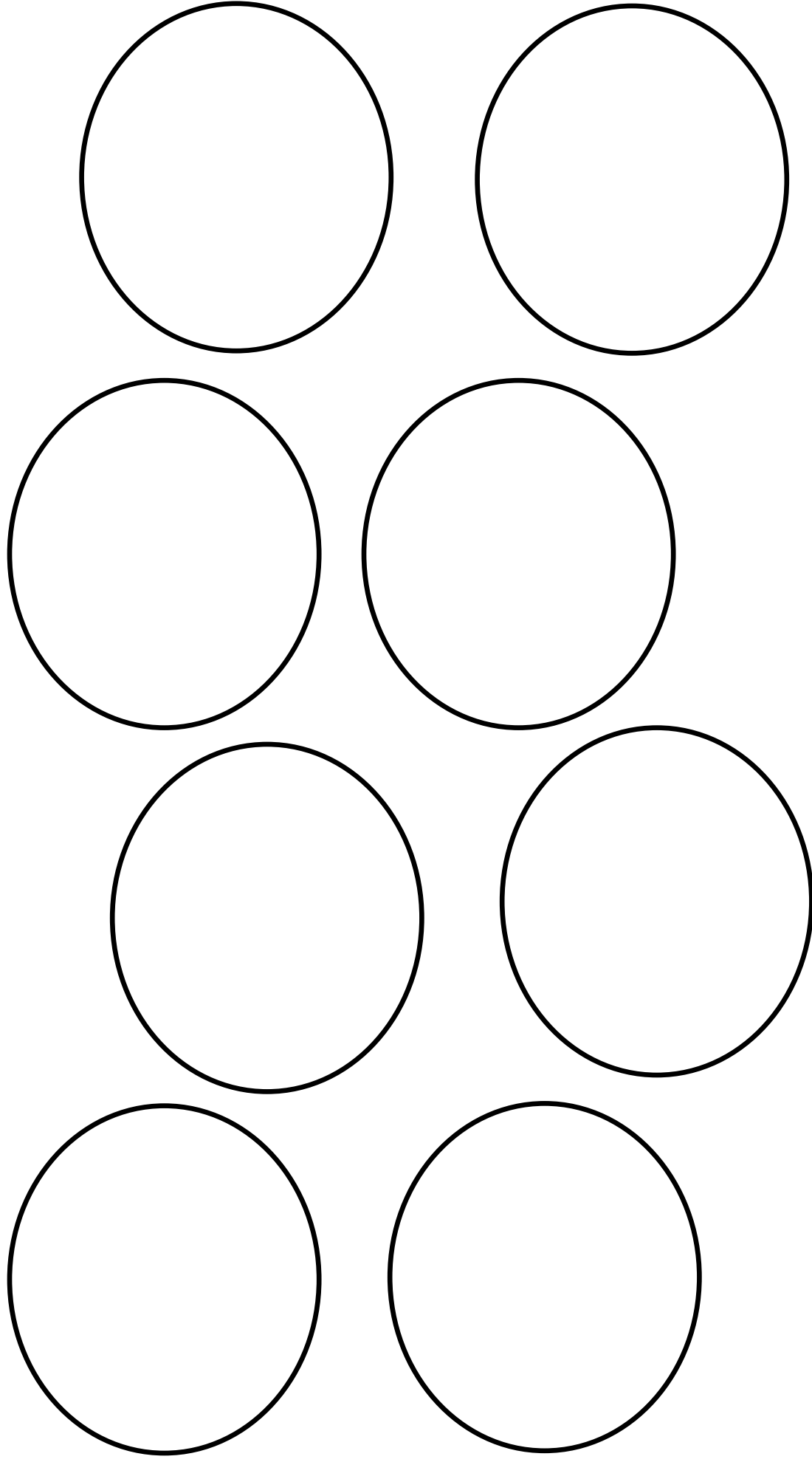
*What you need: Your Deep Blue Kids Bible*

- Read **Genesis 18:1-15**
- Once you finish with your reading for today, go back through today’s wondering questions.
- Ask your parent/guardian about one of their favorite memories of you as a child and/or how you used to make them laugh when you were a baby.

## Prayer

Dear God, thank you for keeping your promises. Help us remember to practice patience. Thank you for Sarah’s laughter and the reminder that through you, anything is possible. We love you. Amen.

# God Cares About Our Families!



# I Can Talk to God

The Lord our God is near us every time we  
pray. Deuteronomy 4:7

Before I begin:

- I find a quiet place.
- I think about who God is.
- I think about what God has done for me and my family.
- I quiet my heart and close my eyes.

**I can talk to God and thank  
God for all God has already  
given me.**

Then you call out to me. You will come and  
pray to me. And I will listen to you.  
Jeremiah 29:12

**I can talk to God when I am  
in trouble or have a problem.**

Even before they call out to me I will answer  
them. While they are still speaking, I will  
hear them. Isaiah 65:24

**I can talk to God...**

**Never stop praying. 1 Thessalonians 5:17**

**I can talk to God...**

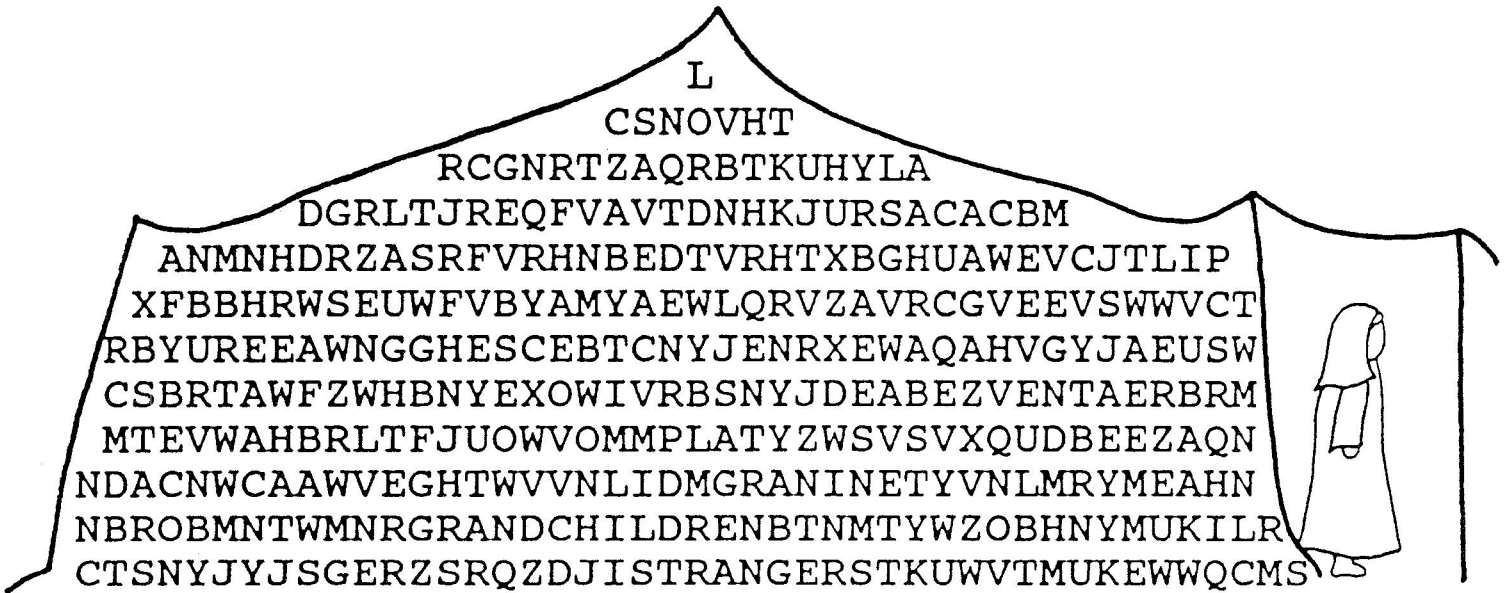
**The prayer of a godly person is powerful. It makes things happen. James 5:16**

**I can talk to God...**

**Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.  
Jeremiah 29:12**

**I can talk to God...**

**Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1**



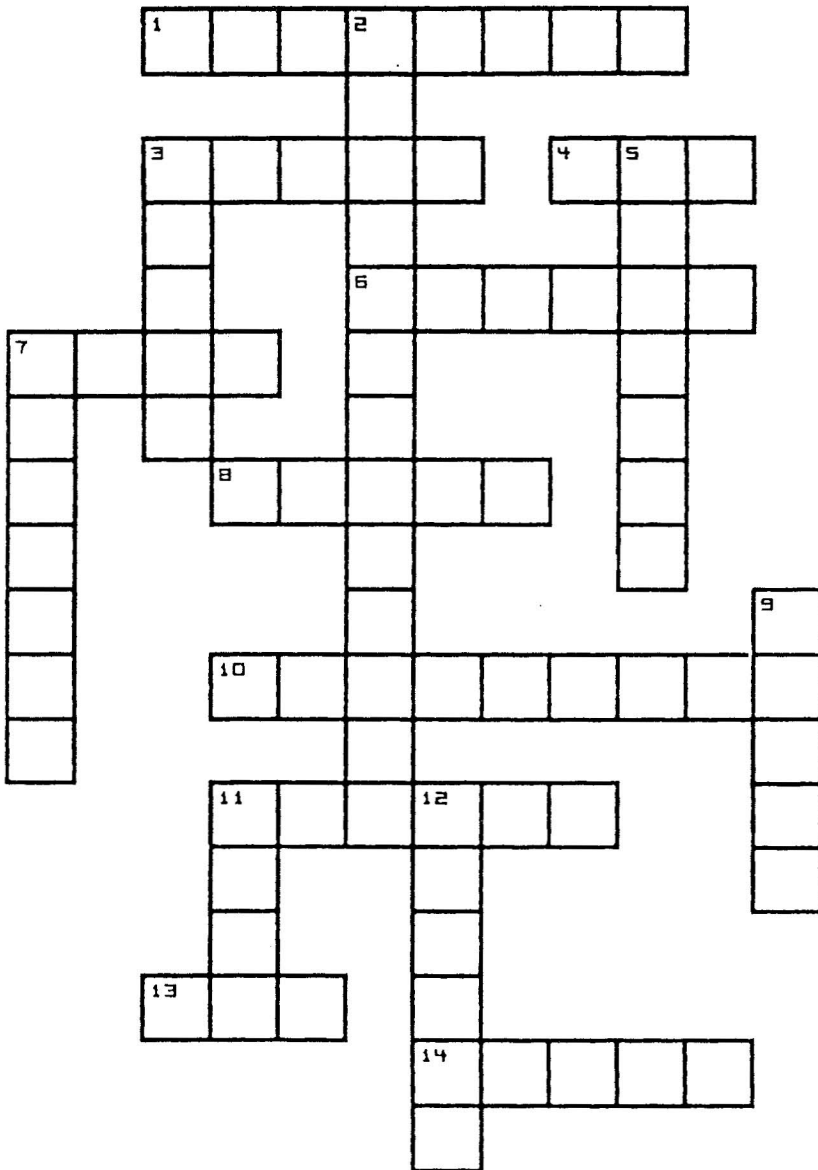
Search the tent for these words.

Abraham  
Cool  
Grandchildren  
Laughter  
Old  
Stars  
Voice

Canaan  
Desert  
Isaac  
Lord  
Sarah  
Strangers

Cattle  
Eat  
Laughed  
Ninety  
Son  
Three





### ACROSS CLUES

1. Isaac means this.
3. Abraham's wife.
4. Abraham offered food to \_\_\_\_.
6. Abraham and Sarah found the Lord in the \_\_\_\_.
7. Another name for God.
8. The \_\_\_\_ of the Lord told them that Sarah would have a child.
10. The \_\_\_\_ were approaching Abraham's tent.
11. This was the place given to Abraham and Sarah.
13. Not young.
14. One, two, \_\_\_\_.

### DOWN CLUES

2. God promised that Abraham would have many \_\_\_\_.
3. Their children would be as many as the \_\_\_\_ in the sky.
5. Sarah's husband.
7. Sarah \_\_\_\_ when she heard God say she would have a child.
9. The name Sarah gave to her child.
11. Abraham offered \_\_\_\_ water to the strangers.
12. Sarah was this old when she had Isaac.

Abraham  
Grandchildren  
Ninety  
Three

Canaan  
Isaac  
Old  
Voice

Cool  
Laughter  
Sarah

Desert  
Laughed  
Strangers

Eat  
Lord  
Stars







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*Abraham is worried that God will not keep His promise.*

