



# CHILDREN Yeah, right!

## Bible notes for leaders

### Old Testament Genesis 18.1-10a

The story of Abraham to this point reveals the struggle he has had to live with and fulfil the promise of his calling (12.1-3). Abraham and his wife Sarah are very old and have had no children. This is something they are sad about. This chapter introduces a dramatic change of events. It begins with the rather strange arrival of three men – or

were they angels or the presence of God (vv. 1-3)? This emphasises the way in which God's purpose for Abraham has become caught up in the ambiguities of his life.

It is not clear what is happening. Abraham offers characteristic desert hospitality but it seems over-generous in the circumstances. Some suggest this is because he is at last taking his responsibility to be a blessing to the world, come who may, seriously. As the story begins to introduce Sarah, Abraham becomes more marginal. It is about Sarah

fulfilling God's plan. Sarah laughed to herself when the visitors said she would be with child. How often do we laugh when we think of what God might have planned?

### Psalm 15

### New Testament Colossians 1.15-28

### Gospel Luke 10.38-42

*These same Bible passages were covered in Roots issue 12 (July/August 2004). Some of the material produced around the Gospel passage may be found on the website [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com) under the date 18 July 2004.*

## Set the scene

How do we prepare to meet God? How do we recognise God? How do we honour God once we have recognised his presence? These are the questions we shall be looking at this week, as we learn about a visit made to Abraham and Sarah, which ended with a surprise revelation.

- Prepare the room as you would for a party. Put a large 'Welcome' sign on the door and, if possible, hang up balloons and streamers. Play some party music. Have some 'party food' ready, such as small cakes or biscuits, but do not put that out yet! Welcome each child by name as they come in.
- Decorate a table with flowers, a pretty tablecloth, and perhaps some candles and serviettes. Invite the children each to write their names on a small card, and put them on the table. (You can use this table at the end of the session if you want to eat together.)
- Make a display of 'surprise' items. You could use a Jack-in-the-box, different musical boxes, nests of dolls and pop-up books. Make sure every child has a chance to experience the 'surprise'.

## Get started

### Ready for a baby

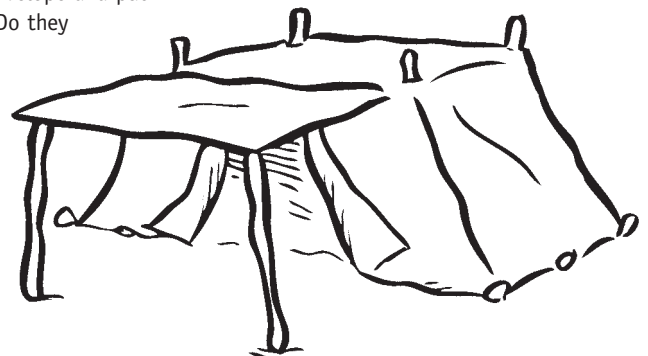
Put together a collection of things that you might need for a baby, such as nappies, wipes, small clothes, a buggy, a car seat. Ask the children what each item is used for, and why it is important. Talk about getting ready for a baby's arrival: which things do you need to have ready before he or she is born, and which can wait? Put nappies, wipes and toy baby equipment, if you have it, in a corner, along with dolls, for the children to use throughout the session. (If you can persuade a parent or grandparent to come with their baby and talk to the children, that's even better!)

### Who is it?

Cut up some pictures of famous people or members of your church, and put each cut-up picture into a separate envelope. Invite the children to choose an envelope and put the picture together again. Do they recognise who it is?



Sarah



### Knock, knock...

Ask the children to tell you some of their favourite jokes or stories that have made them laugh. What kinds of thing make them laugh? With the youngest children, practise making silly faces and silly noises.

### Can you recognise it?

Make up a tape of everyday sounds, or use a commercial sound-effects tape. Can the children identify them? Don't make it too easy! Ask the children to think about what skills they use to recognise the sounds.

### A grand day

Ask the children to think of the best welcome they could possibly be given. If they go somewhere new and meet new people, what kind of welcome would they like? Make a list of all the things that they would like to happen. Make sure they think about the attitudes and emotions as well as the material welcome.



## Use the Bible

### Really? For younger children

Tell the story using play figures and a large box for the tent.

The Bible tells us that long ago there was a man called Abraham. One day he was sitting by his tent when suddenly three visitors appeared. He ran over to them, and asked them to stay with him for a while. He invited them to have something to eat, and they said yes.

Abraham had a wife called Sarah. She was in the tent. Abraham ran over to her and asked her to make some special cakes for the visitors. He then ran to find some meat to eat.

When it was all ready, Abraham gave the food to the visitors and stood with them while they ate it.

Then one of the visitors said to Abraham, 'Where is Sarah?' Abraham pointed to Sarah. 'She's there, in the tent,' he said. The visitor said, 'In a few months, Sarah is going to have a baby boy.'

### Our reporter in Mamre

*For the oldest children*

You will need a newsreader (N), a reporter (R), Abraham (A), servant (SE), and Sarah (S).

- N** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the ...o'clock (*insert appropriate time*) news. Exciting news is coming from our reporter in Mamre, so let's go over live to (*name*).
- R** Thank you (*name*). You join us here where an extraordinary story is beginning to unfold. It concerns Sarah, the wife of Abraham, but let's hear first from Abraham himself. Abraham, can you tell us exactly what happened?
- A** Certainly. I was sitting by my tent in the middle of the day when I suddenly saw three strangers standing there. I ran over to offer them hospitality, some water to wash their feet and something to eat. They accepted, and then I ran to the tent to ask Sarah...
- R** (*interrupting*) Thank you, Abraham. Let's hear from Sarah what happened next.
- S** Abraham came rushing in and asked me to make some special cakes for the visitors. I had to go and get the expensive flour out of the store.

**R** And then what happened?

**A** I ran and found a calf that was ready to be killed and eaten, and gave it to the servant to cook. By the time it was ready, it was getting late!

**SE** Yes, I can vouch for that – I spent a long time preparing it.

**R** So, let's talk now about the visitors. After you had eaten – I understand they revealed some very strange information.

**A** Yes, they told Sarah that in a few months she would have a baby.

**R** And what was Sarah's reaction? After all, she's a bit old to be having a baby now.

**A** She laughed.

**R** So there you have it (*name of newsreader*). Sarah has been told she will be pregnant soon; perhaps we will return to this strange story in a few months' time. This is (*name of reporter*) reporting live from Mamre.

*There is an alternative sketch version of the story available on the website [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com).*



## Be active

### Welcome

Decorate biscuits or cakes using icing pens or, if you have time, making the icing themselves. Alternatively, the children could make jam sandwiches cut into different shapes using biscuit cutters. (Younger children may need help with this.) Talk about the kind of food that we offer to people who visit us. At the end of the session, some of the sandwiches, cakes or biscuits could be shared by the children, offered to the congregation, or taken home for family or neighbours.

### God's here

Give each child a sheet of paper, and ask them to draw a picture of someone else in the room. Try to ensure that everyone is drawn. The name of the person they are drawing must be kept secret! (You may find this is hard for very young children; if possible, let

them whisper the name to you, and then help them with their drawing.) Display the finished pictures so that everyone can see them.

Invite the children to work together to show how God is present with everyone. This could be by drawing a large circle around the pictures, a large pair of hands cupped around the images or by adding labels saying 'God is with me' to each image.

### Welcoming God

As a group, plan a celebration for the start of the summer holidays or end of the school year. Whom would they invite? What kind of food would they want to prepare? Where would they hold the celebrations? How would they entertain their guests? How would they recognise God in their celebrations? Write their ideas on a large sheet of paper, and display. Ask some children to write and/or decorate menus, and others to write invitations or make decorations. (The younger children could make paper chains, for example.) Add everyone's contributions to the display. If

possible, use the ideas for a real celebration during the summer.

### A grand day too

Look at the list of things the children came up with in **A grand day** in *Set the scene*. Did they include everything in their **Welcoming God** preparation? Ask them to reflect on what they might have left out. Can they include anything now to make sure people feel welcome, just as Abraham did in the story?

### Seeing God

Ask the children individually to design a football strip for a church or neighbourhood football team. Talk about the need for individual designs so that teams can be recognised and supporters can recognise each other. You could give the children templates of a plain shirt to fill in or let them draw their own. The children can write the name of the team at the bottom. Add the following: 'Shirts help us to recognise our football team; people help us to recognise God.'

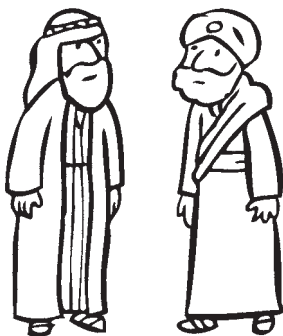
## Make connections

*For younger children*

- Ask the children how they would recognise a police officer, a firefighter or a footballer.
- How do they recognise their parents? Stress that we don't recognise people simply by what they look like – we use sounds and touch too. It's much harder to recognise God whom we can't see, but we can sense that there is something God wants us to do or that we are being called to something.
- Abraham didn't know who his visitors were, but he recognised that they had come from God and that they were special. How can we recognise something as being from God?

*For older children*

- Prepare a list of surprising statements to read to the children. Examples might include:
  - Your teacher is going to be an astronaut!
  - You are going to find a million pounds in your dustbin!
  - (*Name and name's father*) are going to play for England in the European Cup!
- Ask the children how they felt when they heard these statements.
- Why did they laugh? Sarah laughed but it did come true – she did have a baby.
- Sometimes the things that God does are very mysterious. Abraham recognised that his visitors had been sent by God. He showed them the respect that they deserved. How can we show respect to others?



Abraham

Stranger 1

## Pray it through

### God loves you

*For younger children*

Look again at the pictures you drew of each other (in **God's here**), and ask the children to identify each one. Invite the children to hold hands in a circle, put the pictures in the centre, and walk around, singing the following for each child (to the tune 'Skip to my Lou')

(*name – repeated if needed*) God loves you,  
You are special, and we pray for you,  
God will always be with you,  
God knows all of us.

If you haven't drawn the pictures, you can still do this. Ask each child to name one other person in the group, and then use the prayer.

Again, using the identified pictures, display them and invite each child to stand facing his or her picture. Go along the line, calling each child by name. As each child turns, the group says:

'(*Name*), God will be with you this week wherever you are. Look for God.'

When all the children have turned around, pray for the group as a whole, asking that others will see God in the things the children do.

(You can also do this without the pictures!)

### A responsive prayer

Loving God, help us to recognise you when you speak to us,

**help us not to be too busy for you.**

Loving God, help us to understand what you want us to do,

**help us not to be too busy for you.**

Loving God, help us to live our lives in such a way that others will know how much we honour and respect you,

**help us not to be too busy for you.**

**Amen.**



Stranger 2



Stranger 3

## Resources

### Music

Ah Lord God (MP, SHF)

All heaven declares

Be thou my vision

Blessing and honour (BBP)

Christ be our light (Longing for light) (CHB, CG, LAU, TS)

Father, we love you

God's love is deeper than the deepest ocean (CHB, JU, HON, KS)

I reach up high, I touch the ground

I want to walk with Jesus Christ

I'm going to take a step of faith (CPR, JP)

Let us praise the Lord our God (BBP)

Praise to the Lord, the almighty

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

To Abraham and Sarah (RS)

We are marching in the light of God

Will you come and follow me

How awesome are your deeds, Oh Lord, by Ishmael, *Songs for Little Children*, CPO, ISBN 0854768459.

### Books

'Heart stopping, breath holding' a poem by Beth Webb, found in Donald Hilton (compiler), *Liturgy of Life*, CEP, 1991, ISBN 0719707609.

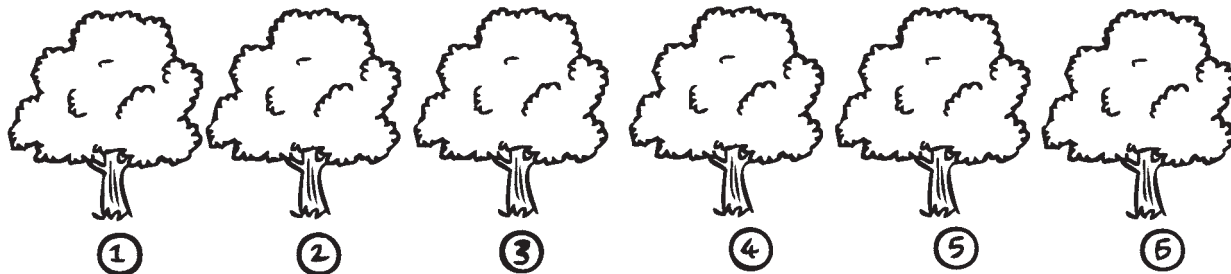
Steve Turner, *The Day I Fell Down the Toilet and Other Poems*, Lion Hudson plc, 1997, ISBN 0745936407.

If you want to know how to say 'Welcome' in languages other than those given, go to [www.britishcouncil.org/languages.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/languages.pdf) (page 6 of the file).



'When he saw them he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.'  
Genesis 18.2 (NRSV)

Use colour or patterns to make each tree look different.



Can you find the tree Abraham sat under at Mamre? Here are some clues:  
The number will divide by 2; It's not the tree with the number of feet you have;  
It's not half a dozen.

How many words of four or more letters can you find in 'Sarah laughed' (it doesn't count if you just add an S)?

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Draw a line under any of these words that you recognise. Then decorate them. Say the words you know to someone else. Try to find out the country each word belongs to.

Activity sheet for extra time, or to take home. Photocopy and/or enlarge.

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