



## **LOVE STORIES: WEEK 1**

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## **LOVE STORIES**

### **WEEK 1: ABRAHAM AND SARAH**

**Bible:** Romans 4:20 (NLT)

**Bottom Line:** True love encourages you to put your trust in God.

## **SUPPLIES**

### **Opening Game (In-Person)**

- 1-2 packs of 3x5 index cards
- 3 tables (more if you have a larger youth group)

### **Opening Game (Online)**

- White Board (for leader)
- Access to computer and printer (optional)

## **OPENING GAME (IN-PERSON VERSION): ALL MIXED UP**

### **GAME PREP**

Using the words from the word list, for each word write one letter per notecard.

Once a word is complete, pile cards into a stack out of order.

You should have one stack per word.

Repeat this process for the numbers of teams you will have.

Word List:

- Sarah
- Abraham
- Laugh
- Promise
- Encourage
- Relationship

Set-up three tables...

- Judges' table: Place one set of cards per team in a separate part of the table.
- Team Tables: Teams will use to unscramble their words.

## **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

Divide your students into two teams.

You should six sets of cards for every team.

Once teams are formed, get one volunteer from each team and tell them they will be the “discourager.”

Their job will be to slow down the team’s progress.

They can say things like, “we will never get this word,” “it is taking too long,” or “we should cheat and use our phones.”

Remind the discourager that he/she should not say anything to offend anyone on the team.

Also, let them know upfront that their teammates will get frustrated with them.

Send back to their groups.

Explain the object of the game is to be the first team to unscramble all the words.

On the signal, a designated person from each team (*only one team member can approach the judge’s table*) will run to the main table and grab one stack of index cards.

Teams will unscramble the letters to make a word. Once the word is made, they will call for the judge to verify the word.

Once a team’s word is confirmed, they may go back to the judge’s table to pick up the next set of cards.

Repeat this process until all the words have been unscrambled.

The team to unscramble all their words first wins.

*Using cell phones is not allowed.*

## **OPENING GAME (ONLINE VERSION): ALL MIXED UP**

### **GAME PREP**

Using the words from the word list, create the scrambled version of each word from the list.

You can do this by hand on a whiteboard or on the computers using Word, Google Doc, PowerPoint, or Google Slides.

### **Word List**

- Sarah
- Abraham
- Laugh
- Promise
- Encourage
- Relationship

Before you begin, use the chat feature or send a message to one student in the group.

Tell them they will be the “discourager.”

Their job will be to slow down the group’s progress.

They can say things like, “we will never get this word,” “it is taking too long,” or “we should cheat and use our phones.”

Remind the discourager that he/she should not say anything to offend any other group member.

Also, let them know upfront that others will get frustrated with them.

Explain the object of the game is to be the first person to unscramble the word each round (*Using cell phones is not allowed*).

After, debrief with the group by asking this question: ***How hard was it to stay focused with someone constantly discouraging your progress?***

Explain that the “discourager” was planted there on purpose to illustrate a point for today’s lesson.

It can be frustrating when someone who is supposed to be on your side, is not supportive.

Share with students about the importance of having positive relationships.

### **TEACH**

**Say:** Today we’re beginning a new series call “Love Stories.”

We will examine the idea of true love and what it looks like by studying four couples from the Bible.

- Abraham and Sarah
- Ruth and Boaz
- Mary and Joseph
- Jacob and Rachel

Talking about love can stir up a variety of thoughts and feelings for different people.

Typically, when people hear the word *love*, we may think of Valentine's Day, marriage, a specific person, or a past relationship.

In our first lesson, we will examine the love story of Abraham and Sarah.

Although their story takes place centuries ago, the lesson we can learn from them is still relevant today.

Through their story, we will gain a godly perspective on a key element to any relationship: trust.

According to [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com), *trust* is defined as “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something; one in which confidence is placed.”

God is trustworthy. When He makes a promise, He keeps it.

As believers, our reliance and confidence are based on the character, strength, and truth of God.

And we should encourage the ones we love to do the same!

Like most relationships, Abraham and Sarah had their ups and downs.

But they also had God, and having God makes all the difference when it comes to true love.

In Genesis 17 and 18, we will look at how true love encourages us to have faith in God.

**Say:** When we put our faith in God, our lives are never the same.

The more we walk with Him, the more changes happen within us.

This is what happened with Abraham and his wife Sarah.

God called him and made a promise to him back in chapter 12 (see Genesis 12:1-3).

At that time, his name was Abram, and he was 75 years old.

Fast forward 24 years and we come to Genesis chapter 17.

Many things happened during those years with Abraham and Sarah.

Despite their mistakes and not always doing it God's way, Abraham never lost his faith.

**Read Genesis 17:1-8 & 15-16.**

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—God Almighty. Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.*

*I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."*

*At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him,*

*"This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!"*

*"What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations.*

*I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!*

*I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*

*And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."*

Can you imagine what must have been going through Abraham's (Abram at the time) mind?

Had God forgotten what Abram and Sarai had done?

Did He forget the whole Hagar and Ishmael saga?

Of course not!

He knew it ALL... and still kept His promise to Abraham and Sarah.

Why? Because He saw Abraham's heart and knew he trusted God.

Abraham kept his faith in God and encouraged Sarah to do the same.

**Ask:** What do we learn about true love from this?

*Allow a few responses from students.*

We learn that godly love pushes us closer to God not away from Him.

Too often we see on the news, stories of couples who have committed crimes together.

In these situations, one person usually leads the other person down the wrong path.

That's not love the way God planned it.

People who really love us should want the best for us, and we should want the best for them.

There is no one better than God!

Knowing this means that we trust in the plans and promises God has for us.

Yes, even if it takes 24 years!

In verses 15-16, we see a second name change.

*Then God said to Abraham, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.*

*And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants."*

What God did for Abraham, He did for Sarah, too.

Abraham's faith and trust in God not only blessed him but his wife also.

When people get married, the two become one.

As one, Abraham and Sarah were the recipients of God's covenant.

They would be the father and mother of all nations.

God is still making promises today.

All He wants is for us to love and trust in Him and lead others to do the same.

God will give reassurance of His promise to strengthen our faith. An example of this can be seen in **Genesis 18:10-15**.

*Then one of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!" Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent.*

*Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children.*

*So, she laughed silently to herself and said, "How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?"*

*Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby'?"*

*Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."*

*Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, "I didn't laugh." But the Lord said, "No, you did laugh."*

The Lord was even more specific with Abraham this time.

He told him that he would have a son by the next year.

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they heard it, but for very different reasons.

Abraham laughed with joy. Although he did not know how it would come to pass, he knew God was able to make it happen.

Sarah laughed with doubt. She knew that they were old and didn't see how it was possible.

In today's time, a couple having a baby at this age would make world news.

It would probably be a Guinness World Record.

We would see doctors on TV talking about all the dangers of the situation.

But God made it clear that there was nothing too hard for Him.

All they needed to do was believe.

The same is true for us today.

All we need to do is believe.

You may be dealing with something right now that seems too hard.

It may be...

- Finishing school
- Getting a job
- Better relationship with parents
- Going to college

*Leader option: Share your testimony of how you had to wait on God and trust His promise. Be sure to highlight who encouraged you to keep believing.*

**Say:** It can be discouraging when things don't happen the way we think they should.

We can try to take matters into our own hands to speed the process along.

When we do this, we often end up off course and further away from God.

Hopefully, you have people in your life who love you enough to push you back to God.

And you can be that person for someone else.

We must trust that God will help us when obeying and following gets hard.

Abraham loved God, and he loved his wife Sarah.

Because he believed he encouraged Sarah to believe also.

**True love encourages you to put your trust in God.**

*Close in prayer.*

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Look at Genesis 18:10. If you were Abraham or Sarah, describe how you would have felt?
2. How do you think their relationship would have been impacted if God had only changed Abraham's name but not Sarah's?
3. How do love and trust impact your relationship with God? With others?
4. In what ways have you encouraged your loved ones to trust in God? How have you been encouraged to trust God by loved ones?
5. What do we learn about godly relationships from Abraham and Sarah?

6. In what way did giving Abraham specific details about what to name his son and when he would be born strengthen Abraham and Sarah's trust?
7. How did Abraham's response differ from Sarah's?
8. Why do you think Sarah lied to God about laughing? In what way does her response show a lack of trust?
9. Can you recall a time when a friend or relative shared something important with you and you laughed at what was said? How did it make the other person feel?
10. In which area of your life do you find it hard to trust God? What will you do to build your trust?