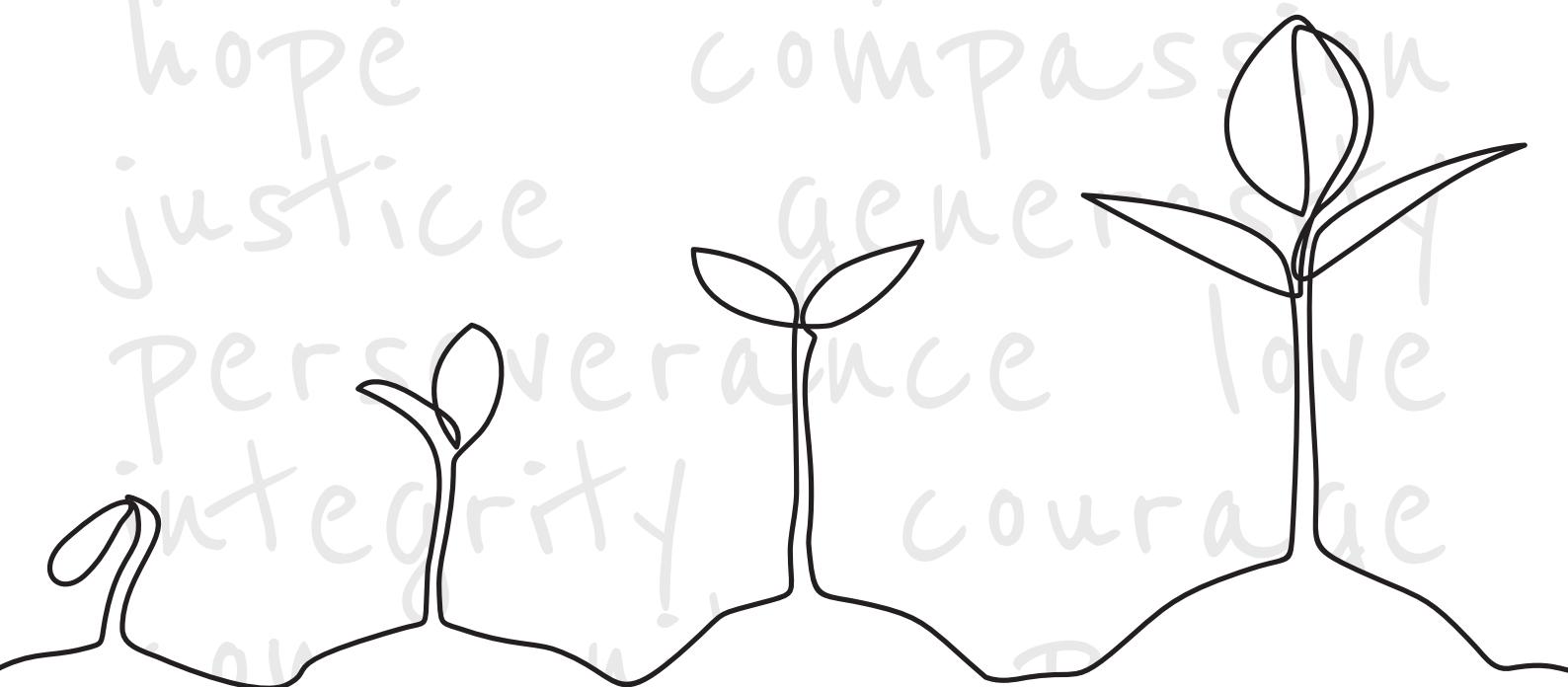


An all-age resource exploring
how to follow Jesus in everyday life

GROWING CHRISTIAN VALUES



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Growing Christian Values

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Growing Christian Values

An intergenerational discipleship resource
exploring how to follow Jesus in everyday life

Who is this for?

- It's for people who attend a Messy Church, who want to explore the theme further between gatherings. This resource complements the session material in *Get Messy! Volume 3*.
- Sometimes it is the children who lead the way in this, asking important questions about how to follow Jesus in everyday life, and so this material is for adults and children who would like to talk about these things together, in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, following the Messy Church value of being all-age.
- You may like to explore the material as an individual household, taking time to read the Bible and pray, perhaps during a meal together.
- You might prefer to meet with others and explore this material as an intergenerational small group, either virtually or in person.



How does the material work?

Each of the twelve sessions is self-contained and can be done in any order. Together they provide a framework for understanding Christian values and how to live them out in daily life.

The language is deliberately uncomplicated and as far as possible tries to avoid too much religious jargon, so it is appropriate for all ages and those at the start of journeying towards Jesus.

Each session has a Bible story with useful ‘First thoughts on the story’, which will prompt young and old to understand its context and purpose. There’s a suggestion around how to introduce the theme as you ‘Play with the story’, together with a choice of questions to help all ages ‘Talk about the story’ together. If you want to ‘Dig deeper’, there are links to video clips that tell the Bible story through an animation or to stories that illustrate the theme, followed by ideas to ‘Pray with the story’. Finally, each session ends with a summary of the key learning points, a ‘Next steps’ challenge and a handy take-away sheet. Remember, you don’t have to complete every section, just pick and choose what suits your group.

A suggested format

- Start with a meal together, as this will encourage fellowship, fun conversation and inclusion.
- Introduce an activity from the ‘Play with the story’ section to kick things off. This will need to be prepared beforehand by whoever takes the lead on that session. Remember that children and young people can lead the session, with support.
- Make copies, use Bibles or find an online Bible to read the story for the session, inviting everyone to take part.
- We recommend that at least one member of the group reads through the section entitled ‘First thoughts on the story’ beforehand, to be able to answer any questions about the story’s context and purpose.
- Ask someone else to take on the role of questioner, selecting questions from the ‘Talk about the story’ section to prompt discussion together.
- Check out the accompanying optional video suggestions in the ‘Dig deeper’ section if you have time.
- Look at the different options to ‘Pray with the story’ together.

- Ask everyone to come up with a one-sentence or even a one-word summary of the session that best captures what they have learnt. You might like to compare these with what is written in the ‘Summing it all up’ section of the material.
- You can use the ‘Take away’ handout throughout the session to capture ideas, especially as you think about the ‘Next steps’ section – people might want to write a response in the ‘Something I will do with this story’ box. Remember next time you meet to find out if anyone completed this.

What themes are covered?

This resource uses the same themes as *Get Messy! Volume 3*, through different Bible stories, to further explore the Christian way of life. Each session covers a different Christian value and encourages the group to put this value into practice in everyday life.

1 Hope

Luke 8:40–56

2 Compassion

Matthew 14:13–21

3 Peace

Nehemiah 1:1–4; 2:11–13; 2:16–18; 4:6–9; 4:16–18; 6:15–16

4 Generosity

Mark 12:41–44

5 Perseverance

Matthew 2:1–12

6 Love

Ruth 1

7 Integrity

Matthew 3:13–4:11

8 Courage

1 Samuel 17:2–11, 17, 20–22, 31b–50

9 Community

Acts 2:1–15, 22–24, 33, 36–39, 41–47

10 Purpose

2 Kings 5:1–15a

11 Justice

Matthew 25:31–46

12 Patience

Genesis 15:1–6; 17:1, 4–5; 18:1–5, 10–15; 21:1–2

5 Perseverance

Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, ‘Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, ‘Where will the Messiah be born?’

They told him, ‘He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote,

“Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.”

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, ‘Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I also want to go and worship him.’

The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

First thoughts on the story

Have you ever been in a long race? I remember at school being selected for the cross-country team. It meant getting out of school for an afternoon. But I never asked to be selected again. The race was muddy, cold and very long. I didn’t know how to persevere, and I stopped long before the end.

We don’t know much about the ‘wise men’ in our story. Scholars think they were astrologer-priests who travelled to Bethlehem from modern-day Iraq or Iran. They would have had a very long journey – probably over a thousand miles – travelling on ancient trade routes which could be difficult and dangerous. They weren’t sure how or where their journey would end. But one thing’s for sure: they would have to persevere to get to Bethlehem.

Because the world’s not as God intended it to be, we all have times when things are hard and we have to persevere. Perseverance is an important quality that enables people to keep going when things are tough. If you’ve lost your job, are experiencing health problems or find your relationships tricky, for example, you will need to dig deep and be determined – you will need to persevere.

We know that God understands perseverance. The Bible tells us that even though people walked away from God’s good plans for them, God didn’t give up on them. The parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15 is a picture of how God never stops persevering in looking for us, making us a priority and keeping on going until we are found.

And God is ready to help us too. Christians know they have to persevere, but they also believe that they don’t just have to dig deep and be determined. They can turn to God to find strength and help. They can turn to Jesus, who says, ‘When life is tough, I’m here for you and I will strengthen you.’ The apostle Paul had a very tough life. He talks about how he had been frequently imprisoned and beaten; that he’d been shipwrecked and flogged, robbed, hungry and homeless. But he also explained how Jesus helped him persevere in those hard conditions:

I know what it is to be poor or to have plenty, and I have lived under all kinds of conditions. I know what it means to be full or to be hungry, to have too much or too little. Christ gives me the strength to face anything.

PHILIPPIANS 4:12-13

The person who wrote the letter to the Hebrews said this:

We must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete... So keep your mind on Jesus, who put up with many insults from sinners. Then you won't get discouraged and give up.

HEBREWS 12:1-3

God knows that life isn't easy and that we need to persevere. God knows that, like the wise men, we may feel we're on a long and difficult journey and we don't know where we're going. When we feel this way, God says: 'I'm here and I will help. Just ask me.'

Play with the story

- Plan your own Perseverance Olympics. Decide on the events, such as: skipping; keepy uppies with a ball or balloons; staring contest; walking with an egg on a spoon; doing step-ups on the stairs. See who can keep going the longest for each event. Add up the scores and award your gold, silver and bronze medals! Then ask everyone what helped them keep going?
- Each choose something new you'd like to persevere with, such as: doing a cartwheel; completing a game; mastering a DIY skill; performing a card trick; or making perfect pastry. Set yourself a target and think about how persevering will help you achieve it. Compare notes in a month. How are you getting on?
- Watch this animated story of Gladys Aylward, a missionary in early 20th-century China, who shares stories of how God helped her to persevere in all sorts of difficult situations, with the 100 children she led on a perilous journey to safety during the war – youtu.be/5TPFJYxb4q0.

Talk about the story

- 1 Share a story of a time you had to persevere. What happened? What helped you?
- 2 Why do you think the wise men persevered with such a difficult and dangerous journey?
- 3 Do you think God still needs people ready to persevere today?
- 4 What do you think is the most important part of the story?
- 5 How are you having to persevere at the moment? Could God help with that?.

Dig deeper

- Read Psalm 55, which David wrote after he was betrayed by a friend and had to flee from his enemies. What helped David persevere?
- Hear what Christian quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada says about what helps her persevere – youtube.com/shorts/7Dd4ulbUMeA. You can find out more about her story here – youtu.be/_uxx-baPqtA.
- Listen to the song 'Way Maker' by Leeland – youtu.be/jNa6lqem_f0. How might knowing the truths of God shown in this song help people persevere?
- Ask a Christian: how does God help you persevere?

Pray with the story

Perseverance can feel like a long and muddled journey. It can be like being in a maze: we can't see more than a few steps ahead and may not be at all sure about what choices to make or how to get out of it. We may feel lost or that we're going round in circles.

A labyrinth is like a maze, with one important difference: there is only one way through it so you can't get lost. You just must keep going.

When we persevere leaning on God, it's like being in a labyrinth instead of a maze. The journey may still be long and hard, but we can be confident that, even if we can't see the way ahead, God does and will be our guide and strength as we travel through the labyrinth. There is a way out, and God will help you get there.

Pray about your situation using a finger labyrinth. You can see a template for one here: urcenter-assets.upper-room.org/Finger+Labyrinth+Pattern.pdf, which you can copy or download.

Slowly trace the path through the labyrinth with your finger. As you do, chat to God about your situation, what you are persevering with, how it feels and what you need.

From time to time, pause and leave space and quiet to see if you can catch back what God says: maybe a word or picture in your mind, an idea or a feeling. Then continue your journey through the labyrinth, thanking God for being in this with you.

If you would like to create a more permanent finger labyrinth, glue your paper labyrinth to a piece of card. Spread glue over it and stick string along all the lines. Then cover it all with foil; the strings create ridges to mark the path.

Summing it all up

- Perseverance helps us keep going when things are tricky or tough.
- The wise men had to persevere on a long and difficult journey when they weren't sure where they were going or how it would end.
- God offers to help, guide and strengthen us when we have to persevere.
- When we remember and call on God, it helps us persevere and even thrive.

Next steps

If you are having to persevere with something at the moment, write down what it is and what you need. Make sure you can find that information later. Twice a week, maybe as you walk or have five minutes quiet at home, chat and catch with God about your situation. If you feel right about it, act on any suggestion you catch from God. In two months check out what you wrote. How have things changed?

Growing Christian Values

Take-away Sheet



Story summary



Something I will do with this story



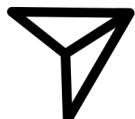
One thing you have learned about this story



One question I have for God about this story



What would I like to tell others about this story?



8 Courage

1 Samuel 17:2–11, 17, 20–22, 31b–50

King Saul and the Israelite army set up camp on a hill overlooking Elah Valley, and they got ready to fight the Philistine army that was on a hill on the other side of the valley.

The Philistine army had a hero named Goliath who was from the town of Gath and was about three meters tall. He wore a bronze helmet and had bronze armour to protect his chest and legs. The chest armour alone weighed about 57 kilograms. He carried a bronze sword strapped on his back, and his spear was so big that the iron spearhead alone weighed about seven kilograms. A soldier always walked in front of Goliath to carry his shield.

Goliath went out and shouted to the army of Israel:

Why are you lining up for battle? I'm the best soldier in our army, and all of you are in Saul's army. Choose your best soldier to come out and fight me! If he can kill me, our people will be your slaves. But if I kill him, your people will be our slaves. Here and now I challenge Israel's whole army! Choose someone to fight me!

Saul and his men heard what Goliath said, but they were so frightened of Goliath that they couldn't do a thing...

One day, Jesse told David, 'Hurry and take this sack of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread to your brothers at the army camp'...

David obeyed his father. He got up early the next morning and left someone else in charge of the sheep; then he loaded the supplies and started off. He reached the army camp just as the soldiers were taking their places and shouting the battle cry. The army of Israel and the Philistine army stood there facing each other.

David left his things with the man in charge of supplies and ran up to the battle line to ask his brothers if they were well...

Some soldiers overheard David talking, so they told Saul what David had said. Saul sent for David, and David came. 'Your Majesty,' he said, 'this Philistine shouldn't turn us into cowards. I'll go out and fight him myself!'

'You don't have a chance against him,' Saul replied.

'You're only a boy, and he's been a soldier all his life.'

But David told him:

Your Majesty, I take care of my father's sheep. And when one of them is dragged off by a lion or a bear, I go after it and beat the wild animal until it lets the sheep go. If the wild animal turns and attacks me, I grab it by the throat and kill it.

Sir, I have killed lions and bears that way, and I can kill this worthless Philistine. He shouldn't have made fun of the army of the living God! The Lord has rescued me from the claws of lions and bears, and he will keep me safe from the hands of this Philistine.

'All right,' Saul answered, 'go ahead and fight him. And I hope the Lord will help you.'

Saul had his own military clothes and armour put on David, and he gave David a bronze helmet to wear. David strapped on a sword and tried to walk around, but he was not used to wearing those things.

'I can't move with all this stuff on,' David said. 'I'm just not used to it.'

David took off the armour and picked up his shepherd's stick. He went out to a stream and picked up five smooth rocks and put them in his leather bag. Then with his sling in his hand, he went straight towards Goliath.

Goliath came towards David, walking behind the soldier who was carrying his shield. When Goliath saw that David was just a healthy, good-looking boy, he made fun of him. 'Do you think I'm a dog?' Goliath asked. 'Is that why you've come after me with a stick?' He cursed David in the name of the Philistine gods and shouted, 'Come on! When I'm finished with you, I'll feed you to the birds and wild animals!'

David answered:

You've come out to fight me with a sword and a spear and a dagger. But I've come out to fight you in the name of the Lord All-Powerful. He is the God of Israel's army, and you have insulted him too!

Today the Lord will help me defeat you. I'll knock you down and cut off your head, and I'll feed the bodies of the other Philistine soldiers to the birds and wild animals. Then the whole world will know that Israel has a real God. Everybody here will see that the Lord doesn't need swords or spears to

save his people. The Lord always wins his battles, and he will help us defeat you.

When Goliath started forward, David ran towards him. He put a rock in his sling and swung the sling around by its straps. When he let go of one strap, the rock flew out and hit Goliath on the forehead. It cracked his skull, and he fell facedown on the ground. David defeated Goliath with a sling and a rock. He killed him without even using a sword.

First thoughts on the story

We all have times when we have to be courageous. Sometimes it's because we are choosing to do something tricky or frightening, like abseiling from a high rock or changing jobs, and sometimes because we just find ourselves in a situation where we need to have courage: a family member is ill or there are funny noises in your house at night.

The dictionary defines courage as 'the strength to carry on in spite of danger or difficulty'. But where does that strength come from? Christians believe that their courage comes from knowing God: knowing who he is and knowing that he is with them, whatever will happen.

A long time ago, a man called Joshua stood looking over a vast country God had asked him to conquer. God said this to him:

I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the Lord your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.

JOSHUA 1:9

For Christians, knowing who God is as they face a court hearing or the result of a scan or when they find themselves in danger, makes all the difference. They find courage in knowing that God is the God of the universe, who is faithful and able to do mighty things and who loves them dearly. They also know that God has promised to be with them. They can rely on God's presence and guidance and know God's peace, whatever is going on. Jesus, although terribly anguished in the garden of Gethsemane, calmly chose to face the soldiers who would take him to his death, drawing courage from God's presence, knowing who God was and would be for him.

In the story of David and Goliath, we have a young man, with no protective equipment or weapons, going out to face a huge giant equipped with all the latest technology: scale armour, a bronze helmet and weapons and a shield made of iron and bronze. At first glance, David's decision to go out and fight seems foolhardy rather than courageous – perhaps a bit of young man's bravado.

As we read the story, we see though that David's courage is rooted in what he knows about God. Indeed, he tells Goliath:

You've come out to fight me with a sword and a spear and a dagger. But I've come out to fight you in the name of the Lord All-Powerful.

1 SAMUEL 17:45

David knows two important things about God: that God has rescued him from danger in the past and that God is with him. Goliath is relying on his own abilities and external protection to give him courage; in contrast David is relying solely on God's presence, guidance and power.

A few years later, David wrote Psalm 23, which contains these words:

I may walk through valleys
as dark as death,
but I won't be afraid.
You are with me,
and your shepherd's rod
makes me feel safe.

PSALM 23:4

The rod David referred to was a short stout stick shepherds used to defend their flocks; the staff was a longer stick with a crook used to guide the animals. Christians can draw on God for courage in every situation, confident that God will be there, faithful, close and tender as a shepherd, able to defend and guide them whatever the circumstance.

Play with the story

- Go out into the garden or go for a walk or go to a beach. Find five small stones. Write or draw on each of them one thing you know about God that will help you be courageous. For example: God will be with us; God is big; God's helped me; God loves me. Put the stones where you'll see them. Next time you need courage, why not slip one of the stones into your pocket and take it with you as a reminder that God is with you too?
- Play a game of five stones – maybe like David did when he was bored watching his sheep! This version is from India. Toss all five stones on to the ground. Then pick up one, throw it into the air and before you catch it, pick up another stone from the ground. Then throw these two stones in the air and pick up a third before catching the first two. Repeat until you have all five stones in your hand and to finish off, throw all five into the air and catch as many of them as you can safely!

- Watch *Finding Nemo* and enjoy a story of courage as Marlin sets out on the long journey to rescue his son. You can watch a short clip, in which Nemo shows great courage, at youtu.be/ulucJnxT7B4, or watch the whole film if you have it available to you.

Talk about the story

- What makes you afraid?
- Why do you think Saul allowed David to fight Goliath?
- What do you think God was doing as David walked out to fight Goliath?
- What's your favourite bit of the story? Why?
- Is there anything you need courage for? What do you know about God that might help you feel courageous?

Here's a question to spark conversation with your family or friends: who is the bravest person you know?

Dig deeper

- Watch the story of David and Goliath from Bible Bricks here – youtu.be/KAXcmFrmrD0.
- Discover the remarkable story of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, missionaries in Ecuador. Along with four other couples, Elisabeth and Jim were convinced that God wanted them to share the good news of Jesus with a notoriously dangerous indigenous tribe, the Huaorani. Jim and the four men went to visit the tribe and all five were killed by them, but despite the danger, Elisabeth chose to return to continue the work Jim and his friends started, along with her three-year-old daughter. There's a short video here – youtu.be/LFn5sdqzhJ8 – and a full-length film version *Beyond the Gates of Splendour*, based on Elisabeth's book *The Gates of Splendour*.
- Read the story of King Jehoshaphat, frightened by news of a great army approaching, in 2 Chronicles 20:1-29. In verses 6-12, we read Jehoshaphat's prayer. See if you can spot what the king knows about God that gives him the courage to face what was coming.
- Ask a Christian: when has God given you courage? What did he do? What did you do?

Pray with the story

When David walked out to fight Goliath, the giant could only see a small boy. But David knew he wasn't alone. He was walking side by side with God Almighty, who promises to be with us wherever we go.

Draw a small figure on a piece of paper. Then draw next to it a large figure. These figures represent you and God. Write underneath the two figures: 'The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'

As you look at the drawing, think about things coming up where you might need to have courage. You might want to list them. Chat to God about them. What do you need courage for? What would you like God to do or remind you about? Leave space for God to chat back, whether that's an impression, a picture, a word or a feeling.

If you would like to, leave the picture up, to remind yourself that even when no one else can see it, God has promised to be with those who choose to follow God.

Summing it all up

- We all need to be courageous sometimes, in big things and little things.
- Christians don't need to rely on their own strength or abilities to give them courage.
- For Christians, courage is about remembering who God is and what God's done.
- Christians can rely on God's faithfulness and presence to give them courage.

Next steps

Write out the verse from Joshua: 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go' (1:9, NIV).

If you have something scary coming up or know there's something you need courage for, write out the verse again, but this time substituting 'wherever you go' with whatever you need courage for: for example, '... will be with you at the dentist'.

Regularly read what you've written, asking God to help you feel that God is with you.

Growing Christian Values

Take-away Sheet



Story summary



Something I will do with this story



One thing you have learned about this story



One question I have for God about this story



What would I like to tell others about this story?



12 Patience

Genesis 15:1–6; 17:1, 4–5; 18:1–5, 10–15; 21:1–2

Later the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision, ‘Abram, don’t be afraid! I will protect you and reward you greatly.’

But Abram answered, ‘Lord All-Powerful, you have given me everything I could ask for, except children. And when I die, Eliezer of Damascus will get all I own. You have not given me any children, and this servant of mine will inherit everything.’

The Lord replied, ‘No, he won’t! You will have a son of your own, and everything you have will be his.’ Then the Lord took Abram outside and said, ‘Look at the sky and see if you can count the stars. That’s how many descendants you will have.’ Abram believed the Lord, so the Lord was pleased with him and accepted him...

When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him again and said, ‘I am God All-Powerful. If you obey me and always do right... I promise that you will be the father of many nations. So now I’m changing your name from Abram to Abraham’...

One hot summer afternoon while Abraham was sitting by the entrance to his tent near the sacred trees of Mamre, the Lord appeared to him. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He quickly ran to meet them, bowed with his face to the ground, and said, ‘Please come to my home where I can serve you. I’ll have some water brought, so you can wash your feet, then you can rest under a tree. Let me get you some food to give you strength before you leave. I would be honoured to serve you.’

‘Thank you very much,’ they answered. ‘We accept your offer’...

One of the guests was the Lord, and he said, ‘I’ll come back about this time next year, and when I do, Sarah will already have a son.’

Sarah was behind Abraham, listening at the entrance to the tent. Abraham and Sarah were very old, and Sarah was well past the age for having children. So she laughed and said to herself, ‘Now that I am worn out and my husband is old, will I really know such happiness?’

The Lord asked Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh?’

Does she doubt that she can have a child in her old age? I am the Lord! There is nothing too difficult for me. I’ll come back next year at the time I promised, and Sarah will already have a son.’

Sarah was so frightened that she lied and said, ‘I didn’t laugh.’

‘Yes, you did!’ he answered...

The Lord was good to Sarah and kept his promise. Although Abraham was very old, Sarah had a son exactly at the time God had said.

First thoughts on the story

It’s not easy being patient, is it? We have to be patient about many things. We may have to be patient with ourselves as we struggle with something or make mistakes. We may need to be patient with others, and we will sometimes have to be patient with our circumstances as we wait for things to change or to happen. Being patient isn’t easy – it’s not a coincidence that our word ‘patient’ comes from a Latin word meaning ‘to suffer’!

One dictionary defines patience like this: ‘The ability to wait, or to continue doing something despite difficulties, or to suffer without complaining or becoming annoyed.’ A shorter definition is this: to be prepared to wait for something good to happen.

Today’s story is taken from the very first book of the Bible and is about a man called Abraham and his wife Sarah. Although they’d been married for many years they didn’t have any children, and this worried them. What they didn’t know was that God had a plan for them – but they would need to be patient. And this story is all about that plan.

God’s plan was that Abraham and Sarah would have a family and through that family, many centuries later, God would save the world. It wasn’t until Abraham was 75 and Sarah 69 that God told them the first steps of the plan: they were going to have a son. And he would have children, and they would have children – until they had so many descendants their family would be like stars in the sky, so many you couldn’t count them! It must have seemed like an impossible dream for Abraham and Sarah, but after 25 long years their son Isaac was born, and God’s promise came true.

The Bible tells us that patience is one of the fruit of the Spirit:

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

GALATIANS 5:22–23 (NLT)

This means that Christians can look to God to grow patience in them. They know that as they learn to love God better, to allow God to shape their hearts and minds, they will change. They can be more patient because they know that God has promised to help us in all circumstances. He promises to help us when we are tempted to be angry or impatient; he promises to comfort us when we are sad or despondent; he promises to be with us in everything we are going through. And as they learn to trust God more and more, waiting for things to change becomes easier.

One of the things that helps Christians is knowing that when we can't understand what's going on in the world or in our lives, God does. Paul says:

Now all we can see of God
is like a cloudy picture
in a mirror.
Later we will see him
face to face.
We don't know everything,
but then we will,
just as God completely
understands us.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

Paul reminds us that in this world our brains just aren't able to understand everything – but God does. When it's hard to be patient, we can remember, as Abraham and Sarah did, that God is a good God who loves us and that he knows what is going on.

Christians today believe they can trust God because he hasn't forgotten them and has good plans for them. Hundreds of years after Abraham and Sarah, a prophet called Jeremiah had a message from God for his people who were refugees in another country.

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'

JEREMIAH 29:11

We can't always see those good plans. Remembering the story of Abraham and Sarah can encourage us that even though patience may be hard, as we wait, God is never far away and if we lean on him, it will become easier.

Play with the story

- Look at a seed (one from an apple or a flower in the garden). It is so tiny, but full of hope. Plant the seed either outside or in a pot as a reminder that even when we can't see God working, he is, and one day, if we are patient, we will see a tiny green leaf sprouting. How long will it take before you see that green leaf?
- Do a jigsaw puzzle together. When you start a puzzle, the pieces don't make sense. It's only as we join them up that we begin to see the picture. Sometimes when we are waiting for something good, we can't see how it's going to happen but have to trust that God has good plans for us.
- Play the one-minute challenge to help you all practise patience! Set a timer to 90 seconds and ask everyone to put their hand up when they think one minute is up. After 90 seconds has passed, the winner is whoever put their hand up closest to the 60 second mark.

Talk about the story

- 1 What's the longest you've ever had to wait for something? Why did you wait? What helped you?
- 2 Do you think Abraham and Sarah were always patient while they were waiting for their son to be born? Are there any clues in the Bible story about what might have helped them?
- 3 What did you notice about God in this story?
- 4 What good plans do you think God has for you?
- 5 How has God grown patience in you already?

Here's a question to spark a conversation with your family or friends: who is the most patient person you know?

Dig deeper

- Watch this version of the story, told by Hillsong Kids – youtu.be/-rrcqpgEoug.
- Read the story of the widow and the unjust judge in Luke 18:1–8. What does the story say about patience? What does it say about God?
- Watch this famous test of children's patience – youtu.be/QX_oy9614HQ. Could you be patient enough to win the extra marshmallow? What helps you be patient? Could God help you be patient?
- Ask a Christian: how does God help you be patient?

Pray with the story

Abraham and Sarah had a long wait for their son to be born and had to be patient for 25 years. That isn't easy. Maybe every time they looked at the stars they remembered God's promise or maybe they kept reminding each other that God wouldn't forget them. We need God's help to be patient sometimes.

Write down three things you or your family need help to be patient for as you wait for them.

- Something small, that might happen soon.
- Something bigger, that you will have to wait for.
- Something that feels impossible – that you think may never happen.

Chat to God about each one of these. Tell God how you feel as you wait, what you need patience for and for signs of hope. Don't forget to leave space and quiet to see if you can catch back what God says: maybe a word or picture in your head, an idea or a feeling.

Summing it all up

- Patience is being prepared to wait for something good to happen – and God has good things for us all.
- This story is about how God has good plans for us and doesn't forget us, even when we can't see those good things.
- It's not always easy to be patient, but we can ask God to help us.
- When we remember God has good plans for us, loves us and hears us, it helps us to be patient.

Next steps

Ask everyone to choose something they know they need to be more patient about. Write down the good things that will happen if they are more patient. Every day for a week, chat to God about being more patient – and see what happens.

Growing Christian Values

Take-away Sheet



Story summary



Something I will do with this story



One thing you have learned about this story



One question I have for God about this story



What would I like to tell others about this story?

