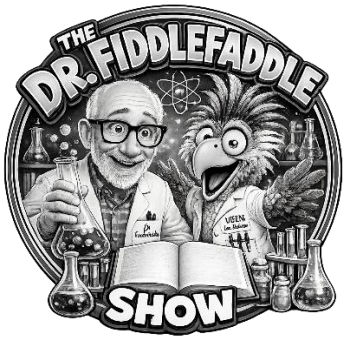


Back to the Bible

Lesson 7: The Case of the Missing Promise

Bible Account: Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and God's promised son
Primary Scripture: Genesis 21:1–3 (KJV)
Supporting Scripture: Genesis 12:1–3; Genesis 15:1–6; Genesis 16:1–16; Genesis 17:15–21; Genesis 18:1–14
Principle: God Always Keeps His Promises.
Memory Verse: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." — 1 Thessalonians 5:24 (KJV)
Additional Truth: "God that cannot lie, promised…" — Titus 1:2 (KJV)

1. LESSON OVERVIEW

The Big Idea

Sometimes God makes a promise, but we don't see how He could possibly keep it. We may begin to wonder:
"Did God forget?"
"Why is it taking so long?"
"Maybe I need to help God."
That is exactly the kind of situation Abraham and Sarah faced. God had promised Abraham that he would have a son and that through his family God would fulfill His greater promise. But years passed. Abraham and Sarah grew older, and the promised son still had not come. Sarah eventually decided that she and Abraham needed to **take matters into their own hands**. But God's promise didn't disappear. God had not forgotten. God had not changed His mind. God had not made a mistake. **God was waiting for His perfect time.** And when God's appointed time came, Isaac was born. The "missing promise" wasn't really missing at all! **God always keeps His promises.**

2. TEACHER'S OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students should understand:

1. **God makes promises and keeps them.**
2. God's timing may be different from our timing.
3. Waiting can be difficult, especially when we cannot see what God is doing.
4. Trying to make God's promises happen our way can create problems.
5. We can trust God even when we don't understand His plan.
6. God cannot lie.
7. God's faithfulness does not depend upon what we can see.

Teacher's Key Statement

Have the children repeat: **"If God promised it, God will do it!"**
Then: **"God always keeps His promises!"**

3. OPENING: THE CASE OF THE MISSING PROMISE

Begin by telling the children: “Today we're going to investigate a very unusual case. It's called **The Case of the Missing Promise.**”
Ask: **“Have you ever been promised something and then had to wait for it?”**

Examples:

- Waiting for Christmas
- Waiting for a birthday
- Waiting for a special trip
- Waiting for something you ordered
- Waiting for a special event

Ask: **“What happens when you have to wait a LONG time?”**
Allow answers. Then say: “Sometimes when we wait a long time, we begin to wonder if the promise is really going to happen.”
Introduce the Bible case: “Abraham and Sarah had received a promise from God. But they waited…and waited…and waited. Eventually, they couldn't see how God's promise could possibly happen.”

Investigation Question

“What do you do when you can't see God's promise happening?”
Tell the children: “That's what we're going to investigate today.”

4. THE PROMISE

Read Genesis 12:1–3 God told Abram that He would make of him a great nation and bless him.

Explain: Abraham wasn't just promised a baby. God was beginning a much bigger plan. God promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation, and through Abraham's family God would bring blessing to the nations.

Teacher Point

God's promises are connected to God's plan. Sometimes we can see only **one little piece** of what God is doing. God sees the whole picture.

5. THE WAIT

Read Genesis 15:1–6

God reminded Abraham that he would have a son. Abraham believed God. But time passed. And more time passed. And still there was no son. Sarah was getting older. Abraham was getting older. From a human perspective, the situation looked impossible.

Ask: “Did God forget His promise?”
Answer: No!
“Did God's promise expire?”
Answer: No!
“Was God unable to keep His promise?”
Answer: No!
Then emphasize: **God was not late. God was working according to His plan.**

6. SARAH TAKES MATTERS INTO HER OWN HANDS

Read Genesis 16:1–4

Sarah became discouraged. She could not see how God's promise was going to happen. So Sarah came up with her own solution. She gave Hagar to Abraham, and Hagar had a son named Ishmael.

Important Teaching Point

Sarah's desire for God's promise was not the problem. The problem was **trying to accomplish God's promise her own way**. This is an important lesson for children. Sometimes we say: "God isn't doing anything, so I'll do it myself." But there is a difference between **trusting God** and **trying to make God work according to our schedule.**

Teacher Illustration

You might say: "Imagine that someone tells you, 'I have a special surprise for you. Wait until Saturday.' But on Wednesday you decide, 'I don't want to wait. I'll make my own surprise!'"
Ask: **"Would that be trusting the person who made the promise?"** No.
Then explain: "God doesn't need us to take over His plan. He wants us to trust Him."

7. GOD REPEATS THE PROMISE

Read Genesis 17:15–21

God specifically told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. His name would be **Isaac**. This is important because God made it clear that **Isaac was the child through whom God's covenant promise would continue.** God knew exactly what He was doing. Sarah couldn't see it. Abraham couldn't see it. But God could.

8. SARAH HEARS THE IMPOSSIBLE

Read Genesis 18:10–14

God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. Sarah laughed because she couldn't imagine how it could happen. She was old. The situation seemed impossible. Then God asked: **"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"**

Teacher Question "Is anything too hard for God?"
Children: **"NO!"**
Repeat it several times. Then say: "What looks impossible to us is not impossible to God."

9. THE PROMISE ARRIVES

Now we reach the most important part of the investigation.

Read Genesis 21:1–3 "And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken." **— Genesis 21:1 (KJV)**
Then Isaac was born.

STOP HERE FOR EMPHASIS.

Say: "Do you remember our mystery?" **"The Case of the Missing Promise."** Ask: **"Was the promise really missing?"**
Children: **"NO!"**
Ask: **"Did God forget?" "NO!"**
Ask: **"Did God fail?" "NO!"**
Ask: **"What happened?" "God kept His promise!"**

10. THE GREAT LESSON

Genesis 21:1 contains a powerful phrase: **"as he had said"**
and: **"as he had spoken."** God said it. God did it. That's the lesson.

Write on the board: GOD SAID IT → GOD DID IT
Then underneath: **GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES.**

11. MEMORY VERSE

1 Thessalonians 5:24 (KJV) “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

Break the verse into three parts:

1. “Faithful is he…”

Who is faithful? **God!** God doesn't change. God doesn't forget. God doesn't lie.

2. “…that calleth you…”

God is the One who calls us. He has a purpose for our lives.

3. “…who also will do it.”

This is the exciting part. God doesn't just make promises. **God does what He says He will do.**

12. SUPPORTING VERSE: GOD CANNOT LIE

Titus 1:2 (KJV) “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”

Ask: **“Can God lie?”** No! Why? Because the Bible says God **cannot lie**. Therefore: If God says something will happen, can we trust Him? **YES!**

13. WAITING DOES NOT MEAN GOD FORGOT

This is one of the most important concepts for children to understand.

Write: WAITING ≠ FORGOTTEN

Explain: “When God makes us wait, that doesn't mean He has forgotten us.” Sometimes: **Waiting means God is working.** Sometimes: **Waiting means God's timing is different from ours.** Sometimes: **Waiting teaches us to trust Him.** And sometimes we may never understand all the reasons for God's timing. But we can always trust **God's character.**

14. WHEN WE WANT TO TAKE CONTROL

Ask the children: “Have you ever wanted something so badly that you thought, ‘I'll just do it myself’?” Explain that this can happen spiritually too. We might pray: “God, please do this.” Then when nothing seems to happen, we think: “I guess God isn't going to do it.” But the correct response is: **“I don't understand what God is doing, but I can trust Him.”**

Three Choices When we are waiting on God:

1. WORRY

“I don't know what will happen!”

2. TAKE CONTROL

“I'll make it happen myself!”

3. TRUST GOD

“God knows what He is doing.”

Teach the children:

God wants us to choose TRUST.

15. CLASSROOM OBJECT LESSON

The Sealed Promise

Take an envelope and write on it: GOD'S PROMISE Place a piece of paper inside. Tell the children: “Suppose I gave you this envelope and told you there was a promise inside.” Ask: **“Could you see the promise?”** No. **“Would that mean there was nothing inside?”** No.

Explain: “Sometimes God's promises are like that. We can't see what God is doing yet. But not seeing it doesn't mean God isn't working.” Open the envelope. Say: “Faith means trusting God even when we can't see the whole picture.”

16. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Understanding the Story

1. Who received God's promise?
2. What did God promise Abraham?
3. Why did Sarah become discouraged?
4. What did Sarah try to do?
5. What was the name of Abraham and Sarah's promised son?
6. Was God's promise really missing?
7. Did God forget Abraham and Sarah?
8. Did God keep His promise?
9. What does Titus 1:2 tell us about God?
10. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:24 tell us about God's faithfulness?

Application Questions

11. What should we do when we have to wait?
12. Why is it sometimes hard to trust God?
13. What happens when we try to take control instead of trusting God?
14. Can we trust God even when we don't understand?
15. What promise of God can you think of?

17. IMPORTANT APPLICATION

Tell the children: “You may have to wait for something you are praying about. You may not understand why God hasn't answered yet. You may wonder if God has forgotten.” Then say: **“Remember Abraham and Sarah.”** They waited. They wondered. They tried to solve the problem themselves. But eventually they discovered something important: GOD HAD NOT FORGOTTEN. God kept His promise. Then point to the memory verse: **“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”**

18. CHILDREN'S TAKE-HOME TRUTH

Have the children say this together: **God's promises don't have expiration dates.** Then: **God's promises don't get lost.** Then: **God doesn't forget His promises.** Finally: **GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES!**

19. MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Break 1 Thessalonians 5:24 into motions.
“Faithful” — point upward.
“is he” — point upward again.
“that calleth you” — point toward the children.
“who also” — hold up two fingers.
“will do it” — make a strong fist and tap the other hand.
Repeat several times.
Then remove one phrase at a time until the children can say the entire verse from memory.

20. FIDDLEFADDLE FUN FACT

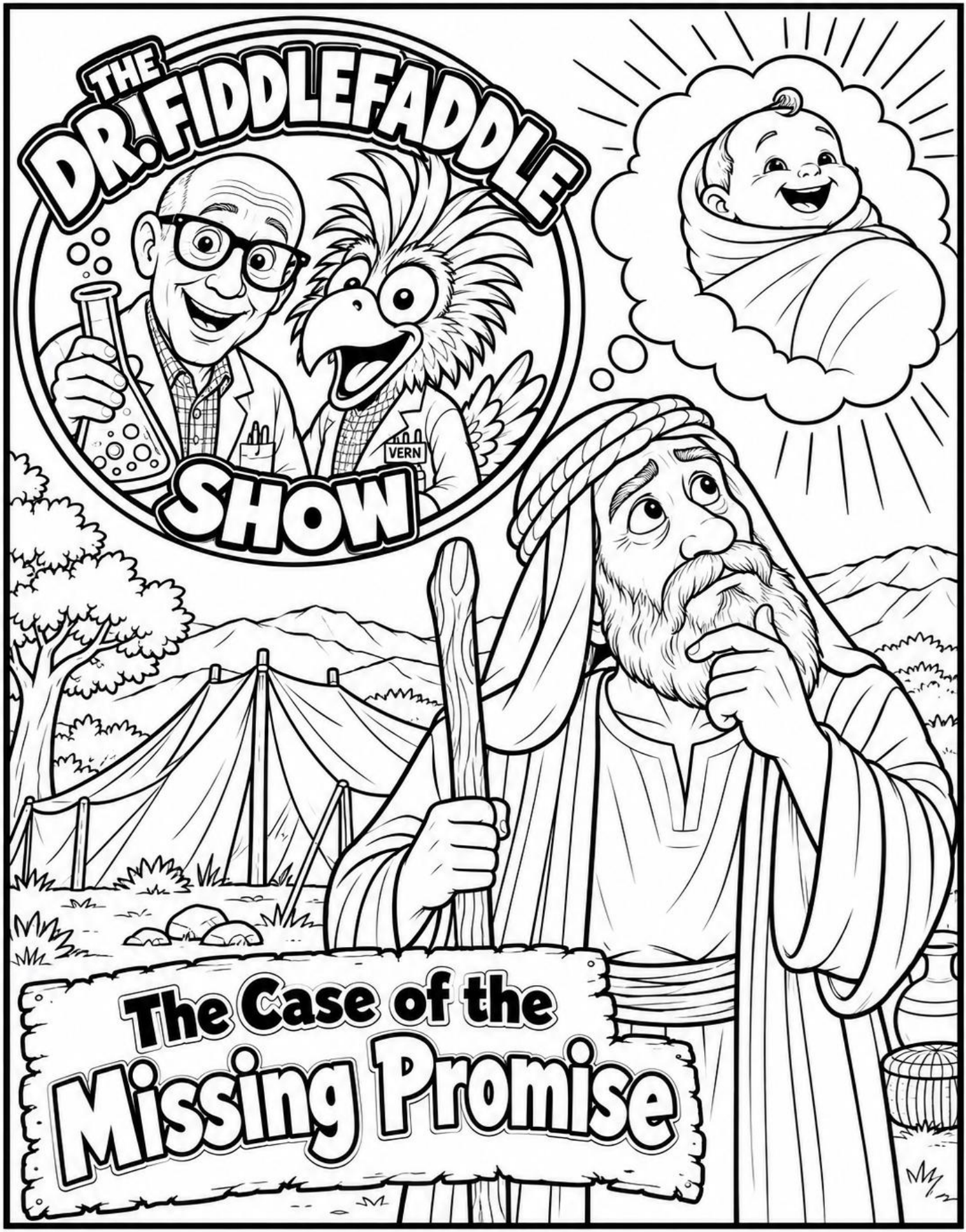
Mystery Question: “What was missing from God's promise?”
Answer: **NOTHING!** The promise wasn't missing. **The people were simply waiting for God's timing.**

21. CLOSING CHALLENGE

Tell the children: “This week, whenever you have to wait for something, remember Abraham and Sarah.” Then teach them this simple sentence:
“I CAN'T SEE IT YET, BUT I CAN TRUST GOD.”
Have the entire class repeat it. Then: **“God always keeps His promises!”**

22. CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank You that You are faithful and that You always keep Your promises. Help us to trust You when we have to wait. Help us not to take matters into our own hands when we cannot see what You are doing. Help us remember that You cannot lie and that You always do what You say. Help us to have faith like Abraham and to trust Your timing. Thank You for Your greatest promise, Jesus Christ, and for the hope we have through Him. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**


THE DR. FIDDLEFADDLE SHOW
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The Case of the Missing Promise