God Calls Abraham

Monday (1st-4th grade)

“...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

-Genesis 12:3b

Activity (12-15 min.)

Deactivate the Bombs!

**You will need:** 15 black balloons, already inflated. One contains the secret code, another contains the cipher. Whiteboard/Chalkboard.

**Mission:** Kids deactivate the bombs by popping the balloons. When the cipher and secret code are found, teacher writes the secret code on the whiteboard large enough that the kids could see from their seats. Kids continue to deactivate the bombs. Once all balloons are popped, the kids work together to figure out what the code says. Pass out extra ciphers for larger groups. [*Teacher’s hint: Be aware that if the kids take too long, they may lose interest. Help them decode the message when they need it by giving them clues or filling in certain letters for them.*]

**Code**: ZYIZSZN YOVHHVW LGSVIH

**Answer**: “Abraham Blessed Others”

Storytelling (5 min.)

Genesis 18:1-8

**Say:** “Now that we know the secret code, let’s recall how Abraham Blessed Others. A long time ago there was a man named Abraham. He lived all the way on the other side of the world, and one day, God appeared to him in a vision. God told Abraham that he and his wife Sarah would have as many descendants as there are stars up in the sky, but this seemed crazy because they were so old! God called them to be special agents that change the world, and God promised them that all of the families in the whole wide world would be blessed because of Abraham and his family. God called Abraham to be a special agent by treating other people the way that God wanted them to be treated, and Abraham said YES! One day, as Abraham was resting beneath some shady trees, three traveling men walked up to his home. He did not recognize these men, but he decided that since it was so hot, they needed some water and food. He and Sarah invited them in, gave them water, and prepared them a meal.”

Questions (5-10 min.)

1. Who do you think the three mystery men were? [*Angels in disguise; undercover angels*]

2. What did Sarah and Abraham do to make the strangers feel welcome? [*Prepared them a meal; invited them into their home; gave them water*]

3. Tell me about a time when someone made you feel welcome. [*Teacher’s hint: let their imaginations wander. If they are having a hard time coming up with something, suggest a simple time in your life that you felt welcome.*]

4. What does it mean to bless someone? [*Take care of their needs over your wants; be polite; treat them the way you would want to be treated; sit with someone lonely at lunch; invite someone to play with your friends; etc. Teacher’s hint: encourage specific answers.*]

5. Who can you bless today? [*parents; siblings; friends; the VBS leaders; a stranger; etc.*]

6. How will you bless someone this week? [*Teacher’s hint: brainstorm fun ways to be a blessing to others then dare them to do at least two of them before they leave VBS today.*]

Memory Verse and Secret Code (5 min.)

**Mission:** Spend some time reciting the memory verse and secret code. Break up the verse into sections. Say a section, then have the kids repeat what you said. Put the sections altogether and give them time to repeat the entire verse back to you. As age appropriate, add hand motions to aid in memory.

**Memory Verse:** “...and in you // all the families of the earth // shall be blessed.”

**Secret Code:** “Abraham Blessed Others”

Prayer Circle

**Mission**: Form a circle with the kids, holding hands. Explain what a prayer circle is. Teacher opens with a small prayer, and squeezes the person’s hand to his/her right. Each child has a chance to pray, and once he/she is done, a squeeze of the hand passes the prayer to the next child. If a child does not want to pray out loud, encourage him/her to pray silently then squeeze the next one’s hand. Close the prayer circle with the following prayer.

**Say**: “God, thank you that you called Abraham to welcome others. Help us to answer your call for us to be a blessing to others also. We love you and want to serve you. Amen.”

God Calls Moses

Tuesday (1st-4th grade)

“Now go; I will help you speak and teach you what to say.”

Exodus 4:12

Activity (12-15 min.)

Target Practice

**You will need:** Secret Code Cards (laminated, if possible); sticky tack (or tacks/nails with a bulletin board); 2 small balls (if a ball is unavailable, crumple up a piece of paper). Attach the cards to the wall, blank side facing out; if using tacks/nails, punch holes at the top of the Secret Code Cards for easy access. If the class is large, split up into teams and compete with two sets of cards and balls.

**Mission:** Agents get target practice by tossing the ball at the letters on the wall. Agents stand in line and take turns throwing the ball at the wall from a specific point. When an agent hits a letter, the teacher turns it over and attaches it back to the wall. Once all the letters are turned over (indicated by the red letters), the kids will have decoded the message! [*Teacher’s hint: If the target practice is too easy, have the kids toss the ball from a further point away from the target. If it is too difficult, let them take a step forward.*]

**Code**: TLW SVOKVW NLHVH

**Answer**: “God Helped Moses”

Storytelling (5 min.)

Exodus 3:1-12

**Say:** “Now that we know the secret code, let’s recall how God Helped Moses. Moses had grown up in Egypt but left the country and settled in a different area. He left his people there, the Israelites, who were slaves to the Egyptians. One day, as Moses was working in the mountains as a shepherd, he saw something very mysterious. He saw a suspicious bush that was on fire, but as he got closer to the bush, he realized that the fire was not burning up the bush! When he got very close, a voice called out from the bush--God’s voice! God told Moses that God had heard the cries of the Israelites in slavery. God does not like when people are being mistreated, and the Egyptians were mistreating the Israelites. God had a mission for Moses: go BACK to Egypt and rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. At first, Moses didn’t want to go. He made up all sorts of excuses: he wasn’t a good speaker, and he didn’t think he was the right guy for the job. He was afraid that he would fail. But God promised to be with Moses, teaching him what to say and what to do along the way. God called Moses to be a special agent by helping the Israelites escape slavery in Egypt, and Moses said YES! So Moses left his family and traveled back to Egypt, where he insisted that the Pharaoh (king of Egypt) let the Israelites leave. Pharaoh was stubborn, so Moses faced all sorts of obstacles. The whole time, God was with Moses teaching him what to say and what to do at the right time. This mission was a long one, but eventually Pharaoh let the Israelites leave. But as they left, Pharaoh changed his mind, and his army chased the Israelites all the way to the Red Sea! It seemed like the Israelites were trapped! But God kept the promise: God was with Moses and helped him. God parted the Red Sea, and the Israelites crossed safely on dry ground.”

Questions (5-10 min.)

1. Why did God want Moses to go back to Egypt? [*To free the Israelites from slavery; because God doesn’t like it when people treat others badly; etc.*]

*2. Why do you think Moses didn’t want to go back to Egypt? [He was scared; he didn’t think he could do what God asked him to do; he wasn’t a good speaker; he didn’t want to leave his family; etc.*]

3. What did God promise to Moses? [*That God would be there for Moses; God would be with him and teach him what to say; God would guide Moses; etc.*]

4. God always wants us to do the right thing. Is the right thing always the easy thing to do? [*Teacher’s hint: most kids will say no, but some may say they find it easy to do the right thing. That’s great! The following question will allow the kids time to explain their answer and give examples.*]

5. Why or why not?

4. When do you use excuses to get out of something? [*Teacher’s hint: allow time for silly answers like how they avoid cleaning their room or doing their homework, but also guide them to think about deeper issues like sticking up for a kid being bullied or telling white lies to get out of trouble (etc.).*]

5. Tell me about a time you chose to do the right thing. [*Teacher’s hint: praise the kids for doing the right thing. Allow conversations about how God helped them make good decisions, if the answers lead that way.*]

6. God promises to be with us just like God promised to be with Moses. How will you choose to do the right thing today? [*Remember God is with us; pray when I need to decide between right and wrong; recite our secret code and memory verse; pray for God’s help and guidance; etc.*]

Memory Verse and Secret Code (5 min.)

**Mission:** Spend some time reciting the memory verse and secret code. Break up the verse into sections. Say a section, then have the kids repeat what you said. Put the sections altogether and give them time to repeat the entire verse back to you. As age appropriate, add hand motions to aid in memory.

**Memory Verse:** “Now go. /// I will help you speak /// and teach you what to say.”

**Secret Code:** “God Helped Moses”

Prayer Circle

**Mission**: Form a circle with the kids, holding hands. Explain what a prayer circle is. Teacher opens with a small prayer, and squeezes the person’s hand to his/her right. Each child has a chance to pray, and once he/she is done, a squeeze of the hand passes the prayer to the next child. If a child does not want to pray out loud, encourage him/her to pray silently then squeeze the next one’s hand. Close the prayer circle with the following prayer.

**Say**: “God, thank you that you called Moses to free the Israelites from slavery, and thank you that you helped Moses when things got difficult. Help us to answer your call for us to do the right thing, even when it’s hard. Help us to remember that you are always with us. We love you and want to serve you. Amen.”

God Calls Esther

Wednesday (1st-4th grade)

“Perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.” -Esther 4:14

Activity (12-15 min.)

Deactivate the Bombs!

**You will need:** Tape (preferably blue painter’s or Duct tape); Secret Code Cards; Mine Cards; bean bags or balls. Create a 7 x 7 grid on the floor with the tape. In each square, tape either a Secret Code Card or a Mine Card to the floor.

**Mission:** Agents collect the Secret Code Cards to decode the secret message. Kids take turns tossing a bean bag on the Minefield. If it lands on a Secret Code Card, the kid collects the card; it it lands on a Mine card, he/she must do 5 jumping jacks and go to the end of the line. Once all of the Secret Code Cards are collected, agents work together to unscramble the letters and decode the message. [*Teacher’s hint: Be aware that if the kids take too long, they may lose interest. Help them decode the message when they need it by giving them clues or filling in certain letters for them.*]

**Code**: VHGSVI HZEVW SVI KVLKOV

**Answer**: “Esther Saved Her People”

Storytelling (5 min.)

Book of Esther

**Say:** “Now that we know the secret code, let’s recall how Esther Saved Her People. The king at this time was named Xerxes, and he decided to find the most beautiful woman to be his wife. He ordered that the most beautiful ones be brought to his palace, where they competed in a beauty pageant. Esther was a Jew who was brought to the palace to compete, but nobody knew she was a Jew. This is important because many people at that time hated the Jews. Esther ended up winning and became King Xerxes’ wife! Now the king had a helper named Haman who hated the Jews so much that he convinced the king to make a law that would end up killing every Jew in the land! Remember: nobody knew that Esther was a Jew. Esther had a cousin named Mordecai who told her about the law and begged her to talk the king out of killing the Jews. He said to her, “Perhaps you have been made Queen so that you can do good!” She knew that God was calling her to save her people; she had the power to influence the king to do good instead of bad, so she crafted a plan. She invited the king on a date and cooked him a nice meal. She told him that she had something to ask him, but only after they had dinner a couple of nights in a row. Then she finally revealed to him that she was a Jew, and begged him not to follow through with Haman’s plan. When the king heard her story, he decided not to kill the Jews, and he even blessed Mordecai, Esther’s Jewish cousin, and punished Haman. Esther was called to save her people, and she said yes to God’s call!

Questions (5-10 min.)

1. What was Haman’s plan? [*get King Xerxes to destroy the Jewish people]*

2. What did Esther do to save her people? *[she convinced the king by “buttering him up” with a good meal and giving him compliments; she told him the truth; she waited until the right time to ask the king for something; she revealed her true identity as a Jew to him; etc.]*

3. What gave Esther the courage to face the king and help the Jews? *[the fact that she knew God was with her; Mordecai’s encouragement; she knew that she was in a position of great power and could make a big difference in a good way; etc.]*

4. How do you think God feels when people are being hurt by others? *[Teacher’s hint: this could evoke some emotional stories from the kids about times that they may have seen others being hurt, or they could begin telling stories of when they themselves have been hurt. Allow them to talk about it; this is a safe place. If a child tells a story about any kind of abuse, report what the child said to the VBS director.]*

5. What do you think God calls you to do when you see others being hurt? *[Teacher’s hint: the obvious and easy answer is “help them.” Press the kids further than this. How do we help those being hurt or in need?]*

6. What can you do to help others, no matter where you live? *[Teacher’s hint: allow the kids to brainstorm here; no answer is too extravagant. Ask follow up questions about their ideas.]*

Memory Verse and Secret Code (5 min.)

**Mission:** Spend some time reciting the memory verse and secret code. Break up the verse into sections. Say a section, then have the kids repeat what you said. Put the sections altogether and give them time to repeat the entire verse back to you. As age appropriate, add hand motions to aid in memory.

**Memory Verse:** “Perhaps you have come /// to the kingdom /// for such a time as this.”

**Secret Code:** “Esther Saved Her People”

Prayer Circle

**Mission**: Form a circle with the kids, holding hands. Explain what a prayer circle is. Teacher opens with a small prayer, and squeezes the person’s hand to his/her right. Each child has a chance to pray, and once he/she is done, a squeeze of the hand passes the prayer to the next child. If a child does not want to pray out loud, encourage him/her to pray silently then squeeze the next one’s hand. Close the prayer circle with the following prayer.

**Say**: “God, thank you that you called Esther to help save her people. Help us to answer your call to do good for others wherever we may be. We love you and want to serve you. Amen.”

God Calls Mary and Mary

Thursday (1st-4th grade)

“Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead.’” -Matthew 28:7a

Activity (12-15 min.)

Invisible Message

**You will need:** Pre-prepared poster boards (2-4 per class) with “invisible” message (painted on white poster with ¼ cup baking soda and ¼ cup water); grape juice concentrate; paintbrushes; tape to attach butcher paper to the table. Depending on numbers, you may want a few extra poster messages available. *Variation: One poster could have the uncoded message, while another would be the decoded message.*

**Mission:** Kids uncover the invisible message by painting the poster with grape juice; the baking soda/water mixture will remain unpainted, and the message will appear against the grape juice.

**Code**: QVHFH RH ZOREV!

**Answer**: “Jesus is Alive!”

Storytelling (5 min.)

Matthew 28:1-7

**Say:** “Now that we know the secret code, let’s talk about how we know that Jesus is Alive. Jesus was a man who preached God’s love to everyone, not just the rich and beautiful. Jesus healed many sick people, and he forgave others when they made bad choices. He taught others that they should love everyone, and that we are all children of God. But some people didn’t like that message because they thought that some people didn’t deserve to be treated fairly. Because so many people loved and followed Jesus around, the Roman government killed Jesus. They had him beaten, and crucified. Crucified means that they nailed him to two wood beams made in the shape of a cross. He hung on the cross until he died. This was on a Friday. His friends took him down from the cross after he died, placed him in a cave as his burial place, and rolled a huge and heavy stone over the entrance so nobody could get in. On the third day that Jesus was dead (on Sunday), his two friends named Mary and Mary went to his tomb to give him a proper Jewish burial. But when they got there, there was a violent earthquake and the huge stone rolled away from the cave. That wasn’t the strangest thing that happened, though; when they looked into the tomb, Jesus’ body was gone! They began to panic, but then an angel appeared to them and told them that Jesus was alive; he had risen from the dead! The angel told them to go back and tell the rest of Jesus’ friends that he is alive. Mary and Mary were called by God to tell the good news that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they said yes! This is still good news for us today because Jesus is still alive, and he lives inside us. His message of love for all people no matter what is bigger than death itself; Jesus overcame the grave so that we can experience God’s love and spread it to others.

Questions (5-10 min.)

1. Why were Mary and Mary at Jesus’ tomb on Sunday? *[to give him a proper burial; to check on his body; to make sure nobody stole his body; etc.]*

2. Why do you think they were surprised to find the tomb empty? *[dead people usually stay dead; dead people don’t move on their own; they expected to find his body there; etc.]*

3. What was the important message that Mary and Mary were supposed to tell the others? *[Jesus is alive! Jesus has risen from the dead; Jesus has returned; Jesus defeated death; the tomb is empty; etc.]*

4. Why do you think God chose Mary and Mary to tell the good news that Jesus is alive? *[Teacher’s hint: there may not be a correct answer here. Let the kids’ imaginations run wild. Were the Marys good followers? Was it just a coincidence? Did they get lucky? Did God know they would say yes? Were they good listeners and obeyed God usually? Did God choose them to show others that God chooses all types of people?]*

5. Why did it matter that Jesus was alive again? Why does it matter to us? *[this means that Jesus defeated death; Jesus’ message was so big and important that it won over death; it means that Jesus is still alive today; we can still celebrate Jesus’ resurrection; etc.]*

6. How do we know that Jesus is alive today? Where is he? What is he doing? *[Teacher’s hint: encourage the kids to brainstorm times that they see God’s love in the world. Any time there is love, acceptance, forgiveness, and mercy, that’s how we know Jesus is alive. Explain to them that when we see God’s love, we see Jesus in the world.]*

7. How will you share the message that Jesus is alive with your friends and family today? *[Teacher’s hint: dare them to share Jesus’ love with someone today; what will they do to show that love? Let them brainstorm!]*

Memory Verse and Secret Code (5 min.)

**Mission:** Spend some time reciting the memory verse and secret code. Break up the verse into sections. Say a section, then have the kids repeat what you said. Put the sections altogether and give them time to repeat the entire verse back to you. As age appropriate, add hand motions to aid in memory.

**Memory Verse:** “Then go quickly /// and tell his disciples, /// ‘He has been raised /// from the dead.’”

**Secret Code:** “Jesus is Alive”

Prayer Circle

**Mission**: Form a circle with the kids, holding hands. Explain what a prayer circle is. Teacher opens with a small prayer, and squeezes the person’s hand to his/her right. Each child has a chance to pray, and once he/she is done, a squeeze of the hand passes the prayer to the next child. If a child does not want to pray out loud, encourage him/her to pray silently then squeeze the next one’s hand. Close the prayer circle with the following prayer.

**Say**: “God, thank you that you called Mary and Mary to tell the good news that Jesus is alive. Help us to answer your call for us to spread the good news of your love. We love you and want to serve you. Amen.”

God Calls You

Friday (1st-4th grade)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...And remember, I am with you always, to the end.”

-Matthew 28:19-20

Activity (12-15 min.)

Spread the Word

**You will need:** A quiet room; listening ears.

**Mission:** Kids sit in a circle. Explain that you have been given the answer to the secret code presented at the beginning of the day, but it’s so secret that you have to whisper it. In order to make sure everyone knows the code, the teacher whispers to the person to his/her right, then that person passes the secret code on to the next person, until each child has heard it. The last person who has heard the code announces to the group what the code is. [*Teacher’s hint: Explain the game, then play a couple of practice rounds before you pass the secret code around. Laugh if the phrase is not quite the same at the end, and point out how quick the phrase changed when everyone was whispering. Possible phrases: Jesus loves you; Twinkle, twinkle, little star; Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands; etc.*]

**Code**: TLW XZOOH NV

**Answer**: “God Calls Me”

Storytelling (5 min.)

Matthew 28:16-20

**Say:** “Now that we know the secret code, let’s find out how God Calls You. Yesterday we learned about Mary and Mary when they found Jesus’ tomb empty. This is Good News because that means Jesus is alive! After Mary and Mary went and told the disciples the Good News, the disciples went up on a mountain and waited for Jesus to meet them there. When Jesus showed up, I bet they celebrated, don’t you think?! The disciples were so excited to see Jesus because they had spent the past three years following him and spreading the Good News of God’s love to all people with him. But then Jesus told them that he was leaving again. This time, it wouldn’t be death, but he was going back up into heaven. I bet the disciples were really sad, don’t you think? But Jesus told them that they would not be alone, and then he called them. Just like God called Abraham, Moses, Esther, and Mary and Mary, Jesus called his friends--his disciples, or followers. He called them to go out to the whole world and teach the Good News. He called them to spread God’s love to every person on earth and to help them become followers of Jesus too. Then Jesus promised them that he would always be with them and always give them help to complete such a difficult mission! Here’s the cool part: we are called to do the same thing. Jesus continues to call people to be his followers and to spread God’s love to everyone they meet. And Jesus calls you--right where you are--to be a part of this mission. We can’t teach the whole world about Jesus without people everywhere, and God calls you to be an agent and help with this mission of spreading the Good News to the whole world.

Questions (5-10 min.)

1. What job did Jesus have for the disciples? *[make other disciples; spread the Good News; go to the ends of the earth; tell others about Jesus; etc.]*

2. Where did he want them to go? *[all over the world; everywhere; to the ends of the earth; Colby, KS; etc]*

3. How do you think the disciples felt about going to share the news of Jesus with others? *[Teacher’s hint: this could spark a variety of answers and emotions, from fear to excitement. Let the kids explore how they would feel if Jesus called them to do this.]*

4. What did Jesus say that helped the disciples along the way? *[he would be with them forever; he will help them; they should always remember him; they will not be alone; etc.]*

5. When have you had something important to say? *[Teacher’s hint: allow them to talk about what they think is important; this will help you get a glimpse into their lives. Ask follow-up questions when appropriate.]*

6. How important do you think the Good News of God’s love for everyone is? *[Teacher’s hint: the quick and easy answer is that it’s very important. Ask why? Ask them to compare how important it is to other things, like sports, playing out on the playground, getting a new toy, etc. Spreading the Good News is of eternal importance, and they should come away from this question understanding that spreading God’s love is one of the most important things in the world.]*

7. How will you answer God’s call to spread the Good News today? Who will you tell? *[Teacher’s hint: dare them to get out of their comfort zones. Let them brainstorm new and creative ways to spread God’s love.]*

Memory Verse and Secret Code (5 min.)

**Mission:** Spend some time reciting the memory verse and secret code. Break up the verse into sections. Say a section, then have the kids repeat what you said. Put the sections altogether and give them time to repeat the entire verse back to you. As age appropriate, add hand motions to aid in memory.

**Memory Verse:** “Go therefore /// and make disciples of all nations. /// And remember, /// I am with you always /// to the end.”

**Secret Code:** “God Calls Me”

Prayer Circle

**Mission**: Form a circle with the kids, holding hands. Explain what a prayer circle is. Teacher opens with a small prayer, and squeezes the person’s hand to his/her right. Each child has a chance to pray, and once he/she is done, a squeeze of the hand passes the prayer to the next child. If a child does not want to pray out loud, encourage him/her to pray silently then squeeze the next one’s hand. Close the prayer circle with the following prayer.

**Say**: “God, thank you that you have called each and every one of us to be your agents. Help us to say yes to your call in our lives to love others and spread the good news, just like Abraham, Moses, Esther, and Mary and Mary. We love you and want to serve you. Amen.”