

LOWER KEY STAGE 2/UNIT 2A.2

PEOPLE OF GOD

PEOPLE OF GOD

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO FOLLOW GOD?

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO FOLLOW GOD?






LOWER KEY STAGE 2/UNIT 2A.2



★ OUTCOMES

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT, PUPILS ARE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO:

-  Make clear links between the story of Noah and the idea of covenant.
-  Make simple links between promises in the story of Noah and promises that Christians make at a wedding ceremony.
-  Make links between the story of Noah and how we live in school and the wider world.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING BLOCKS

PUPILS WILL KNOW THAT:

- The Old Testament tells the story of a particular group of people, the children of Israel known as the People of God – and their relationship with God.
- The People of God try to live in the way God wants, following his commands and worshipping him.
- They believe he promises to stay with them and Bible stories show how God keeps his promises.

NOTE: Teachers should read the Essential Information pages before teaching this unit.

YOU MIGHT LIKE TO START WITH...

Look through some Bibles and Bible storybooks to find the Old and New Testaments. Introduce the idea of there being different books in the Bible – it is a collection of books. Introduce the division of book, chapter, verse. If you have a few Bibles, give pairs of pupils a few verses and see which pairs can find them first. Choose some well-known stories (see Resources for suggestions) and see if pupils recognise any of them. Explain that the stories in the Old Testament happened many years before Jesus was born. They often focus on the friendship between the main characters and God. The New Testament introduces Jesus and his followers.

MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

- Present pupils with a situation: their mum/dad/guardian has told them to help build a yacht. The adult has instructions showing how to do this. The pupils must leave school and begin building immediately because their family needs to sail away on the yacht as soon as construction is finished, and will never return to their normal lives. Are pupils happy to go and build the yacht? Would they like to sail away? What would they miss from their normal lives? Do they think this seems a sensible plan? How surprised are they by the adult's behaviour?
- Tell the story of Noah from **Genesis 6:5–9:17**. Use pupils to help you to act out the retelling in large-scale, dramatic fashion – everyone in the class should have a part.
- Talk about what pupils think about the story. They could choose favourite and least favourite moments; puzzling questions; surprises; feelings about characters and events. Ask why they think Christian and Jewish people still read it today – they will learn about this in these lessons, so these will be first thoughts to consider and come back to.
- Ask pupils to list a) the qualities Noah had that made God choose him, and b) the actions Noah carries out in obedience to God's commands.
- Hot-seat Noah at different points in the story. What is he doing? Why? How is he feeling? In the Bible text, Noah does not actually speak (not until 9:25). Why do pupils think this is the case? Discuss how much trust Noah must have had in God to continue with his actions. You could hot-seat other members of Noah's family. It must have been hard for them too.
- Put up a large image of the outline of a man underneath an outline of a rainbow (see Resource Sheet 1). With pupils, write words they can think of to describe Noah inside the man. Remind pupils how God gave Adam and Eve jobs to do in the creation story. Look at how God gives humans rules after the flood subsides. Both the creation and Noah stories show that people have responsibilities given by God – part of being the People of God is trying to live by God's commands.
- Ask pupils to define a 'pact' and talk about if they have ever made one. Explain that when God gives rules in the Noah story (Chapter 9), he makes a covenant – a pact. God is not just giving humans rules to obey, but he also has a promise to keep. Get pupils to answer the question: 'What was God's covenant with Noah?'
- Hold a circle time discussion. Pupils finish sentence starter – 'What I would like to say about God in the story is...', then open the discussion to the floor. If necessary, ensure that pupils are reminded that the story says God sent the flood to bring good into the world and wipe out evil, and that after the flood he promises to stick with people – even though people often mess up; God keeps on forgiving. Talk about this as a reason why Christian and Jewish people still read and remember this narrative. With pupils, write words they can think of to describe God inside the rainbow.
- Talk about the key question: what was it like for Noah and his family to follow God?

SELECT AND WEAVE TOGETHER ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE THE OUTCOMES

UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT

MAKE SENSE OF THE TEXT

MAKE CONNECTIONS

OUTCOMES



MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Think about the agreements (pacts – or covenants) that people make; for example, drivers driving on the correct side of the road, shopkeepers giving customers goods they have paid for, playing with somebody in the playground because you have promised to do so, keeping to the rules in sport, the government providing hospitals because people pay taxes. Ask pupils to talk about what happens if people break each of the agreements you come up with – what are the consequences?
- Remind pupils that God in the Noah story was trying to do away with evil in the world and make it a better place. In groups, list what they think we could do without from today's world in order to make it a better place. Ask pupils to split their list into two categories: 'Things we could stop' and 'Things we can't stop'. Discuss together how pupils in the class think they could help to stop items on the first list, and pick two or three that everyone in the class will work hard to discontinue.
- Ask pupils to think about the covenant between God and the creatures he created in the Noah story. Both humans and God had conditions they needed to stick to. Pupils should think about one thing that they could do to make their table/group in class a great place to work. Write table contracts: on a large piece of paper each pupil writes down their promise of one thing they will do to help their table/group. The paper should then be signed by all group members. Discuss God's sign of the rainbow as a reminder of his promise, and other ways people remember things: for example, sticky notes on the fridge. Pupils decide on what they are going to do to help them remember their promises in the contract and then carry out their decisions.






UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

- Start with a list of people: for example, Brownies, doctors, policemen, parents at christenings, and the types of promises they make. Pupils match the people with the promises. If pupils have covered the 2a.3 Incarnation unit, recap here what they know about baptism and promises.
- Watch a video showing a Christian wedding, or look at photographs. Use these to start a discussion on how promises are made at a wedding (recapping how pacts and promises link to the story of Noah), and how the Christian ceremony initiates a partnership between two people and God.
- Look at text of a simplified version of a wedding ceremony (see Resource Sheet 2). Hold a 'promise scavenger hunt' by giving pupils a list of promises made at the ceremony and the people making them (including the congregation as witnesses and supporters of the couple). Pupils should find these in the text. Throw in some red herrings of promises people might like to make, but don't, in a wedding ceremony (for example, 'I will always buy you birthday presents'); pupils will not be able to find these, but it will help them focus on what is and is not promised. Point out that this is like a covenant, because both parties make promises. Talk about how making these promises to each other and to God might help a Christian couple in their married life.
- (You might re-visit baptism, and look at the promises made there too – pp.66-67 in this document: www.churchofengland.org/media/1190836/holy%20baptism.pdf)
- Ask pupils to recall the symbol that God sends to show he will never again destroy all life. Recap what a 'symbol' is. Ask pupils where they see symbols in a wedding ceremony and discuss what they mean, such as the ring symbolising God's never-ending love. Collect and display some symbols from a wedding; ask pupils to write display labels for them.
- Remind pupils that for Christians the Noah story is about getting rid of evil, and also about how God will always stick with people even when they do bad things. However, in marriages and other areas of life it's important to say sorry when you do something wrong in order to get forgiveness. Sometimes we need to say sorry to people. Christians and other religious believers say sorry at other times to God. Give pupils situations (some between a married couple and others not) where one party needs to say sorry (for example, someone breaks your pencil; someone trips you up by accident... or on purpose; in marriage, someone is cross, or lazy, for example)– pupils should identify who needs to say sorry, what they should say sorry for and who they should say it to.
- Recall the unit question: what is it like to follow God? Christians say it includes trusting God, obeying God, believing that God promises to stay with them and to forgive, and believing that God will do this.

★ OUTCOMES

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT, PUPILS ARE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO:

-  Make clear links between the story of Abraham and the concept of faith.
-  Make simple links between People of God and how some Christians choose to live in their whole lives and in their church communities.
-  Suggest answers about how far ideas of covenant, promises and following God might make a difference in the world today.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING BLOCKS

PUPILS WILL KNOW THAT:

- The Old Testament tells the story of a particular group of people, the children of Israel, known as the People of God – and their relationship with God.
- The People of God try to live in the way God wants, following his commands and worshipping him.
- They believe he promises to stay with them and Bible stories show how God keeps his promises.
- The Old Testament narrative explains that the People of God are meant to show the benefits of having a relationship with God, and to attract all other nations to worshipping God.
- Christians believe that, through Jesus, all people can become the People of God.

YOU MIGHT LIKE TO START WITH...

Give pupils tick and cross cards. Present a range of actions that a trusted person (Mum or Dad, for example) has asked them to carry out. Include easier ones like 'eat a snack' and harder ones such as 'going into a dark and spooky house'. Include 'leaving home forever without knowing where you are going' as a scenario. For each scenario pupils show a tick card if they would do the action, but a cross if they would not. Discuss their choices.

MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT

- Explain to pupils that the stories of the first part of the Old Testament tend to focus on a particular group of people. Pupils have learnt about Noah and his friendship with God, now they are going to learn about Abraham (Noah's descendant) and his relationship with God.
- Tell pupils Genesis 12:1 in pupil-friendly language. Discuss what Abraham was asked to leave behind (everything) and where he was told to go (an unnamed distant land). Pupils think, pair and share whether or not Abraham should do this. Tell the rest of the story (until Genesis 12:9). Pupils freeze-frame key moments in the story – use thought-tapping to focus on Abraham's thoughts and feelings.
- See if pupils can think of any reasons why Abraham followed God's command to leave Haran. Put this in context of the second knowledge building block – as a person of God, Abraham was following God's commands, but also because of the promises God made – remember the term 'covenant'. Point out to pupils that God repeats his promise to Abraham in Chapter 17.
- Ask pupils what *faith* is. Create dictionary definitions for 'faith'. Discuss how we can tell from the story that Abraham had faith. Point out what a huge thing Abraham did in this story to show he had faith. This was a big test: ask pupils for ideas of some easier tasks God could have given to show that he had faith.
- Tell the story of how God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah (from Genesis 18:1-10 – see Resource Sheet 3). Allow pupils to read the story and ask questions. They can fill in speech bubbles to show the thoughts/reactions of the characters at different points. Explain that Sarah and Abraham were even older than most people's grandparents, so thought that having a baby was impossible – but the story emphasises the idea that God keeps his promises.
- Tell the end of the story (from Genesis 18:11-15 and 21:1-5) to find out Sarah's reaction. Explain that God keeps his promise and Sarah indeed has Isaac, whose name means 'he laughs'. Use dialogic talk to help pupils decipher what this might show a believer about having faith, and trusting in God's promises. Talk about the key question: for Abraham and Sarah, what is it like to follow God?
- Talk about the promise to bless all the peoples of the earth: Christians read this as part of the 'big story' – bringing all people back into a relationship with God that was spoiled at the Fall (see Unit 2a.1 Creation).
- Tell pupils that Jewish and Christian people believe God made a covenant with Abraham. This promise is not just for Abraham but for his descendants – the People of God. Place the People of God on the Big Story timeline and discuss where they come chronologically in the Bible. Explain that although they come before Jesus and well before Christianity, they show Christians and all people what it is like to have a friendship with God and try to live in the way that God wants.



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

- Create two lists based on prior learning – promises God makes to people in the Old Testament and actions he asks of People of God. (See Resource Sheet 4 for ideas.)
- Explain that some Christians are inspired to have faith like Abraham and follow God: for example, members of the Salvation Army (SA). Introduce William Booth and briefly tell the story of how he founded the Christian Mission and then the Salvation Army (see Resources for support).
- Explain that showing God's love is incredibly important to the Salvation Army because this is something that Jesus focused on in his teachings. Look at pictures of the SA's work and worship (for example, on their website), discussing what pupils can see – how are the members showing love for other people or God? How are they trusting God's promises?
- Using simple written and pictorial information, allow pupils time to research and find out a little more about the work of the SA, in the UK and internationally. If possible, invite an officer to speak to the class about what they do at a local level. Pupils show their learning by creating short oral presentations in groups.
- Using pictures of members of the SA working to help others, discuss the dedication of the Army members in their service. Pupils think, pair, share why members carry out these tasks even though they require so much dedication. Use their learning and research to inform answers. Recap what Abraham had to give up to follow God and point out that to carry out these tasks, members of the SA will have to give up parts of their lives. Pupils could have a large outline of an SA badge; in one third write or draw the things someone might give up, in one third the things they might do in the SA, and in one third, the rewards or blessings they may experience.
- Give pupils a range of examples of how people might give up something in order to follow God, from Father Peter Walters' work in Columbia (see Resources) to putting money into a collection box. Pupils discuss what is being given up and rank the examples, from tasks they feel would be easiest to perform to those that would be hardest.
- Ask for pupils' views on why a Christian might give up much to follow God. Explain that many Christians don't think that only the Old Testament characters were People of God, but that everyone can be one of the People of God and they try to follow God's directions in order to do this. Lots of Christians dedicate their lives to acting in ways that they think will please God. Whilst they may give up some things, they think loving God is more important and more rewarding!



MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Show a range of faces – which do the pupils trust the most? Can they tell who to trust just by looking? Pupils choose a person in the school whom they trust. Talk together about what qualities make us trust others, and also what makes people untrustworthy.
- Play some leader-and-follower games involving trust: for example, falling back into someone's arms [take care with this!]. Discuss what it feels like and whether pupils found it easy to trust some people more than others. Point out that faith is a bit like this: if you put yourself in the hands of someone you trust, it is not scary. Make the link with Abraham's trust in God, William Booth's, and the faith of many Christians today. They believe God is good to them. Talk about what difference this makes in some people's lives today.
- Remind pupils that Abraham showed a lot of faith and trust in God by leaving his home. Recall Christians who have seemingly given up much to follow God. Look at pictures of the natural world – some that are idyllic, for example, a forest in spring, a beach on a summer's day, and others that are not: for example, a flood, a house that has been damaged after a storm. Pupils discuss and vote on which picture might make it easiest for people nowadays to trust God, and which might make it hardest. Think together about Abraham's faith in God, and God keeping his promise about Isaac. Do pupils think remembering this might help people who are finding it hard to trust God? Ask them to justify their answers.
- Hear some stories of people who have felt supported by God through tough times. Discuss whether these affect pupils' opinions at all.
- Answer the unit key question, with written and creative responses: what is it like to follow God? Consider any links with pupils' own lives, whether they have religious or non-religious backgrounds. Compare who they follow with Christian ideas. What inspires them? Comment on similarities and differences.

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

The People of God units in this resource focus on stories from the Old Testament, looking at characters from Noah to the prophets. This unit looks at stories from the book of Genesis, concentrating on Noah and Abraham.

Many of the biblical characters and stories in the People of God units are important in other religions too. This unit puts a Christian emphasis on the interpretation of the stories because they are being taught in the context of Christianity.

The 'Big Story' of the Bible sees many of God's actions as showing people how to live and have a good relationship with him. Through these stories in Genesis, Christians see a model of God having a relationship with people. They can use them to gain insights about how God intends people to live, which can guide Christians today who want a close relationship with God.

There is an emphasis on promises and a covenant between God and his people in the Old Testament. God makes covenants with his people on a number of occasions, besides those with Noah and Abraham. The covenants show people correct beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are appropriate for being in a relationship with God, but they also show what they can expect from God.

For Christians, Abraham is a hero of faith. He trusts in and obeys God, even though God asks him to perform outrageously difficult actions, surrounded by tribes and people who did not hold the same beliefs. God too is shown to be faithful to Abraham and his descendants.

In this unit, the Salvation Army is used as just one example of ways in which Christians today shape their lives to follow God and be People of God.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT AND ITS MEANING(S)

THE STORY OF NOAH

The story of Noah is found in Genesis Chapters 6:5-9:17. The text itself can seem a little confusing at times: for example, Noah seems to be given two sets of different instructions for the number of animals to take on to the ark, and we are given different lengths of time that the flood actually lasts for. Some people think that this is because the text of Genesis 6-9 was taken from more than one original source (although most believers take the text as it is and try to understand what it teaches about God and how to live). This does not necessarily detract from the overall meaning of this text, but does mean that using the story straight from a traditional Bible might be confusing for pupils at this age. Luckily there are good children's Bibles that tell the story simply and age-appropriately!

Many ancient cultures had flood myths, and the story of Noah resembles some flood myths that came before it. However, unlike

many other flood myths, whilst it has a dark start, this one has a very clear link with moral goodness, and sees God as trying to bring about moral behaviour by sending the flood. God chooses Noah to be saved because he was completely good whilst everyone else was thinking and acting wickedly. God is sorry to have created beings of such wickedness, so he wipes most of his creation from the earth. Some see this as a fresh start after the effects of sin and the Fall – as if God were starting Creation again. Adam and Eve are given tasks by God after Creation, as are Noah and his family after the flood. There is a moral element to God's words here, showing the importance that should be given to the sanctity of life.

This is the first time in the Old Testament where we read of God establishing a covenant. This is a precursor of the covenant with Abraham and the People of God.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT AND ITS MEANING(S)

THE STORIES OF ABRAHAM

Chapters 12–25 of the book of Genesis tell the events of Abraham's life. Many events of Abraham's life are recounted, and it is not feasible for pupils of this age to learn about them all.

A key feature of the story of Abraham is his faith in God. Pupils start off by learning the story of God calling Abraham to leave Haran where he was dwelling, and go to a land that God would show him. This was an act that would have taken great faith and trust in God.

The promise of the birth of Isaac (Genesis 18:1–15) is an element of Abraham's story that shows how people can trust and have faith in God to keep his promises. It is a seemingly impossible promise at that stage of Abraham and Sarah's lives, and pupils can speculate on what the characters' reactions to it might have been. Both characters have a range of reactions at various points in Genesis, but the pupils are introduced in this story to Sarah's laughter on hearing the news in Genesis 18:12. When God tells Abraham about Isaac's birth in the preceding chapter, he also laughs (Genesis 17:17).

One story that shows Abraham's complete faith in God is the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22. This has been left out of the unit because some classes in Lower KS2 might find it upsetting. However, other pupils may be comfortable with and even enjoy the ideas in this story, so it can be introduced where appropriate.

Many Christians see the stories of Abraham as prefiguring the stories of Jesus. For example, the binding of Isaac can be seen as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It needs to be remembered that child sacrifice was practised at the time, and whilst this still seems a reprehensible command, most Christians interpret that the Bible shows that God does *not* want it to happen.

The Abraham story is the second time that God establishes a covenant in the Bible. There is an increased emphasis on how all nations will be blessed through the obedience of Abraham – the People of God will draw all nations to God.

RESOURCES

APPROPRIATE BIBLE VERSIONS:

The Big Bible Storybook – www.scriptureunion.org.uk
The Lion First Bible – www.lionhudson.com
The Beginner's Bible – www.zondervan.com

It is helpful for you to read through the full texts in a clear translation, so that you are aware of anything important that is left out of some of the child-friendly versions. Bible Gateway offers a wide range of translations, but the *Contemporary English Version* is a clear, straightforward version, as is the *International Children's Bible*.

<https://biblestories.org> This gives a list of Bible stories and their verses that you could use in the introductory activity to Core Learning. Note that not all are suitable for lower KS2, so check them out first before giving the verse references to your pupils to find!

Salvation army: The Salvation Army has a wealth of resources to use with pupils on their website. Pupils could base research on some of this: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/schools/history

Simple examples of promises that people might make can be found in *Opening Up RE Promises*, ed. Fiona Moss, by RE Today Services.

You can read about the work of Peter Walters in September 2015's *REtoday* magazine. For more information, visit the 'Let the Pupils Live' website: www.letthepupilslive.org/



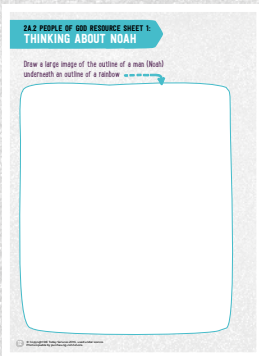
GOING FURTHER

- Perhaps find out about the children's opera 'Noye's Fludde' by Benjamin Britten – Noah's wife does not want to go on to the ark!
- Examples of people of other faiths and no faith leaving their homes to follow God or for other reasons could be explored. Links can be made with stories of refugees here.
- The story of *Abraham and the Idols* is not found in the Bible but is in the Midrash (Jewish Rabbinic literature that explores the Torah) in explanation of Genesis 11:28 and in the Qur'an. This is a good story to show Abraham's understanding of the nature of God and his faith in God.

YOU MIGHT LINK WITH...

Note that the stories of Noah and Abraham are important Jewish stories; the covenant promises were made to the Jewish people. The stories are also important to Muslims. You might talk about stories that the three religions share, and think about why.

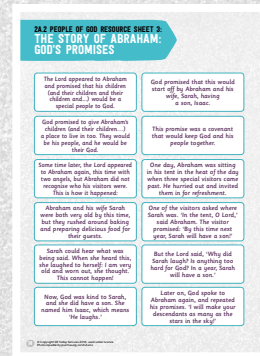
DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT: WWW.UNDERSTANDINGCHRISTIANITY.ORG.UK



THINKING ABOUT NOAH



CHURCH OF ENGLAND MARRIAGE VOWS



THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: GOD'S PROMISES



PROMISES AND ACTIONS