

6

Altars, Altars Everywhere

Service
We serve God despite difficulties.

POWER TEXT

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26).

KEY REFERENCES

- Genesis 11:27-12:9
- *Patriarchs and Prophets,* chap. 11, pp. 125-131
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 1, pp. 138-147
- Student story on page 72 of this guide

OUR BELIEFS

- No. 21, Stewardship
- No. 17, Spiritual Gifts and Ministries
- No. 3, The Father

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- **Know** that God sometimes asks them to leave home and country to serve Him.
- **Feel** that wherever they are, they can serve the Lord.
- **Respond** by wanting their service to be a witness for God.

POWERPOINT

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Abram obeys God's order to leave his home in Haran and go to Canaan. He travels around in Canaan, and wherever he goes he builds an altar for God. The altars Abram builds are a witness for generations to come. God promises to make Abram into a great nation. Abram serves God wherever he goes.

This is a lesson about service.

God calls us to serve Him wherever we are. Sometimes He will call us to abandon our plans and to accept another route. If we willingly follow Him, God will bless us abundantly and assure us of His guidance and care.

Teacher Enrichment

"Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; but a life of ease and the influence of friends and kindred would hinder the development of the very traits essential for its accomplishment. He calls them away from human influences and aid, and leads them to feel the need of His help, and to depend upon Him alone, that He may reveal Himself to them" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126).

What is God calling me to abandon? What will be my response? How will this choice affect my influence on those around me? How will I depend on Christ alone today?

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson. Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

Have students begin the Readiness Activity of your choice.

Program notes

LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at the door. Ask about their week.	
1 Readiness	10-15	*A. Follow the Leader*	
		B. Law of the Land	paper, pens/pencils
* Prayer & Praise	15-20	See page 67. Prayer & Praise may be used at any time during the program.	songbooks, world map, pushpins, offering container, paper, pencils, scissors, banner
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story	local map, paper, pencils
		Experiencing the Story	local maps, highlighters, red pencils, copies of map from p. 150
		Exploring the Bible	Bibles, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	*Servant Surprise*	paper, pens/pencils
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	*Build an Altar*	Bibles, paper, pencils
* Closing		A. Prayer and Closing Comments B. Reminder to Parents C. Coming Up Next Week	

1

READINESS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

Follow the Leader

Have the students form a circle. Appoint a student to be the leader. Ask him/her to give commands to students to follow (as in "Simon says"), and to change the commands rapidly. The rest of the students will follow the leader. Allow a few minutes for the activity.

Debriefing

Ask: **What was the best part of this activity? Is it always wise to follow others? How is following God like following a human leader?** (We didn't know how our leader would lead us, just as we sometimes don't understand where God is leading us or what He is doing in our lives.) **How is following God different from following human leaders?** (Unlike human leaders, who don't always have our best interest in mind, God is a leader we can always trust.) Say: **Following God is not always easy, fun, glamorous, or exciting, but it's always the right thing to do. And God promises to be with us and reward us for being faithful to His leading. Let's say together our power text, John 12:26:**

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26).

Our power point this week reminds us that

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

B

YOU NEED:

- ☐ paper
- ☐ pens/pencils

Law of the Land

Form two groups and send them to opposite sides of the room with paper and pens/pencils. Have each group decide on three new laws and write them down. Tell each group to memorize the laws so they can act them out with the other group. (For example: consistently use a specific greeting, shake hands, cross arms—when talking to members of the other group.)

When both groups are ready, have them mingle to establish friendships. Have the members of each group try to figure out the laws of the other group by interacting with them. After a few minutes, have each group explain what their laws are.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel not to know what the other group's laws were? What made it difficult to understand them?** (communication styles; unusual behavior that you couldn't decipher) **If you were a missionary to the other group, what would have made interacting with them easier?** (having more time to observe and get to know them) **How is following God like or unlike interacting with the other group?** (We have to take time and get to know how He speaks to us, but He is careful to make sure we understand, and gives us confirmations along the way.) Say: **Let's say together our power text, John 12:26:**

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26).

We are learning that

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

(Adapted from Crowdbreakers and Games, Card 12, "Fictional Culture Game," *Pick and Choose: Program Ideas for Youth Ministry* [Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing]. Used by permission.)

Prayer & Praise

Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"Seek Ye First" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 83)
"Make Me a Servant" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 126)
"We Are an Offering" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 136)

Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Use *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults* (go to www .juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION or another mission report available to you. Using a world map, have the students identify and mark with pushpins the location where the mission story is taking place.

Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ offering container

Say: **We are all asked to serve in different ways. One way we all can serve is by giving our offerings to help others.**

Prayer

YOU NEED:
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ banner

Ask the students to outline both hands on sheets of paper or cardboard and then cut out the outlines. Tell them to write on one hand any prayer requests they have and on the other something that they can do with their hands to help answer their prayer. Put the "commitment" hands on the wall under a banner reading "In Service to God." Pray, mentioning the petitions and committing each of the hands to God. Close with a prayer for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

Notes

2

BIBLE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ local map
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencil

Introducing the Bible Story

Tell your students you have to go on an errand in a city near you. Ask if anyone knows how to get there. If students respond ask, **Could you draw a map with the directions?** If someone draws a map, say, "Oh, now I understand!" If no one can draw a map, say: **Maybe there's one in the other room.** Step outside and get the map and have them show you the route.

Debriefing

Ask: **It's pretty easy to find where we're going when we have a map, but what if we didn't have one?** Say: **Let's look at a story in the Bible in which God told Abram, his family, servants, livestock, and friends to pack up and move. He didn't tell him where they were going. In spite of that, Abram learned that he could serve God wherever he was led.**

YOU NEED:
- ☐ local maps
- ☐ highlighters/red pencils
- ☐ copies of map from p. 150

Experiencing the Story

Ask: **If you were going on a trip, what kinds of things would you want to know?** (Where my final destination is, how long it will take, the route, how I will get there, who will accompany me, etc.) Say: **Let's see who can figure out the quickest route between two points.**

Have the students count off by threes and get into three groups. Give each group a local map and a highlighter or red pencil. Call out pairs of cities, counties, landmarks, etc., at random. Do this a few times. Have student volunteers read Genesis 11:27-12:9 aloud.

Distribute copies of the map from page 150 to the groups. Tell them to map out the way Abram and his family took based on the Bible passage they read.

Debriefing

Say: **Let's say together our power text, John 12:26:**

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26).

Our power point this week reminds us that

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

(Adapted from Quick Devotions, Card 12, "Following God," *Pick and Choose: Program Ideas for Youth Ministry* [Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing]. Used by permission.)

Accommodation for students with special needs

Guide students with special needs who experience difficulty with this activity to groups that offer them assistance in participation. It is important that they feel comfortable working with their peers as they get involved in the activity.

3

APPLYING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ white/chalkboard
- ☐ markers/chalk

Exploring the Bible

List the following names and Bible texts where all can see:

Joseph, Genesis 37:25, 26; 39
Esther and Mordecai, Esther 2:5-8; 8:5, 6
Daniel, Daniel 1; 2
Naaman's maid, 2 Kings 5

Say: **Let's make a list of biblical characters who served God in foreign countries. Tell where they came from, where they went, and how they served God there.** Have the students look up the passages listed to get them started. Then ask them to think of other names (Jonah, John Mark, Paul, Philip, Luke).

Say: **Now let's make a list of people who served right in their own communities or native countries. Find out where they lived and how they served God.** Possible names are:

Elijah (1 Kings 18:16-38)
Boy with five loaves and two fish (Luke 9:10-17)
Elisha (1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 3, 4)
Deborah (Judges 4; 5)
Dorcas (Acts 9:36-41)

Debriefing

Ask: **Why is it necessary sometimes to leave home to serve God?** (to get away from negative influences, to help you become stronger, solely dependent on Him, and listening only to Him; so He can test or prepare you for a special work; because people in other places are waiting to hear the message God has specifically given to you to give to them) Note: See Teacher Enrichment for this week. **Why is it better sometimes to stay where you are to serve God?** (It's not better, but necessary sometimes, because you may be able to communicate to people in your immediate surroundings in a way that a stranger cannot; the change in your life or the way you live your life may have greater impact at home than abroad.) **What do you think is the best place to serve God?** (wherever He leads) Say: **Let's say together our power text:**

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26).

Our power point this week reminds us that

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

YOU NEED:
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pens/pencils

Servant Surprise

Have the students divide into small groups and plan a "Servant Surprise." First have them pray for wisdom in finding out where God is leading them to serve the community and beyond. Then have them brainstorm together what they will do, when they will do it, and for whom. They should make a list of supplies they would need for each surprise. Some suggested activities and their supplies are:

Letter writing campaign: stationery, pens/pencils, addresses, stamps

Car wash: detergent, water hose or bucket, rags

Lawn care: lawn mower, gasoline, rakes, brooms, pruning shears, edgers

Snow removal: shovels, salt, sand, or cat litter

Food drive: bags, baskets, boxes, names of people who need food

Cleanup/refurbishment: trash cans/bags, brooms, mops, buckets, rags, sponges, paint, brushes, rollers, masking tape

Allow the students a few minutes to complete the assignment; then have each group report what they have decided.

Debriefing

Ask: **Why did your group choose the surprise that it did? How do you think people will react to your surprise? How would you feel if someone surprised you in this way? How will these surprises help you and others to serve God?** (They let people know that someone cares. It opens the door for us to talk about God with them. It softens their heart and makes them more receptive to what we say.) **How will they help us?** (We become more aware of others' needs and of various ways we can serve.) Say: **We know that**

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

Accommodation for students with special needs

Guide students with special needs who experience difficulty with any aspect of this activity to groups that will offer them assistance in participation.

4

SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ paper
- ☐ pencils

Build an Altar

Allow time for students to share if they had the opportunity during the past week to do something special to encourage someone. Ask: **How did you allow God to use you to reach out to someone through acts of kindness?**

Say: **Let's reread Genesis 12:7, 8. Wherever Abram went, he built an altar to worship God. Those altars were a lasting witness of the God he served.**

Debriefing

Ask: **What can we do that would be a lasting witness where we are?** (Encourage them to commit to serving others.) Have the students write their responses on small sheets of paper and place them in a container. Encourage students to continue being actively involved in service to help or strengthen those around them who are in need.

Say: **Remember:**

We can serve God wherever He leads us.

Closing

Prayer and closing comments:

Play or lead the class in singing "We Are an Offering" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 136). Close with prayer that God will help them be willing to discover what He wants them to do and to follow wherever He leads.

Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

Coming up next week:

Say: **God prepares Joseph for his lifework. God can use our challenges to bless our faithful service.**

Notes

Student lesson

Altars, Altars Everywhere

Imagine that half your family is moving away. You can choose to go or to stay. How would you feel about leaving them—and your friends—to go somewhere you knew nothing about?

Lot faced an important decision. For someone so young, it seemed that changes were always coming his way. And they weren't always happy changes. Sometimes they were pretty scary.

First, his father, Haran, had died at an early age. Lot went to live with his grandfather Terah. Then Terah moved the entire family out of the city of Ur, where Lot's father was buried. Lot had to pack up and leave his birthplace, his friends, everything!

In the company of his grandfather and his two uncles, Nahor and Abram, Lot set out for the land of Canaan. The most direct way to Canaan would have been to go across the Arabian Desert, but that was impossible. No one would have survived that. Instead they set out on an indirect route up the great Euphrates River. Along the way, after traveling 600 miles, they settled in a city called Haran.

Life in their new home brought with it more changes in the family. In their homeland they had been faithful to God and had followed His leading. Regretfully, however, when they settled in the land of Haran some of them began to worship other gods. Little by little they adopted the practices of the surrounding people.

After Grandfather Terah died, God told Abram, Lot's uncle, to go on to Canaan. This was where they had been headed in the first place. It was time, Abram said, to move again.

Everyone knew that Abram was faithful to God. If he said God had brought him a message, it was not something that could be ignored. Now he said that God had warned him of the dangers of staying where they were. But Canaan sounded so distant, so different from what the family was used to. Instead of living in solid, comfortable homes, with four walls and a roof, they might be spending the rest of their lives in flimsy tents. And the people who lived in that place were known to be even more wicked than the people of Haran. Why would this decision to go on to Canaan be a good idea? Lot's uncle Nahor declared that he and his family were staying in Haran.

Abram and his wife, Sarai, and their family prepared to leave. As they packed their belongings, they urged Lot to come with them. "God has made us a promise," Abram said. "He told me: 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing' (Genesis 12:2). If we follow His leading, our people will become a great nation. God said this, and I believe Him."

Lot was torn. Whom should he follow? Finally, when Abram was ready to leave, Lot decided to go with him.

Throughout this great migration to Canaan, however, Abram never claimed to be a great leader. Wherever he went, Abram always acknowledged that God, his heavenly Father, was the leader of His people. When they reached a place called Shechem, they camped in a broad, grassy valley. It was a beautiful, fertile area, known for its grainfields and orchards. To show his thanks for God's leading, Abram built an altar.

Canaan had long been the home of a people who worshipped idols. As Abram further explored Canaan, he came across many altars that were built to honor false gods. The Canaanites had actually offered human sacrifices on these altars. In these surroundings Abram boldly placed his own altars for the worship of the one true God.

Wherever Abram pitched his tent, he immediately set up an altar to God and called his people to worship. These were joyful celebrations. Abram felt responsible to give back to God a part of the substance with which the Lord had blessed him. Everyone in Abram's camp came together to praise God for His leading.

Lot observed the influence that Abram began to have in Canaan. Abram and Sarai became known throughout the new land, as they had in Haran, for their service and love to all. Whenever Abram left one of his encampments, the altar remained as a witness to anyone who happened by. Lot learned from his uncle Abram's example to serve God wherever he journeyed.

KEY REFERENCES

- Genesis 11:27-12:9
- *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chap. 11, pp. 125-131
- *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 1, pp. 138-147
- Our Beliefs, nos. 21, 17, 3

POWER TEXT

"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:26).

POWER POINT

We can serve God wherever He leads us.







Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 47.

Sunday

READ Read Genesis 11:27-30 and this week's story, "Altars, Altars Everywhere."

LEARN Begin to memorize the power text.

RESEARCH Use an encyclopedia, concordance, or Bible dictionary to find out as much as possible about altars. Write, in your Bible study journal, what you find.

PRAY Ask God to help you be willing to follow His leading.

Monday

READ Read Genesis 11:31, 32.

THINK Why is Abram's family background important?

CREATE Draw Abram's family tree, starting with Terah.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for your own family.

Tuesday

READ Read Genesis 12:1-3.

THINK How did Abram know that this message came from God?

REFLECT Think about a time God sent you a message that led you to do some special service for Him.

SERVE Find someone who needs help or encouragement. Allow God to use you to reach out to that person through acts of kindness.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for empowering you to serve others.

Wednesday

READ Read Genesis 12:4, 5.

THINK Who were the people Abram took with him? What can you learn from Abram and his people about leaving everything behind to serve where God calls you?

LIST In your Bible study journal, list three people for whom you can do something special and ways you can help them. Surprise one person each day for the next three days by doing what you listed.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask that God will bless the people in your life through your acts of service.

Thursday

READ Read Genesis 12:6, 7.

FIND In your Bible, find two other people who served God and others in a strange land. How did their service differ from Abram's? How was it the same?

BUILD Build an altar out of simple materials. Write out the power text, including the reference, and place it on your altar.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to give you ideas about how to leave the world a better place because of your service for Him.

Friday

READ Read Genesis 12:8, 9.

THINK Why do you think Abram built an altar wherever he pitched his tent? What were some of the advantages for Abram and the people around him of having an altar to worship God?

DISCUSS Brainstorm about service activities your family can do together in your area.

SHARE Repeat the power text aloud from memory.

PRAY Kneel together and dedicate your lives to serving God wherever He leads you as a family.