

## Age-Level Overview

	Open the Bible	Activate Faith
<b>Lower Elementary</b>		
<p><b>WORKSHOP FOCUS:</b> God surprises us.</p> <p><b>SURPRISES IN THE STARS:</b> Kids work through a star word search to find words from the story.</p> <p><b>SURPRISE, YOU CHANGED!</b> Kids play a game to find what changed in someone else in the group.</p>	<p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Story Bibles</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> None</p>	<p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Story Bible</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> Surprises in the Stars Word Search (page 47), Surprises in the Stars Word Search Solution (page 48), pencils; pin-on buttons, hairpins, hair binders (optional)</p>
<b>Upper Elementary</b>		
<p><b>WORKSHOP FOCUS:</b> God's surprises mean good things are coming.</p> <p><b>ASK ABRAHAM OR SARAH:</b> Kids play a game similar to musical chairs and ask "Abraham or Sarah" to surprise them.</p> <p><b>MESSAGE DELIVERED:</b> Kids make a paper airplane to deliver a Bible verse.</p>	<p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> Pencils</p>	<p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Bibles</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> CD player, CD of some simple music, Message Delivered Paper Airplane (page 49), markers, ice-cream pail or open box</p>
<b>All Kids</b>		
<p><b>WORKSHOP FOCUS:</b> God surprises us and makes good things happen.</p> <p><b>LETTER RIP:</b> Kids rip apart a sheet of letters to form words from the Bible story.</p> <p><b>MESSAGE TAG:</b> Kids work in pairs to deliver a message to "Sarah."</p>	<p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Story Bibles, Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> None</p>	<p><b>SPARK RESOURCES:</b> Spark Bibles, Spark Story Bibles</p> <p><b>SUPPLIES:</b> Letter Rip Letters sheet (page 51), paper, pencils,</p>



Visit [www.sparksundayschool.org](http://www.sparksundayschool.org) for more Spark content. Watch a short Lesson Prep Video that will prepare you and give you confidence to explore this Bible story with the kids you are leading. You will also find a downloadable Family Page for this rotation's story filled with ideas for families to use to explore this story and live out their faith at home.



**Workshop Focus:** God surprises us.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

- Each week, remember to welcome kids to the rotation. Keep in mind that for some kids, it may be the first time they are visiting your workshop!
- If kids have heard the story several times during previous weeks, read it again! Kids learn through repetition, and every workshop will explore the Bible story in a slightly different way.
- Remember that the Shepherds are there to support you as they accompany kids each week.
- Be sure to visit [www.sparksondayschool.org](http://www.sparksondayschool.org) to download the Family Page for this story. Make copies of it and ask Shepherds to distribute it during the Wrap Up.

## Open the Bible (10 minutes)

### Abraham and Sarah Storytelling

Welcome kids as they arrive. **Thanks for being here today. We're going to have some fun playing games as we learn a little bit about Abraham and Sarah. They lived a long time ago, like thousands of years. Their story is in Genesis, the first book in the Bible. In this story, God makes a surprising promise to Abraham and Sarah. What does it mean to make a promise? What kinds of promises have you made? What makes it hard to keep your promises sometimes?** Allow time for kids to respond. **In a minute you'll hear how surprising God's promise was. Every one of us has surprising gifts, and we're all made special. What surprising things can you do? Can you wiggle your ears? Are you double-jointed? Or can you say the alphabet backward?** Allow time for kids to show off. **God surprises us with things we can do that will help others. Let's hear about God's promise to Abram and find out what his surprise was.**

Hand out the Spark Story Bibles. **Open your Bibles to page 30. While I read the story, remember that Abram was old, really old, probably older than most of our grandparents, when this story took place. See if you can figure out what the surprise was.** Read the story with excitement, and emphasize the line "I don't have any children yet."

Spark Resources  
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies  
None

**What did God promise Abram?** (*lots of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren*) **Why was that a surprise to Abram?** (*He didn't have any children yet.*)  
**What would it be like to have a family with as many members as there are stars?**  
Allow time for kids to respond. **God's surprises almost always mean good things are going to happen. In this story, Abram's big family means that God's family will be big.**

## Activate Faith (25 minutes)

### Surprises in the Stars

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#### Activity Instructions

Gather kids in a place where they can write. Open your Spark Story Bible to page 30-31, and hold it up so all kids can see the picture. **Look at all these stars. How many stars do you think are in the sky?** Allow all answers. **God told Abram that his family would include as many people as there are stars in the sky. That was quite a surprise to Abram! We have a star surprise of our own, today.**

Pass out the Surprises in the Stars Word Search to kids. **Let's see how many words you can find from our story today in these stars.**

Allow kids several minutes to complete the word search. **Did you find all of the words? Let's see if we can put these words into a sentence or two to tell the story.** Guide kids in a discussion to come up with sentences such as "God told Abram his family would be as big as the number of twinkling stars in the sky" or "God promised Abram sons, daughters, grandchildren."

#### Spark Resources

Spark Story Bible

#### Supplies

Surprises in the Stars Word Search (page 47), 1 copy per kid

Surprises in the Stars Word Search Solution (page 48)  
Pencils

# Surprise, You Changed!

## Activity Instructions

**Abram got some great news in today's story, the kind of news that changed his life forever. What's different about life in a big family and life in a small family?**

Allow time for kids to respond. **What kinds of things change when a family has a new baby? Would you rather be the new baby or the older brother or sister?**

Allow time for kids to respond. **Babies are just one way God surprises people in the Bible. Let's play a game called "Surprise, You Changed!" to have our own fun with surprises.**

## Get ready to play:

1. Choose a volunteer to stand in front of the rest of the group.
2. Explain the game. **Take a good look at [Name]. He/she is going to leave the room in a minute. While he/she is gone, [Name] going to change something about his/her appearance—a belt, or a pin, or whatever. It will be your job to figure out what's changed when she/he comes back. Any questions?**

## Play the game:

You may need to help some kids think about things to change. Have them take off their glasses or turn them upside down; put their shoes on the wrong feet; or, if you have supplies, add an accessory. Give as many people a turn as possible, and play as long as time allows.

After the game, take time to chat. **What were some of the most surprising changes people made? What was the hardest to figure out? Easiest?** Allow time for kids to respond. **What do you think Abram did when he was surprised? Did he celebrate? Did he tell everyone he knew? God surprises us many times in our lives. Be ready for yours, and remember, God's surprises make good things happen.**

## Spark Resources

None

## Supplies

A few pin-on buttons, hairpins, hair binders (optional)

# Send (5 minutes)

## Wrap Up

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Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received it, and come together for Wrap Up.

**Thanks for all your surprises today. I hope you will look forward to the many surprises God has in store for you. Remember, sometimes when you least expect it, God will surprise you.**

### Spark Resources

Family Pages



### Supplies

None

## Prayer Time

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**For our prayer today, we're going to surprise each other. Let's all fold our hands and be really quiet. Now, think of something you are thankful for. Wait until it's quiet, then all of a sudden either whisper or shout or say what you are thankful for. At the end, I'll say Amen.** Allow a short time for kids to pop in with their surprising thanks.

**Workshop Focus:** God's surprises mean good things are coming.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

- Each week, remember to welcome kids to the rotation. Keep in mind that for some kids, it may be the first time they are visiting your workshop!
- If kids have heard the story several times during previous weeks, read it again! Kids learn through repetition, and every workshop will explore the Bible story in a slightly different way.
- Remember that the Shepherds are there to support you as they accompany kids each week.
- Be sure to visit [www.sparksondayschool.org](http://www.sparksondayschool.org) to download the Family Page for this story. Make copies of it and ask Shepherds to distribute it during the Wrap Up.

## Open the Bible (10 minutes)

### Abraham and Sarah Storytelling

Welcome kids as they arrive. **Let's talk about the desert. Abram and Sarai spent much of their life traveling through the desert. What things do you know about the desert? How would it be to camp in the desert?** Allow time for kids to respond. **What things would you need to take along? How would that be different if you knew someone was going to have a baby while you were there?** Allow kids time to respond. **In today's story, Abram gets some news about his future family while he is in the desert. Remember as we read the story that Abram is more than 90 years old.**

Hand out Spark Bibles. Ask for kids to volunteer to read. When finished, find Abraham and Sarah's route on the map on pages M2-M3, and put a sticker there. Then have kids underline one of the surprises in the story.

**Even though Abram was old, how did God surprise him?** (*God said Abram would have many children and grandchildren and beyond.*) **It's kind of like if I told you that when you wake up tomorrow morning, you'll have a twin brother. Then the next day you'd have another brother or sister. Then another, and another. That's how impossible the idea of a family would have seemed to Abram. What would you**

**Spark Resources**  
Spark Bibles  
Spark Bible Stickers

**Supplies**  
Pencils

**think if you got a message from God about something impossible like a new member of your family? Would you be excited? Who would you tell about it?**

Allow time for kids to respond. **Now imagine sharing everything you have without complaining, and you have to do all this while traveling through the desert. How is your reaction different?** Allow thoughtful responses.

**It must have been a huge surprise for Abram to hear that he was going to be a dad. The surprise for us is that Abram never seems to doubt what God promises. It can only be because Abram knows that God's surprises often mean good things are happening. In this case, a son, and the generations that follow.**

## Activate Faith (25 minutes)

### Ask Abraham or Sarah

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#### Activity Instructions

Gather kids in a circle (break into groups if you have a lot of kids). **God surprised Abraham and Sarah more than once. But when you read all about it, you realize God's surprises mean good things are coming. Let's play a game called Ask Abraham or Sarah to find out what surprises we can make happen.**

#### Get ready to play

1. Have a Spark Story Bible handy.
2. Have the CD player ready.
3. Explain the game: **We're going to play a game kind of like musical chairs. When the music starts playing, pass the Bible around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the Bible instantly becomes Abraham or Sarah. That person points to someone else in the circle and says, "Abraham (or Sarah), surprise us," then gives a direction, like "touch your nose with your foot," or "balance on one knee," or "name three books from the Bible." We'll have fun asking Abraham or Sarah and seeing how they surprise us.**  
**Any questions?**

#### Play the game:

1. Give a Spark Story Bible to the youngest member of each group.
2. Play as long as time allows.
3. Here's a list of suggestions to have ready, in case a kid gets stuck.

Balance the Bible on your head.

Spin around three times on one foot.

#### Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles, 1 per group

#### Supplies

CD player

CD of simple music

Touch your toes.

Rub your belly with the Bible while patting your head.

Hop on one foot while you count to 10.

Say the alphabet backward.

Balance the Bible on one foot.

Hold the Bible out with one hand for 15 seconds.

Make up your own surprise.

Balance the Bible on one finger.

Put the Bible on the ground, and run around it three times.

After you are finished, sit down and discuss the game. **Okay, so we just played this silly game for fun. What were some of the surprises in your group? What was the hardest thing anyone had to do? What was the easiest?** Allow time for kids to discuss. **It's kind of amazing to think of how many times God came to Abraham and Sarah, like we did in this game, and said, "Do this!" or "Go there!" And Abraham and Sarah always did what God asked. And, surprisingly, good things happened. That's the real surprise in this story. It's almost a sure bet that God will surprise you one of these days. And when it happens, you'll know that God's surprises often mean good things are going to happen.**

## Message Delivered

**Set Up:** Make copies of the paper airplane template, one for each kid. Make sure you have a workspace where kids can color and fold.

### Activity Instructions

**God's surprise to Abram came in the form of a message that Abram either heard or understood in his head. There are lots of ways to get messages. Today we're going to play a game with the lesson focus and your own paper airplane.**

### Get ready to play

1. Put an ice-cream pail or open box at one end of the room.
2. Hand out the paper airplane templates and markers.
3. Have kids color and fold their airplanes while you explain the game. **We're going to deliver the key verse from our story today via airmail. The first person will hold the bucket and run back and forth across the end of the room. The next person will read the lesson focus from her or his airplane, and then try to throw the airplane into the moving bucket. After you fly your plane, take your turn holding the bucket while the other person returns to the end of the line. Any questions?**

### Spark Resources

Spark Bibles

### Supplies

Message Delivered Paper

Airplane (page 49)

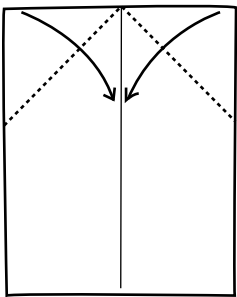
Markers

Ice-cream pail or open box

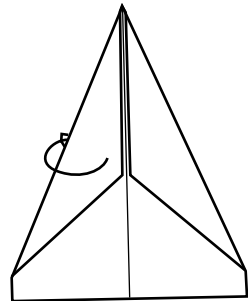
## Play the game:

1. Choose one person to hold the bucket.
2. Have the rest of the kids line up single-file.
3. If the game is too hard, try it with the bucket held in one place. If it's still too hard, let the person with the bucket move to try and catch the airplane.
4. Play as long as time allows.

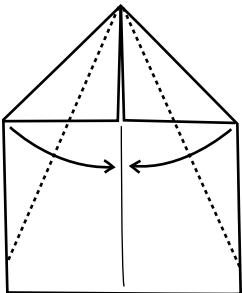
**It's surprisingly hard to fly a paper airplane into a bucket. Even though that's not really important, it tells us something about surprises. When God surprised Abram with the news he'd be the father of many, that was important. This week, pay attention to the surprises in your life. Remember, God's surprises often mean good things are coming.**



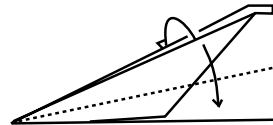
**1.** Fold a sheet of paper in half lengthwise, then open. Fold the corner from one side down to the long fold. Make the same fold on the other side.



**3.** Fold down the corner one last time to the long fold and do the same on the other side. Write the Bible verse on one or both wings of your airplane.



**2.** Now fold down the corner again to the long fold, and repeat on the other side.



**4.** Hold the long fold of the plane, spread out the wings, and fly!

# Send (5 minutes)

## Wrap Up

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Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received it, and come together for Wrap Up.

**Thanks for the fun times today. Aren't surprises fun? We know that we'll have lots of them in our lives, and when they come from God, they often mean good things are going to happen. How do you like surprises? What's one surprise you experienced?** Allow time for kids to respond. **Let's thank God for surprises.**

### Spark Resources

Family Pages



### Supplies

None

## Prayer Time

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**Today we're going to pray a round-robin prayer, where you'll each have your own chance to say something like, "Thank you God, for \_\_\_\_." I'll start, and then we'll go around the room. If you prefer not to pray aloud you may say "pass."**

**Thank you, God, for \_\_\_\_\_.**

After the last kid has prayed or passed, say, **Amen.**



**Workshop Focus:** God surprises us and makes good things happen.

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## Open the Bible (10 minutes)

### Abraham and Sarah Storytelling

Welcome kids as they arrive. **Today we're going to play some games and learn more about Abraham and Sarah. God surprised them more than once in their life. The story today is just the beginning. What do you know about camping? What would make a good camping trip? How might you be surprised on a camping trip?** Allow time for kids to respond. **This story takes place partly in the desert, and Abraham and Sarah spent a lot of time living in tents. Let's hear the story.**

Pass out the Bibles. Ask a volunteer to read the stories from the Spark Story Bible on pages 30-37. Have kids follow along in their Bibles. While you're asking questions, have the older kids pick a sticker to mark the story in the Spark Bible. **What was the surprising news to Abram? (He would be the father of many.) What things in the sky did God point at to tell Abram to imagine his many children and grandchildren? (stars) Abram saw his future children and grandchildren when he looked at the stars. What do you see when you look at the stars?** Allow thoughtful responses.

**Spark Resources**  
Spark Story Bibles  
Spark Bibles  
Spark Bible Stickers

**Supplies**  
None

# Activate Faith (25 minutes)

## Letter Rip

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**Set Up:** Make copies of the Letter Sheet, one for every two kids. Know your group. If you need to cut the letters for this game beforehand, then by all means, do so.

### Activity Instructions

Put kids into pairs for this game. Make sure an older kid is with a younger kid, or that you can provide enough help for early readers. **Abraham and Sarah became some of the most important parents in the Bible. And as all parents know, there are many surprises in parenting. As all kids know, parents do surprising things sometimes. Let's play a game to discover some surprises with letters. It's called Letter Rip.**

### Get ready to play:

1. Hand out the letter sheet.
2. Explain the game. **I'm handing out a sheet of letters for you to use for this game. You'll be surprised how much you can do with these letters.**

### Play the game:

1. **Before you do anything else, I want you to count all the letters and see how many of each there are.** (A=9; B=2; R=4; M=2; H=2; S=2; I=1) Allow time for kids to count. Have them signal you somehow when they are done.
2. After everyone is done counting, continue to explain. **Now, we're going to do some word matching, and if you can, I want you to find some other words in these letters. So, you'll need to tear the letters apart so you can match words and spell others. After you tear the letters apart, look at your Bible for the stories about Abram and Sarai, Abraham and Sarah, and see if you can match the spelling of those words.** Allow time for kids to match the spelling of the names from their Bibles (Spark Story Bible, page 34).
3. When everyone has spelled out the names, get their attention again. **Now, see how many words you can make with these same letters. Start with two-letter words and work your way up. Write them down on your paper, and we'll see what everyone has after everyone has run out of ideas.** Allow time for kids to come up with words. Below is a partial list of some of the words. If you sense it is too difficult for your group, you can all work together.  
a, am, ma, is, as, miss, him, his, ham, baa, abs, bam, ram, arm, rim, sir, Sam, harm, mama, mass, Mars, mash, sham
4. Play as long as time allows.

After you're done playing, gather the group together. **Abraham and Sarah probably didn't know how to read or write, so this game might have been impossible for them. That's kind of a surprise, isn't it? Why was it hard to spell new words from**

### Spark Resources

Spark Bibles  
Spark Story Bibles

### Supplies

Letter Rip Letters sheet (page 51)  
Paper  
Pencils

**these letters?** Accept any thoughtful response. **What surprised you most about this game?** Allow time for kids to respond. **When we have fun with the Bible, we might surprise our friends and ourselves. One surprise from playing a game like this is that we might always remember Abraham and Sarah because we had fun with the letters in their names. Remember, God will always surprise you and make good things happen.**

## Message Tag

**Set Up:** Make sure you have plenty of room to safely play this game.

Spark Resources  
Spark Story Bible

### Activity Instructions

Gather kids around you at one end of the room. **God surprised Sarah with the news that she would have a baby. Even more surprising is that God didn't tell Sarah directly. She hid in the tent while God's messengers told Abraham. If she hadn't laughed out loud, the story wouldn't be nearly as fun, and Isaac might have had a different name. Let's play a game where our Sarah will hear the message directly and tell all of us what she hears.**

Supplies  
None

### Get ready to play:

1. Choose a volunteer to be Sarah. It can be a boy or a girl.
2. Have your Spark Story Bible open to Abraham and Sarah's Visitors on page 34.
3. Explain the game: **Sarah will "hide" down at the other end of the room. I'll pick two messengers and whisper to each of them half a sentence from the story in the Spark Story Bible. When they've heard their part of the sentence, they'll run to find Sarah and give her the message. After both have told her, Sarah will repeat what she's heard to us. If she gets it right, we'll cheer. If she's wrong, I'll read the real message, and we'll cheer anyway. Then we'll switch Sarahs and try it again. But, to make things more interesting, the rest of you will be the animals that might have traveled with Abraham and Sarah. You'll make goat and sheep sounds while Sarah is trying to hear the message, and we'll see what happens. Any questions?**

### Play the game:

1. Send the first Sarah to the other end of the room.
2. Pick an easy sentence to start. If the game is too easy, divide the sentence into three and add a third messenger. If it's too hard, have the animals go to sleep and look for really short sentences.
3. Play as long as time allows.

After the game, gather everyone in a circle and thank kids for playing. **It's a good thing God spoke directly whenever possible, isn't it? God surprised Abraham and Sarah, and I'm sure God will surprise you. And just like good things happened after the surprise, I'll pray that when God surprises you, good things will happen, too.**

# Send (5 minutes)

## Wrap Up

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Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received it, and come together for Wrap Up.

**Thanks for all your energy and excitement today. We had fun thinking about God's surprises and coming up with some of our own. I hope God surprises you this week. We can be thankful that God's surprises often mean that good things will happen. Maybe you'll have something to tell us about next time.**

### Spark Resources

Family Pages



### Supplies

None

## Prayer Time

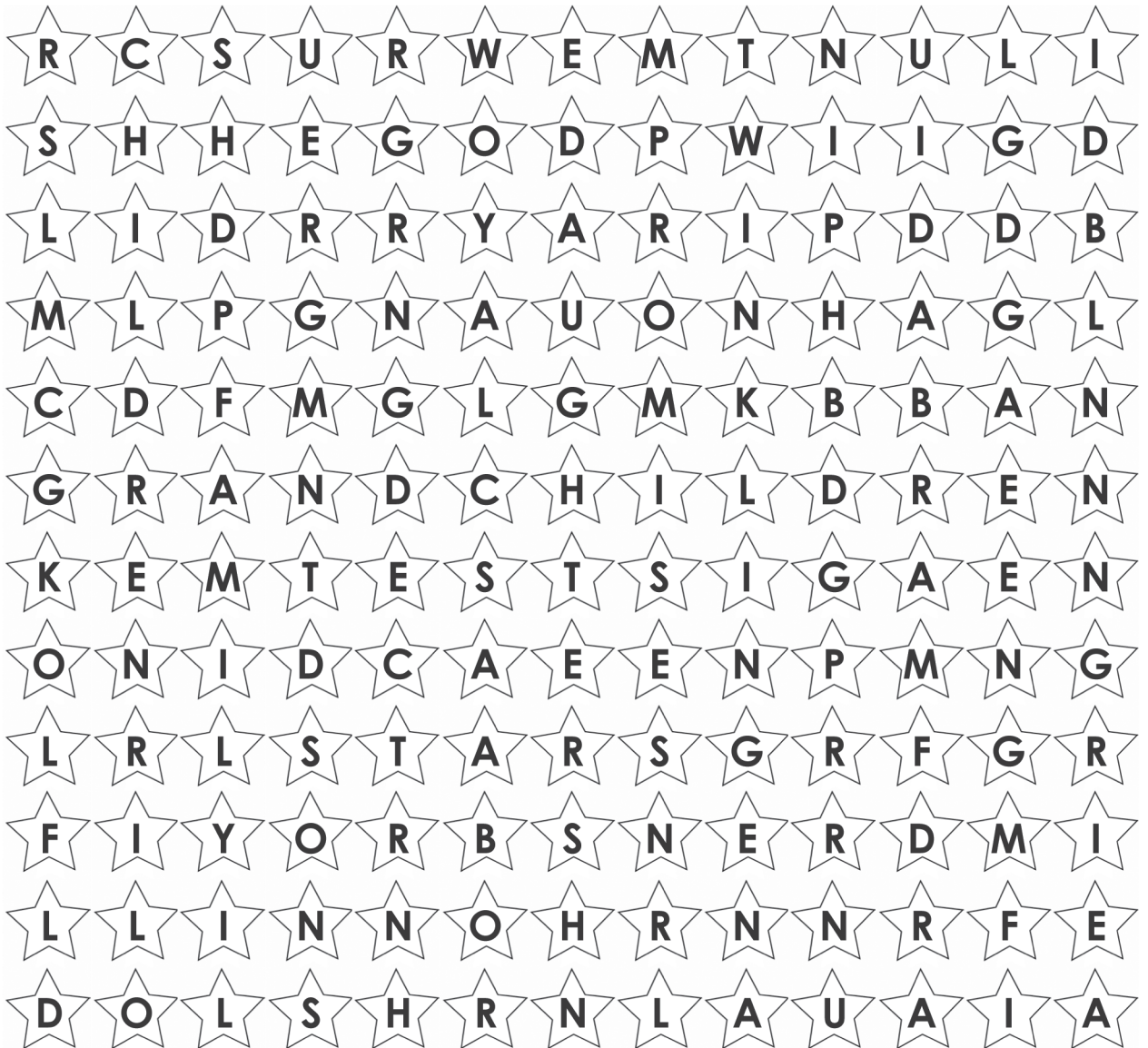
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**For our prayer today, I want you to think of some message you'd like to send to God.** Allow time for kids to come up with something. A thank-you is always a good possibility. **Now, we're going to fold our hands and close our eyes for exactly 30 seconds. I'll watch the time, so please try not to think about that at all. This is your time with God. At the end of 30 seconds, I'll say Amen, and you can say it, too. But during those 30 seconds, I want you to surprise God with your message. Are you ready?** Allow exactly 30 seconds, then say, **Amen.**

*Tear here for easy use!*

# Surprises in the Stars

## Word Search



### Word Bank

Abram

Family

Sons

Children

God

Stars

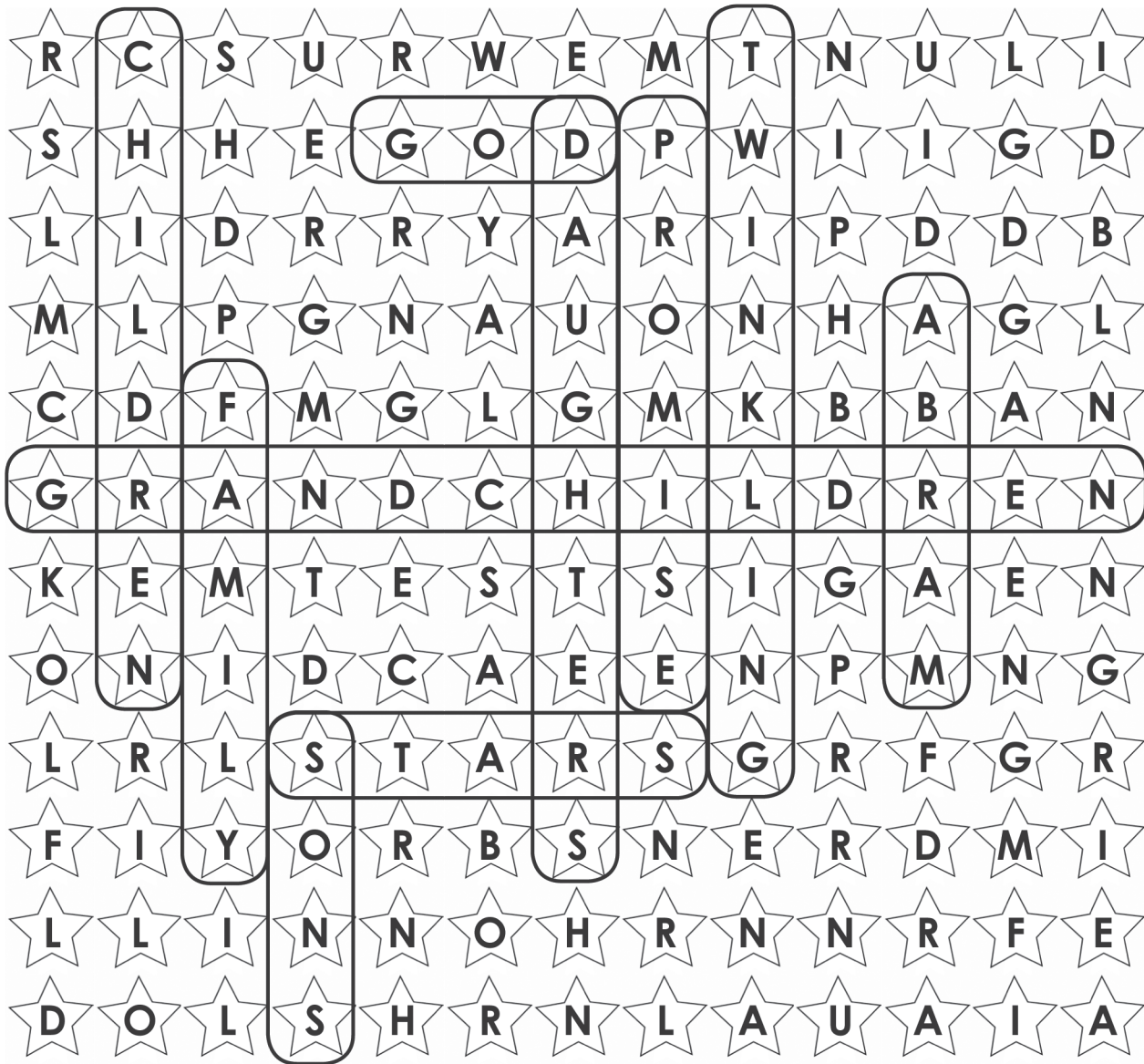
Daughters

Grandchildren

Twinkling

Promise

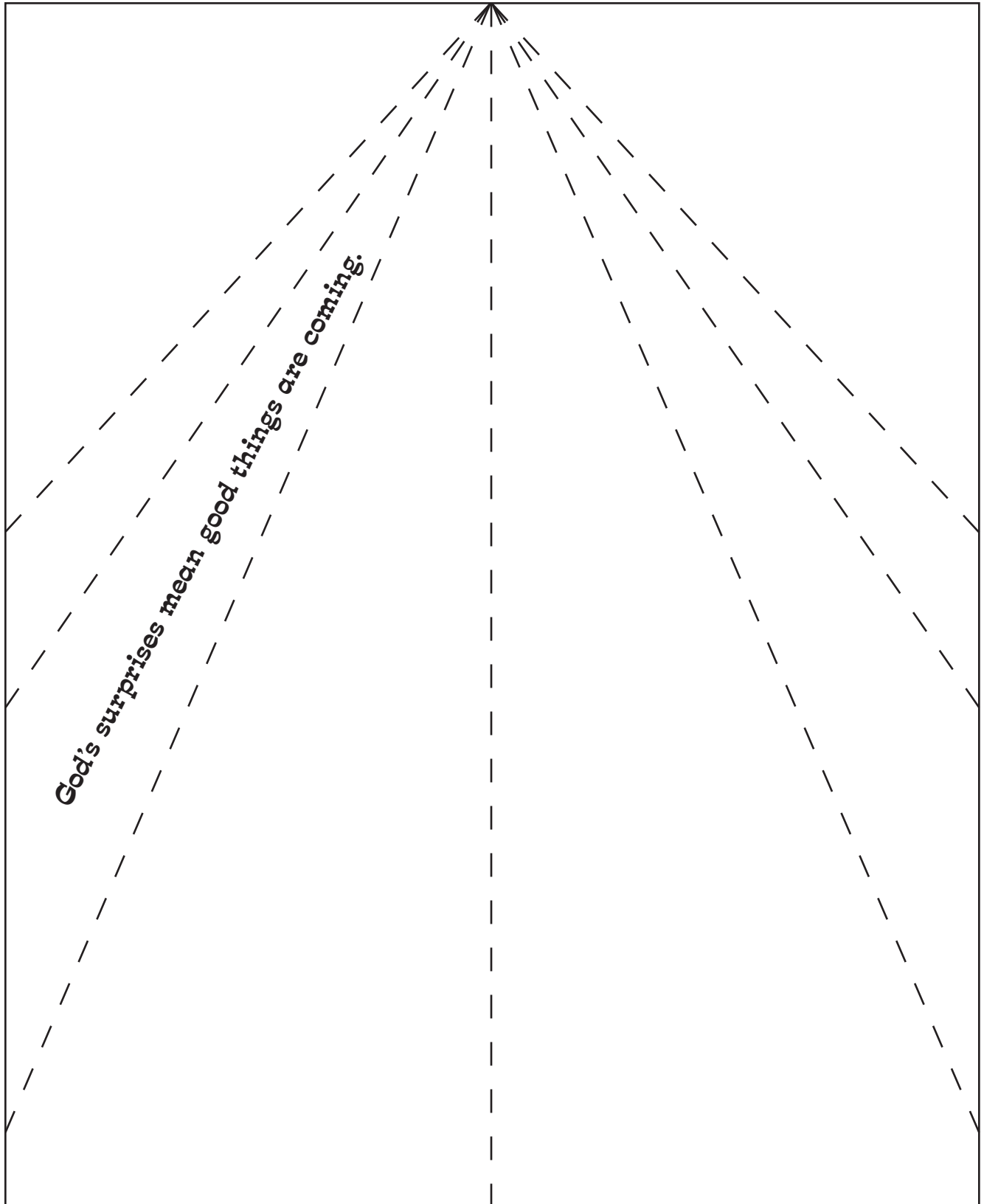
# Surprises in the Stars Word Search Solution



## Word Bank

Abram	Family	Sons
Children	God	Stars
Daughters	Grandchildren	Twinkling
	Promise	

# Message Delivered Paper Airplane





# Letter Rip Letters

A	B	R	A
M	A	B	R
A	H	A	M
S	A	R	A
I	S	A	R
A	H		