



## On your marks

Although not an official church festival, many Sunday services and Messy Churches celebrate Father's Day, which is in June in the UK. The following celebration outline focuses on Father Abraham as an example of faith and fatherhood for us all and could be used as part of an all-age service or as the Messy Church celebration.

## Get set

Jesus calls the first great patriarch of the Jewish faith 'Father Abraham' (John 8:53). His story comes right at the beginning of the Bible and is an example of what it means to set out on a journey of faith in God. Abraham's claim to fame is not that he did miracles and took people through the Red Sea like Moses, nor that he overcame incredible military odds like Gideon, nor killed a giant in one-to-one combat like David. Rather, his life was one of faith, which can encourage all of us as to trust in God's promises and entrust ourselves to his protection as we face the everyday routines and challenges of life.

In this sense, Abraham shows us the best quality of a true father. It isn't about great deeds or special talents but about staying faithful to God day after day after day. By focusing on Abraham as a true father to imitate, we are brought to a better understanding of Father God who is our perfect father in this life and the next.

You will need:

- a metronome or something that ticks loudly and visibly to show the passing of time
- a Sat Nav
- a sign that says 'outsider'
- a crossroads sign
- a sword
- an outline of a young boy

The following idea for a celebration draws on Paul's description of Father Abraham in Romans 4:1-3 and 13-25. The key verse is:

*The Scriptures say, 'God accepted Abraham because Abraham had faith in him.'*  
Romans 4:3 (CEV)

## Go!

### A way into the story

You'll have heard of Father Time... of Father Christmas... of Father Thames... of the Founding Fathers... of Fathers for Justice... of the Father of Medicine (Hippocrates)... of the Father of History

(Herodotus)... and perhaps even of the father of all wrestlers, Big Daddy! But I want to tell you about another, even more famous, father today.

There are all sorts of famous fathers the world over, but biblically the most famous real father of all is found in the first book of the Bible. It's Father Abraham - or Father Abram as he was first known... or Father Abe to his friends.

At this Father's Day celebration... he's a great example to look to but also an example to look through - see the final section.

So what makes Abraham such a great father?

- Did he have a large family? No
- Was he a really good dad? Not especially
- Did he always do the right thing? No way!
- Was he a brilliant husband? Well, not particularly!
- Did he treat his son especially well? Now, that's debatable!

So, what makes him such a great father then?

*Set the metronome going*

It's got something to do with this...

*Pause and watch the metronome ticking back and forth*

He was someone who knew how to wait for things to happen in God's time. He trusted God, even though things didn't happen quickly - he believed that God would keep his promise one day. That's what made him a great father and that's the great example he left for all of us who are fathers, grandfathers or father figures. It was his great faith that made him a great father.

Lots of difficult and hard things happened to Abraham:

*First visual aid: a Sat Nav that doesn't work*

- He had to go off on a journey even though he didn't know where he was going. All he had was the promise that God had the destination planned for him but it was an unknown until he got there.

**Now that takes faith**

*Second visual aid: Sign saying 'outsider'*

- He had to make a new home in a strange place far from where he was brought up and make new friends with people who weren't always that trustworthy.



### **Now that takes faith**

*Third visual aid: Road sign of a crossroads*

- He had to be a peacemaker in his extended family and even settled for what looked like the worst deal when his nephew Lot chose the best bit of the land.

### **Now that takes faith**

*Fourth visual aid: A sword*

- He had to go to the rescue of his nephew Lot and even fight in a battle on behalf of the family.

### **Now that takes faith**

*Fifth visual aid: The metronome again*

- He had to wait 20 years for the promise of a child with his wife Sarah.

### **Now that takes faith**

*Sixth visual aid: Outline of a young boy (or just the name Isaac)*

- He had to be prepared to give up his most precious possession – his own son Isaac – when God put him to the test.

### **Now that takes faith**

*But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God... So God accepted him. (Romans 4:20-22, CEV)*

Abraham was a great father with a great faith – what a great example. God loved him not because of what he did but because of who he was and how much he trusted in God, and that's the example for us. God doesn't love us because of some great thing we do; because we are great fathers who know how to teach our sons how to play football or can coach our daughters through complicated exams; or because we are great fathers who can pass on lots of money or possessions to our children. No, God loves us like he loved Abraham, just because we have faith in him.



Christians believe that it's our faith in Jesus... just as Abraham had faith in God... that makes us great. So, we can learn through Abraham's story how to be true fathers, by pointing our lives to Father God who loves us just as we are.

**Suggestion for a song:** 'Father Abraham had many sons' (with actions)

### **Prayer activity**

Invite everyone to spell out the letters of F-A-I-T-H on the fingers and thumb of one hand after each of these five prayers:

*Hold out your hand, palm upward ready to receive* - Thank you that all we have comes from you, Father.

### **Help us to have faith in you, Father God... F-A-I-T-H**

*Draw in the fingers and thumb of your hand, as if holding tightly on to something* - Help us to hold on to your promises each and every day.

### **Help us to have faith in you, Father God... F-A-I-T-H**

*Point forward with the index finger and draw the other digits in* - May all we do point to you and your great love.

### **Help us to have faith in you, Father God... F-A-I-T-H**

*Hold up your hand as if stopping something* - Help us to put an end to all that spoils your world and hurts our neighbours.

### **Help us to have faith in you, Father God... F-A-I-T-H**

*Hold your palm and digits face down as if blessing another* - May our family life, our homes and our day-to-day living be a blessing to all we love and meet in the days ahead.



## Help us to have faith in you, Father God... F-A-I-T-H

### Gift idea

Give out a Lion Bar to all the men in the congregation, to RE-mind them to RE-lion God like Abraham!

### Blessing

Go to <http://www.fathersdaycelebration.com/fathers-day-prayer.html> for some suggestions.

### Finally

Abraham's story helps us to put the **F** for **F**aith into **F**atherhood:

Abraham travelled **F**ar by **F**aith

Abraham lived an **A**dventure by **F**aith

Abraham trusted **I**n God by **F**aith

Abraham listened **T**o God by **F**aith

Abraham was at **H**ome with God by **F**aith