

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 17:1-10,15-19

CONTEXT

Sojourning in his new home, Abram waited for God to bring about His promises, which included a son. Waiting isn't easy, and the aging Abram wondered if the promised child would ever come. Growing anxious, he and Sarai brought Hagar into the fold and bore Ishmael through her. But God did not need their help, only their faith. Ishmael would not be the inheritor of the blessing, and God had not forgotten His word. Everything He promised would come to pass. So Abram received a new name that reminded him of that truth and reconfirmed the covenant God had made with him.

KEY CONCEPT

The almighty God makes it possible for humanity to be in relationship with Him.

As you study Genesis 17:1-10,15-19:

- Consider the significance of God calling upon His people to live in His presence.
- Recognize that true faith always leads to obedient action for those who love Jesus and are called by Him.



TIMELINE

Tests of God's Promises (Genesis 12-16; 20)

1: God Protects Sarai from Pharaoh

3: God Renews His Promises and Abram Believes God

SESSION STUDY: God Makes a Covenant with Abraham to Bless His Family Through Sarah (Genesis 17)

2: Abram and Lot Separate

4: Abram Has a Son, Ishmael, Through Hagar

5: God Protects Sarah from Abimelech

Abraham and Sarah Give Birth to Isaac, the Promised Son (Genesis 21)

Daily Readings

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Genesis 15:1-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Genesis 18:1-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Genesis 16:1-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Genesis 18:16-19:38 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Genesis 17:1-27 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 105 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

THE ALMIGHTY GOD COMMITS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE.

Highlight God's covenant promises to Abraham, signified by "I will . . ."

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him, saying, "I am God Almighty. Live in my presence and be blameless. **2** I will set up my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you greatly." **3** Then Abram fell facedown and God spoke with him: **4** "As for me, here is my covenant with you: You will become the father of many nations. **5** Your name will no longer be Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations. **6** I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you. **7** I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you and your future offspring throughout their generations. It is a permanent covenant to be your God and the God of your offspring after you. **8** And to you and your future offspring I will give the land where you are residing—all the land of Canaan—as a permanent possession, and I will be their God." **9** God also said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations are to keep my covenant. **10** This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to keep: Every one of your males must be circumcised."

Key Concept: The almighty God makes it possible for humanity to be in relationship with Him.



God's covenant with His people is a one-way promise. We are completely dependent upon His faithfulness and must learn to be comfortable with His timing. When we wonder if He will ever act, remember what He has said. Seven times in Genesis 17:2-8, God says, "I will." The promise is God's to give and ours to receive.

Like all Christians, Abram had much to learn about waiting patiently upon the Lord. Part of Abram's lesson included a name change. Abram, which means "the father is exalted," became Abraham, "father of a multitude," a reminder of God's promise to make him into a great nation and the father of many nations. God had declared it so. Abraham could trust God with His plan, and so can we.

Why might we struggle to wait on God to bring His promises to pass, and what are some ways we reveal this struggle?

The once empty-nested Abraham would one day be the father of nations and kings through a promised son. All the way down to Jesus, Abraham's greatest descendant, God would remain true to His word and bring to pass all that He said. The phrase "I will be their God" in verse 8 is the personal touch every human heart desires. By grace, the almighty God pledges Himself

to His covenant people, and there is no greater promise or gift than God Himself.

Why is a personal relationship with God the greatest possible blessing?

In verses 4-8, God said what He would do: "As for me . . ." This was all of grace, "a permanent covenant" (v. 7). Yet in verses 9-10, God told Abraham what He expected of him: "As for you . . ." There is a necessary response to God's covenant, and here, the sign of faith was circumcision. The action did not invalidate God's grace but testified to it, and the mark did not invalidate Abraham's faith but gave evidence of the reality of faith in his heart.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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Circumcision became the sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:10), but God credited Abraham with righteousness on account of his faith before he was circumcised (15:6). Therefore, all who have faith in God, who raised Jesus from the dead for our salvation, are declared righteous and considered to be Abraham's children so that he indeed would be the father of many nations (Romans 4).

PERSONAL PREPARATION

GENESIS 17:15-19

THE ALMIGHTY GOD WILL KEEP HIS PROMISES.

Circle and summarize Abraham's two statements that expressed his doubt about God's promise.

15 God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai, for Sarah will be her name. **16** I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her." **17** Abraham fell facedown. Then he laughed and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a hundred-year-old man? Can Sarah, a ninety-year-old woman, give birth?" **18** So Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael were acceptable to you!" **19** But God said, "No. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac. I will confirm my covenant with him as a permanent covenant for his future offspring."

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

THE CHURCH: The New Testament speaks of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Key Concept: The almighty God makes it possible for humanity to be in relationship with Him.

Following Abraham's name change, Sarai receives a new name as well, though her name does not change in meaning. Sarah, like Sarai, means "princess." So why the change? Rather than adding clarity to her future, her new name confirmed her future. She was a princess and would remain one. From her would eventually come the King of kings—Jesus.

In verse 16, additional confirmation comes after the renaming. Again notice the definitive nature of the words. "I will" is used three times, and the results appear two times after. God would bless Sarah with a son, and that son would produce nations and kings. A princess indeed.

Their prospects, however, looked bleak. Abraham and Sarah were old and childless. Ishmael seemed to be their only hope, but God reaffirmed His promise specifically through Sarah—a child would come from her. The circumstances seemingly contradicted the reality, but God called them to see through the eyes of faith.

How can we help others trust God's Word when the circumstances of life seem to put it in question?

The Bible displays Abraham as wholly human. He laughs at God's word. Not

a proper response, we may think, but if it were us, might we also chuckle at the preposterous idea? Children are not normally born to 100-year-old husbands and 90-year-old wives. Abraham had a true struggle of faith, and God showed patience and kindness during it. We can expect the same for our sincere doubts and wondering.

Naturally, Abraham wished Ishmael were acceptable in God's sight, but Ishmael represented the power of man. The power of God would be seen in the birth of Isaac to a barren old woman and a doubting old man. God would do the impossible in a miraculous birth to point to the reality of His covenant promises yet to come.

How does God's reaction to Abraham's laughter show us His kindness?

Isaac's name, which means "he laughs," was revealed for the first time in verse 19. With a name, this yet-to-be-conceived child became more real than ever. According to God's plan and declaration, Isaac would be the beginning of the offspring to whom the covenant would be passed down. Isaac would receive what Abraham received, and all who descend from their faith will inherit the covenant blessings found in the ultimate Son, who is Jesus.

THREE C'S OF GENESIS 17

For each box, identify the party responsible and the recipient.
Then describe the relationships between the three C's.

CIRCUMCISION

Responsible:

Recipient:

COVENANT

Responsible:

Recipient:

CHILD

Responsible:

Recipient:

How would you describe the contributions of Abraham and his promised child to the covenant God established with Abraham and his descendants?

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HEAD

How does Abraham's story help us see that we are justified by faith in Christ?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 105 and consider the wonderful works of God. Thank God for all that He has done in history thus far. Ask Him to help you share His works with others as you go about your days.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

How does the patience of God in the face of our unbelief encourage us to trust Him even more?



HANDS

What actions can you do this week as a response of faith to the grace of God given to you in Jesus Christ?

