

Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 17: January 10-17

Genesis 17

In Genesis chapter 17, we see God confirming the covenant He made with Abram. A covenant is a sacred promise made between two or more people. God explains to Abram that this covenant calls for a response of trust and obedience. He gives Abram a permanent sign to constantly remind Abram of the covenant. This chapter contains several principles that will help us remember and respond to the covenant God made with us through Jesus Christ.

Read Genesis 17:1-14

1. How old was Abram when God appeared to him in verse 1?

Thirteen years passed from birth of Ishmael in chapter 16 to the encounter Abram had with God in chapter 17. Ishmael was the result of Sarai's plan to speed up God's promise. Ironically, Sarai's plan and Abram's willingness to go along with it, may have been the reason God delayed His promise.

2. What did God reveal about himself in verse 1?

James Smith observes,

In this appearance the Lord identified himself as El Shaddai. The derivation and meaning of shaddai are uncertain, but "the Almighty" seems to be the best translation. This name of God characterized the patriarchal period. It emphasized the power of God in working out his plan in the lives of his people (17:1). No obstacle whatever could stand in the way of the complete fulfillment of the word of promise.¹

3. What did God command Abram to do in verse 1?

The Hebrew word for "walk" is in the *hithpael* form, a verb stem that is intensive and reflexive. The reflexive idea means that the subject (Abraham) is both doing the action and receiving the action. The intensive idea emphasizes the process and the purpose of the action.

¹ James Smith, *The Pentateuch* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 138.

4. What promise did God repeat to Abram in verse 2?

This is the fifth time God has told Abram about the promises He is making to him (Gen. 12:1-3; 12:7; 13:14-16; 15:5-7; 17:1-8).

5. How did Abram respond to God in verse 3?

6. What promise did God repeat to Abram in verse 4?

7. Why did God change Abram's name to Abraham in verse 5?

The name Abram means "exalted father." The name Abraham means "father of a multitude." This new name would be a daily reminder that God was going to make Abraham a father of many nations.

8. How did God expand on His promise in verse 6?

God promised Abraham that among his many descendants there would be some kings. Kent Hughes notes how this prophecy points us to Jesus.

It was beyond tent-dwelling Abraham's dreams that such a thing could be! But one thousand years later the founding of a line of kings in the Davidic dynasty began the fulfillment of this promise, which was ultimately fulfilled another thousand years later in the advent of Jesus Christ, King of the Jews. This is what Matthew celebrates in the opening verse of his Gospel: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Here in Genesis is the first prediction of the ultimate "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16).²

9. What did God say about His covenant in verse 7?

10. What promise did God repeat in verse 8?

11. What did God establish as the sign of His covenant with Abraham? (17:9-11)

12. What would happen to any male in Abraham's camp who was not circumcised? (17:12-14)

Read Genesis 17:15-27

² R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 247.

13. What was the new name that God gave to Sarai? Why? (17:15-16)

14. How was God planning to bless Sarah in verse 16?

15. How did Abraham respond to the news about Sarah in verse 17?

16. What was Abraham suggesting to God in verse 18?

17. What did God tell Abraham to name the boy that Sarah would have? (17:19)

18. What promise did God give Abraham concerning Ishmael? (17:20)

Paul Kissling notes a play on the words in God's promise concerning Ishmael. He writes,

Once again we have a wordplay. Abraham had asked implicitly that God would hear his prayer for his son whose name means, "God will hear." Taking up the pun God says explicitly, "With regard to God Will Hear (Ishmael), I have heard you." Abraham had asked for Ishmael to live under God's blessing without much confidence. God assures him that he will receive God's blessing.... The promise that Ishmael will be made into a "great nation" is an obvious echo of the initial promise to Abram in Genesis 12:2. The theological point seems to be that though Ishmael is not chosen for the role of heir to the Abrahamic promises, he is still under God's blessing.³

19. How soon after this would Sarah give birth to a son? (17:21-22)

20. What did Abraham do on the very same day that God had appeared to him? (17:23-27)

21. What does it mean for us to walk before God and be blameless?

22. What are some things we can do to remember the covenant we have with God through Jesus Christ?

23. What promises of God do you need to remember this week?

³ Paul Kissling, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Genesis Volume 2* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2009), 132.

Sermon Notes 1/10/21

Remembering God's Covenant

How should we respond to Genesis chapter 17?

1. _____ to walk before God.

Genesis 17:1

1 John 1:6-7

2. _____ the new name God gives us.

Genesis 17:5

2 Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 3:26-27

3. _____ the covenant we have in Christ.

Genesis 17:9

Luke 22:19-20

2 Corinthians 3:6

