

ESTABLISHED

GENESIS 17:1-10; 15-19

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. Are there situations that you believe will never change for the good?
2. Does our belief that a situation will not change mean that we don't believe God could change it? (It's not that God can't change it but do we have faith that He can.)
3. When we pray about those situations do we pray doubting or believing?

In the situations I am thinking about the individual must turn to God and allow God to change his or her life. I believe God can change them but, unfortunately, I have very little faith they will turn to God. Therefore, I struggle with praying in faith that God will change them or the situation.

4. How do you handle that?

It seems that Abram believed God's promises but did not believe the promise of many offspring would come through Sarai, since she was barren and old. Although it seemed Abram understood that Sarai was to have the promised child our text today is the first time God specifically tells Abram that Sarai will bear the child of promise. Ishmael was born when Abram was 86 years old. Now 13 years later God appeared to Abram, at the ripe old age of 99. Abram naturally assumed Ishmael would be his heir. God had some exciting news for Abram.

Remember a "covenant" is *an agreement of binding promises between two parties with each party being responsible for upholding their end of the agreement.*

5. What does God making covenants with His people reveal about Him? (He desires to have a relationship with us.)

COVENANT! Read Genesis 17:1-8

1. How does God introduce Himself in this passage? (*El Shaddai*, God Almighty!) Every time God speaks to Abram, or to us, He reveals a little more of who He is. "El" is "God"; "Shaddai" is "Omnipotent/Almighty."
2. What does God's name here reveal about Him to Abram? ("I am God Almighty!" Nothing is too difficult for me!)
3. What does it mean to "live in my presence and be blameless"? (Of course, God is everywhere, so we are to live with an awareness of God's presence, He is always watching. Blameless doesn't mean sinless. Rather it refers to single-hearted devotion to God, sincere in all areas of life!)

Remember Genesis 15:6, "Abram believed God, and it was reckoned to His as righteousness." It is by faith that we live blameless lives before God.

4. What did God promise Abram again in verse 2? ("I will set up my covenant between me and you...")
5. How does Abram respond to God's appearance? (He fell on his face.)
6. There are numerous times recorded in Scripture where people fall on their face before God. Why do you think they do this? (It is AWE in the face of the majesty and glory and power of God: it represents HUMILITY on our part; that we are, in a sense, "in the dust" compared to Him.)
7. Have you ever fallen on your face before God, and if so, what was your motivation? (Yes. Pleading with Him on behalf of my children and grandchildren.)
8. Why did God change Abram's name to Abraham? (From "exalted father" to "father of many nations.")
9. What does your name mean?
10. How many times do we find God saying "I will" in these verses? (Eight! God is proclaiming His almighty power is at work and He will bring it to pass!)
11. How long is the covenant to last between God and Abraham and his offspring? (It is a permanent covenant!)
12. In what ways are future generations blessed by our faith? (Our obedience to God today makes a difference in the lives of those who follow us!)
13. How does God's covenant with Abraham impact followers of Jesus? (We too are heirs through faith.) When God reaffirmed His covenant with Abram, He also changed his name to Abraham. In addition, God established a sign that would set His people apart from other nations.

SIGN! Read Genesis 17:9-10

In verses 1-8 God tells Abraham what He is going to do now He tells them their part, “every male shall be circumcised.” This was a sign of the covenant between God and His people in the Old Testament (covenant). Now there is a new “sign” of the New Covenant (really two) Baptism, and then The Lord’s Supper. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:25 that at the Last Supper Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.” So, The Lord’s Supper is another sign of the New Covenant that we have in Jesus, that we are saved by His body and blood that was given on the cross for us.

1. How does the baptism of a follower of Jesus serve as a sign of agreement with the new covenant? (Baptism is an outward testimony that the person has died to sin and raised to walk a new life in Christ.)
2. Is baptism necessary for a person to be saved? (Absolutely NOT! But baptism is the first act of obedience after accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.)

In addition to Abram’s name change, God was going to change his wife’s name too. All of this was preparation for God’s ultimate act of faithfulness, providing the promised heir!

PROMISE! Read Genesis 17:15-19

Sarai’s name is changed also. Although both names have the same root the “I” ending indicated “MY” princess—implying that she was only one family’s princess. But now God is changing her name to “Sarah”: just “princess”: now she will be the princess of a whole people who will arise from her. So as with Abraham, there is significance in Sarah’s change of name.

1. What was Abraham’s response to God’s announcement that Sarah would have a child in her old age? (He fell face down and laughed.)
2. In what sense do you think Abraham laughed? (I believe it was from joy and/or disbelief!)
3. What indicates that Abraham still couldn’t believe Sarah would have a son? (He said to God, “If only Ishmael were acceptable to you!”)
4. Do you think you would have a hard time believing God spoke to you in an audible voice?
5. Why might our human limits get in the way of accepting God’s plan and promises? (Far too often we only believe what we can see. We say, “seeing is believing” instead of “believing is seeing.”)

In the midst of his humble worship, Abraham still had questions. He laughed at the idea of what God was saying and offered Ishmael as a suitable alternative. God again rejected that suggestion and turned Abraham’s focus to Isaac, the son he would have with Sarah.

CHALLENGE!

1. What are some ways God is demonstrating His faithfulness in your life?
2. How can we help each other recognize God’s grace in our lives?
3. If you trusted God to accomplish in you what only He can accomplish, what would that kind of trust look like? (Exciting.)

Thank God for keeping His promises and for doing what only He can do in our lives!