

Established

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Genesis 17

Where are we in Abraham's life?

Age 75 – Abram leaves Haran after the death of his father, Terah, having heard the call of God to go to a land that God would show him. (**Genesis 12:1-4**)

- Genesis 12-25 covers the life of Abraham in the Bible. It is a period of 100 years.
- Abram's life is traced from age 75 until his death at 175 years of age (**Genesis 25:7-8**)

Age 85 – Abram is given Hagar to wife by Sarai in an exhibition of human effort to fulfill the promise of God (**Genesis 16:1-3**)

Age 86 – Ishmael was born to Abram and Hagar (**Genesis 16:16**)

Age 99 – After 13 years of silence (at least not recorded in the Bible), God speaks to Abram, confirms his covenant with him, and gives him the sign of circumcision (**Genesis 17:24**)

What does the process of spiritual maturing look like in a person?

- It is not a straight line to the top; there are unfortunate detours along the way.
- It is not on a standardized timeline; different time frames exist for different individuals.
- It is not an academic course taken from a textbook; it is a life course conformed to the Bible.

I. God's Remembrance (Genesis 17:1-3a)

A. God's silence in our exhibitions of self-will (**Genesis 17:1a**).

1. Our self-will is seen in rebellious thinking (**Genesis 16:1-2**). Sarai is presented as a model wife, **1 Peter 3:6**, *As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*. Yet, she also errs.
2. Our self-will is established in disobedience (**Genesis 16:3-4**) (**Genesis 3:17**)
3. Our self-will manifests in messy consequences (**Genesis 16:5-6**)

B. God's Expectations of Abram (**Genesis 17:1b-3a**)

1. Remember Who God is – I am God Almighty. "El Shaddai" (**Genesis 17:1 & 35:9-11**)
 - a) He possesses all power & control. The title strikes terror into the hearts of the wicked & lost.
 - b) To the believer, **Proverbs 18:10**, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.*
2. Remember What God provides – Walk before me
 - a) To walk before – is to be conscious of God's perfect security as children.
 - b) To walk after – is to be conscious of following his Master as a servant.
 - c) To walk with – is to be conscious of God's fellowship as His friend.
 - d) To walk in – is to be conscious of God's union as members of His body.
3. Remember What God Expects – Be blameless; upright; sincere; without blemish
 - a) Total obedience is necessary to experience the covenant promises.
 - b) Orient our life to his presence, promises, and demands.
 - c) God orders Abraham to live before God so that every step is made with God in mind. (**1 Kings 9:4-5; 2 Kings 20:3**)
4. Remember What God Promised to do
 - a) Established by irrevocable covenant
 - b) Between me and you
 - c) To make you fruitful

II. God's Renewal (Genesis 17:3b-10)

A. A new name (**Genesis 17:5**).

1. Abram – exalted father.
2. Abraham – father of multitudes

B. A new mission (**Genesis 17:6-8, 19, 21**) (See also **Exodus 6:6-8**)

1. I will make you exceedingly fruitful (**17:6a**)

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2. I will make you into nations (**6b**)
 3. I will establish my covenant multi-generationally (**7**)
 4. I will give you the land of Canaan eternally (**8a**)
 5. I will be their God generationally (**8b**)
 6. I will establish my covenant with Isaac (**19**)
 7. I will establish my covenant with Isaac (repeat, **21**)
- C. A new sign (**Genesis 17:10**) (See also **17:11-14, 23-27**)
1. The sign of circumcision (externally)
 2. The sign of a circumcised heart (internally)

III. God's Reminder (Genesis 17:15-19)

- A. The Change of Name for Sarai (**17:15-16**)
1. Sarai – means princess. It is thought that her birth name looks back on her noble descent.
 2. Sarah – means princess. Her covenantal name looks ahead to her noble descendants.
- B. The Connection of Abraham to Ishmael (**17:17-18**)
1. Abraham laughed at the thought of God providing a son in his old age and of a child conceived by barren Sarah. (**17:17**)
 2. Abraham again proposes the solution of Ishmael (**17:18**)
- C. The Confirming of Isaac as the recipient of covenantal blessing (**17:19**)

IV. What is going on in Abraham's life?

- A. God's silence does not minimize His presence.
1. God is at work (**Psalm 121:4**, *Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*)
 2. God is still faithful (**Deuteronomy 7:9**, *Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,*)
 3. God is still purposeful and intentional (After Malachi, there came 400 years of silence between the Testaments. Then, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2))
- B. God's strength is displayed in our weakness.
1. **Romans 4:19–20**, *He [Abraham] did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,*
 2. **Romans 4:21**, *fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*
 - a) An obvious tension is perceived in Abraham's life. In the Bible, we see him as a hero of faith, yet we can readily see his failures.
 - b) The same tension exists today, as in Abraham's life, between two essential and distinctive doctrines: justification and sanctification. Though distinct, justification and sanctification are inseparably linked.
 - (1) Justification – being declared righteous (an event), (God forgives the sinner and imputes (grants; accounts) righteousness to the believing sinner based on Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Seen in Romans 4).
 - (2) Sanctification – being made righteous (a process). Sanctification concerns the believer's holiness; we are set apart unto holiness. Sanctification is growth in holiness. (Seen in Romans 6 & 7)
 3. When we reach the end of ourselves and look up, God steps into our lives. Put another way, God's opportunity does not arrive until man's extremity is reached. (Psalm 107:4-6, 12, 13, 23-28)