

MESSAGE

TANGIBLE SIGNS

FAITH LIFE | GENESIS 17:1-27 | OCTOBER 18/19, 2014 | PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"The LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you.'" (Genesis 17:1-2)

The Strong Promises of God's Covenant

- The promise of increased descendants (17:1-2)
- The promise of international blessing (17:3-6)
- The promise of everlasting impact (17:7-14)
- The promise of a son to come (Genesis 17:15-22)

The Interplay between God and Humanity

The Tangible Signs of Abraham's Response

- The response of walking (Genesis 17:1) – a **way** of life with God
- The response of falling facedown (Genesis 17:3, 17) – a **posture** for life with God
- The response of name changing (Genesis 17:5, 15) – an **identity** for life with God
- The response of circumcision (Genesis 17:10-14, 23-27) – a **mark** of life with God

STUDY GUIDE

1. When did you make a personal response to your encounter with God's truth? What happened? How did you express it? How did that change your life?
2. This week, we will look at Genesis 17 as we continue our "Faith Life" series at Eastbrook. Ask God to speak to you before reading this chapter of Genesis aloud.
3. God has spoken powerfully to Abraham throughout the previous chapters. However, there is a thirteen-year gap between the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17. The story picks up again with God declaring Himself as "God Almighty" (El-Shaddai in the Hebrew). Why do you think God uses these particular words to introduce Himself here?
4. Here, as in Genesis 15, we read a powerful word that holds the whole Bible together: 'covenant'. Take a moment to make note of the number of times that word appears in chapter 17. What would you say are the basic aspects of God's covenant with Abraham here?
5. God confirms His previous promises to increase Abraham's descendants (v 2) and bless the nations through Abraham (vv 5-6). Why is it important that God also promises to make "an everlasting covenant" (v 7) that will impact Abraham's descendants?
6. Circumcision was sometimes practiced in the ancient near east, usually related to marriage or fertility rites and often before marriage or at puberty. Here, God asks Abraham to make circumcision on the eighth day a sign of the covenant. Why do you think God did this? What might it signify?
7. In verse 3, Abraham falls down in reverence before God. In verse 17, Abraham falls facedown but also laughs. Why does Abraham laugh here? What does this tell us about Abraham's faith at this point?
8. Have you ever experienced a time when God's promises seemed almost too difficult to believe? What did you do in that time?
9. How would you describe Abraham's response to all these promises and commands of God in verses 23-27?
10. What is one way you could tangibly respond to what God is speaking to you about your own life of faith through this week's study? If you are on your own, make a plan to put it into action. If you are with a group, take some time to discuss this with one another.

[Next week we will look at Abraham's conversation with God in Genesis 18:16-33 as a basis for the faith-filled life of prayer. Read that passage ahead of time to prepare for the study. You may also want to read the follow-up to that passage in Genesis 19:1-38.]