

# 12

GENESIS 17:1-10,15-19

## FATHER OF NATIONS

### THIS WEEK'S **focus**

A microwave and a slow cooker are both appliances we use to cook meals, but they work very differently from one another. A microwave can cook a dish in minutes, but a slow cooker (such as a Crockpot) cooks food slowly—sometimes all day. Something cooked in the microwave usually doesn't taste as good as something cooked in a slow cooker! If you've ever come home to a meal cooking in a slow cooker, you know the smell fills the kitchen and makes you smile in anticipation of a delicious dinner. We want God's promises to "cook" quickly—but most often, God takes a slow cooker approach. Today we'll hear God repeat His promises to Abram, and the beautiful aroma of His anticipated work fills the air as God makes a covenant with Abram. It's a delicious reminder that God always keeps His promises.



CENTRAL **truth**

God always keeps His promises.



EXPLORE

# scripture

GENESIS 17:1-10,15-19

## GENESIS 17:1-8

**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.”

## GENESIS 17:9-10

**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.”

## GENESIS 17:15-19

**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.”

# 12

GENESIS 17:1-10,15-19  
CONVERSATION

## questions

▶ READ GENESIS 17:1-8.

**.01** Look up Genesis 12:1-4. How many years have passed and what has happened since God first called Abram?

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**.02** How does Genesis 15:6 impact how you understand God's command for Abram to be "blameless" in verse 1?

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**.03** In today's text, God says several things we've heard before. Do you notice anything new? Why do you think God would repeat Himself?

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**Q** GIVE AN ANSWER

Circumcision is a procedure done to male private parts that God designed to set the Israelites apart as belonging to God. As Tim Keller said, "It's gory, it's gross, it's bloody, it's intimate, it's creepy"<sup>1</sup>—so it's okay if you feel weird about it. Yet circumcision was ultimately life-giving because it identified that person with the Life-Giver. In Genesis 17:12, God commanded that baby boys were to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. But although some may have viewed it as a legalistic requirement, it was really a sign of God's promise. Now, under the new covenant through Jesus, believer's baptism is the sign of belonging to God (see Col. 2:11-12).

<sup>1</sup> Tim Keller, "Why Circumcision?", The Gospel Coalition, December 15, 2019, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/video/why-circumcision/>

▶ READ GENESIS 17:9-10.

**.04** How is this covenant also a confirmation of God's promise to make Abraham a father of a multitude?

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**.05** Why do you think God gave Abraham such specific instructions about how to keep their covenant?

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**.06** Read Galatians 3:6-7. How is Abraham now truly the father of a multitude?

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▶ READ GENESIS 17:15-19.

**.07** Create a timeline of Abraham's life using the following verses: Genesis 12:1-4; 16:16; 17:1,21. What does this timeline reveal about God?

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**.08** Why do you think God would fulfill His promise through Isaac and not through Ishmael?

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## THEOLOGY

God could have given Abraham and Sarah a child the very moment He promised the child. After all, He created the world with just His words! Nothing is beyond His ability. But often in Scripture, and in our own lives, we'll see that immediacy is not as important to God as it is to us. We live in a world of instant gratification, which tempts us to believe that the best time to get something is "now." But God works not just through His promises but also in the process to fulfill His promises. As 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness" (NIV). His timing may seem slow to us, but it's good to remember that we can trust God's when, His where, and His why.



# 12

GENESIS 17:1-10,15-19

NOW

# what?



## CENTRAL truth

God always keeps His promises.

**.09** What has God provided as ways for us to remember His promises?

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**.10** How can we respond when we find ourselves believing we have to do things to earn God's favor?

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**.11** Why do you think it's so tempting for us to believe we need to earn God's favor?

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**.12** How can this narrative encourage us when we feel like God is being slow to act?

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# DAILY devotions

## MEMORIZE GALATIANS 3:7

### 7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

# GENESIS 17:1-8

## DWELL

For decades, God repeated His promises to Abram. God would make Abram—now Abraham—into a great, royal nation. He would bless this nation and give it the land of Canaan. He would be the God of Abraham's family for generations. As another reminder of these promises, God introduced the practice of circumcision. With this sign, generations of men in Abraham's family would remember God's promises.

↑ What does God's faithful repetition of His promises reveal about God?

→ How is this a reminder to you of the importance of reading God's Word?

## MEMORIZE

Using colored pencils or pens, creatively write out Galatians 3:7 on a piece of paper. Then, "take a picture" of it with your mind and try to say the verse to yourself a few times without looking.

## PRAY

Praise God for His faithfulness to keep His promises—and to repeat them while we wait!

day 2

# GENESIS 17:9-22

## DWELL

Over two decades after God first spoke to Abraham and promised to make him into a great nation, Abraham had one son, Ishmael, whom he had with Hagar. Abraham still didn't have any children with his wife Sarah, and apparently, he didn't think he ever would! From Abraham's perspective, the idea was actually laughable. But nothing is impossible with God!



Despite Abraham's faith in God, why do you think this was hard for him to believe?



How could you encourage someone else by sharing the ups and downs of Abraham's faith journey?

## MEMORIZE

Write out Galatians 3:7 on a note card, and place it next to your bed. Make it a goal to read it five times before you go to bed and five times when you wake up.

## PRAY

Ask God to increase your faith. Nothing is impossible with Him—nothing!

day 3

# GENESIS 17:23-27

## DWELL

Imagine the faith it took to circumcise all the males in the household! (Yikes.) And yet Abraham wasted no time—he followed God's instructions the very day God gave them. Abraham believed God's promise, and his belief impacted what He did. James 2:17 says, "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (ESV). Abraham's belief is what counted—but his works showed that he believed!



How do our actions reveal what we believe?



Where in your life do you need to ask God to help you believe?

## MEMORIZE

Invent motions that match the words of Galatians 3:7, and practice them while saying the words out loud a few times. It probably feels a little weird, but when something is weird, it helps us remember!

## PRAY

Ask God to show you places where your actions reveal your unbelief. Ask Him to help you believe.

day 4

# GENESIS 18:1-8

## DWELL

One day, when the Lord appeared to Abraham, Abraham looked up to see three men standing nearby. He instantly knew they were from God, so he hurried to serve them. Abraham had been following God long enough to know that he needed to stay alert and pay close attention to what God was doing.



What does Abraham's quick response reveal about his understanding of God?



How does this text encourage you to keep your eyes open to what God is doing?

## MEMORIZE

Write down the first letter of each word of Galatians 3:7 on a note card. At least five times today, see if you can say the verse just by looking at these letters.

## PRAY

Ask God to help you stay alert to see who He wants you to see and serve those He wants you to serve.

day 5

# GENESIS 18:9-15

## DWELL

The idea of Sarah having a baby at ninety years old was a ridiculous idea to Abraham when God mentioned it in Genesis 17, and it was just as ridiculous to Sarah when she overheard God speaking to Abraham! Even though God had changed her name to Sarah to show she would be the mother of a royal family, she laughed. How could this thing be? But God promised: a year later, she would give birth to a baby.



How do you think the original audience reacted to this promise? Why?

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How might the "ridiculousness" of this promise be encouragement to someone you know?

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## MEMORIZE

Tell a friend or family member that your memory verse this week is Galatians 3:7, and explain what it means. Then, invite that person to randomly quiz you at some point today to see if you can remember the verse.

## PRAY

Thank God for being the God of the impossible.