

## **“The Birth of Isaac Promised”**

Genesis 17:1-27

For the week of February 7, 2021

### **What Silence Means**

Read Genesis 16:15-16 and then Genesis 17:1-2. From the time of Ishmael's birth to God next speaking to Abram covers 13 years. Think about it: Thirteen years of silence. Doesn't every believer want to sense God's presence regularly? Of course! Sometimes, though, a lengthy timeframe goes by without anything significant happening. But that is not true, is it? What goes on in your spiritual walk while you wait on God? Is there a specific example in your life where this has occurred? Share with your community group.

Sometimes we feel God is far from us but that doesn't mean He is. In fact, we are told He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Remember, we walk by faith, not by sight. Read the following Psalms and identify some keys in “finding” God.

Psalm 1 –

Psalm 77 -

Does God's silence mean absence or apathy of Him? If not, what is God doing during periods of silence? How should this impact you?

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*El-Shaddai* is the name of the all-powerful and all-sufficient God who can do anything and meet any need. The name occurs 48 times in the Old Testament. This name of God emphasizes God's power, which will allow Sarai to bear Abram a son in their old age.

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## Listening to God

Read Genesis 17:3-8. How long was Abram "...on his face"? Besides being on his face, what else was Abram doing while God spoke to him?

What things did God say to Abram in this passage as Abram listened?

How can you know if you are hearing God, or hearing something else? The answer is most commonly, God communicates through the Bible (read Psalm 119:105). God can also guide us through circumstances (read 2 Corinthians 2:12), as well as the promptings of the Holy Spirit (read Galatians 5:16), and wise counsel from godly people (read Proverbs 12:15). What are ways you listen to God? Are there times when God wants to speak to you, but you are not listening? Why would we not be listening to God?

## Name Change

In the ancient world, a name conveyed the essence of a person, and giving a name conveyed rule or ownership. What do you make of Abram's and Sarai's name change (verses 5-6, 15-16)? How might God's view of Abraham (see verse 7) differ from Abraham's view of himself (see verses 17-18)?

## The Mark of the Covenant

Read Genesis 17:9-14. In what sense is God's covenant with Abram an "everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7)? What does this mean for our relationship to God?

Why is it important for us that God commanded circumcision *after*, and as a sign of faith and commitment (see Romans 4:9-12)?

If circumcision is no longer required for God's people, what is yet required (see Galatians 5:6)?

### **“Did I hear you correctly?”**

It has taken 25 years for Abraham to receive complete information. First, God was going to make a great nation of him (Genesis 12:2), then it was said that his heir would be his biological son (Genesis 15:4), and now it is revealed that the heir will be Sarah's biological son (Genesis 17:16).

Read Genesis 17:15-27. Put yourself in Abraham's "shoes." Would your response be different or the same? Explain.

Have you experienced times in your walk with God where you sense God moving in your life, but you begin to ask: "How can this be?" "What is this about?" More than likely God is giving clarity to you and it can be difficult to fully grasp. Describe one of those situations in your life and how you determined that God was orchestrating this in your life.

### **Pray**

Thank God for being your God, the God who hears, sees, and cares for you as He did Hagar. Thank Him for remaining faithful to you despite your failures, just as He remained so to Abraham and Sarah. Ask Him to show you how to walk with Him, to act out your faith in love.