

Faith's Commitment

Abraham—part 8

Genesis 17

July 26, 2026

Reviewing our series on Abraham:

- Week 1: Faith's Beginnings (Canaan)
- Week 2: Faith's Tent and Altar (Centering metaphors)
- Week 3: Faith's Choices (Considerations)
- Week 4: Faith's Fight (Core battles: inner/ outer)
- Week 5: Faith's Promises (Cementing: anchoring)
- Week 6: Faith's Covenant (Covenant)
- Week 7: Faith and Failure (Correcting grace)

DAY 1: Getting to know God better

*Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "**I am God Almighty**: walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."*

1. God shows up and announces a new "name," El Shaddai, which means God Almighty, or "the God who is sufficient" or "the all-competent God."
2. Each of the Hebrew names of God references some particular aspect of God's being and character.
3. As Abraham is getting to know God, Abraham associates some characteristic to who God IS.
4. Why does God introduce Himself to Abraham as El Shaddai, the God who is sufficient, all-competent?
5. God underscores the hard lesson Abraham has had to learn while waiting for the first son to be born, even after many years! God can fulfill the covenant for an heir because God can do anything!
6. The flip side of this lesson is that while **God** is sufficient in the telling and redemption of his story and life, ultimately **Abraham** is not.
7. Nothing is impossible with God (Gen. 18:14)
8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Walk before me faithfully; be blameless

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

- **Walk before me faithfully**

1. Up until this episode, the challenge for Abraham has been to *believe* God.
2. Now, the challenge widens: it is to *walk before God faithfully*.

Before: believe God;

Now: walk before God

3. To walk with God means to live in light of God being with you.
4. Faith is not just a matter of believing the right theology. Faith means to let your theology govern and direct you.
5. Faith is to be the metric for your priorities, influencing, decisions, choices, etc.

Colossians 2:6 As therefore you received Christ Jesus, so live in Him rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving.

Genesis 5:22 Enoch walked with God.

Genesis 6:9 Noah walked with God.

- **Be blameless**

"Walk before Me and be blameless."

6. Blameless: the long-term vision in this life is someone who walks with God consistently, (not perfectly. We will walk with God perfectly in heaven).
7. The imagery of walking with God faithfully and blamelessly is walking AS IF God is right next to you.
8. The way to walk with God involves surrender of our will, agenda, desires, and purpose to God's will, agenda, desires and purpose.
9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Name and identity changes

Abraham

1. The effect of the first two verses on Abraham is to humble him and fall down in surrender and reverence.

*Genesis 17:3 **Abram fell facedown**, and God said to him ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.*

2. I have referred to Abraham as Abraham throughout this series on Abraham so there would not be any confusion between the man earlier named Abram and later named Abraham.

3. But ever since we started back in Genesis 12, Abraham’s name was simply “Abram” which meant “**exalted father**.” That is the name his father gave him. Abram had leaned in on the “exalted” part—becoming a father primarily to exalt himself.

4. The new name means “**father of a multitude**.” Abraham, you have learned that you are not the exalted one. I am El Shaddai, the all-sufficient One for you.”

Sarah

*Genesis 17:15 God also said to Abraham, “As for **Sarai** your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be **Sarah**. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the **mother of nations**; kings of peoples will come from her.”*

5. Sarah’s old name means “contentious.” The idea is argumentative, or nagging. This trait is seen in having to have the last word, having to win the discussion, having to win the argument, jumping in to correct her husband or a friend regarding some detail in retelling a story, or when trying to make a joint decision usually focusing on what you don’t like about the other person’s ideas instead of what you like about the other person’s ideas.

6. Sarah’s new name means “princess,” as in mother of nations.

7. When I got in trouble as a teen, my father sat me down and I learned the principle of a family name and the effect it could have on your identity, character, and way of life. He said, “Seth, you are a Gatchell. That is our family name. It is your father’s name, mother’s name, brother’s name and sister’s name. What you do affects all of us. Live to uphold our family name.”

8. There was a shift in my thinking about myself. My purpose in life was not just about me.

9. What effect do you think these name changes had on Abraham and Sarah?

DAY 4: Circumcision Abraham

*Genesis 17:9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰ This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: **Every male among you shall be circumcised.** ¹¹ You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be **the sign of the covenant** between me and you. ¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. ¹³ Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”*

1. What does it mean? Circumcision is a lasting symbol of the covenant between God and man.
2. A wedding ring is meant to be a **lasting** symbol of a covenant between husband and a wife. With a wedding ring, the groom places the bride's ring on his bride's fourth finger as a symbol of his commitment to her. And at the same time, he continues to wear the ring she gave him at the wedding, also as a symbol of his covenant commitment to her. But a wedding ring can be abandoned.
3. For some people a tattoo is a lasting symbol commemorating a special person or event but the ink from a tattoo can be removed. But no one can undo the operation done by circumcision.
4. What does circumcision symbolize? The Lordship of God. God's people belong to God and are to live for His purposes, unlike the nations around Abraham who were living for their self-centered purposes.
5. Here is how it played out.

Genesis 17:22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

²³ On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. ²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵ and his son Ishmael was thirteen; ²⁶ Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. ²⁷ And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

6. Every day, when Abraham dressed for the day, he was reminded to Whom he was committed, and for Whom he lived.
7. This is how we are to live!
8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Circumcision of the heart

1. What does circumcision mean for us? As we've seen numerous times with Abraham's story, what was literal and physical for Abraham was meant to be symbolic and applicable for us.

This is not a circumcision of the flesh,
but a circumcision of the heart.

2. The heart is the contraption that makes us human beings. The heart is made up of these parts: our mind, feelings, volition, the personality, our imagination, our spiritual nature, the capacity to know God.

3. We are a "ranking" creature, meaning we rank what we treasure most. We are relational creatures, created for relationship.

4. We are creatures that hunger and thirst, that long and yearn, that rejoice and ache.

5. But more than any other component we are a creature made to worship. Worship means that which is highest priority, what we value the absolute most. What we worship is the center pole around which we organize and order our life. The heart is our North Star.

6. The human heart, for all of its magnificent make-up is also broken. It is twisted in a way that doesn't work the way it's supposed to. As C.S. Lewis famously said, we are curved in on ourselves. We make self the center pole of our existence. We make self the captain of our life. And this skews our lives. We are meant to have God as the captain of our soul. The New Testament calls this the lordship of Christ. Jesus Christ our Lord is not just a title. It is to be our existential reality, the life of Jesus animating every part of our life.

Roman 2:28 A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.

Colossians 2:10...and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

7. How would you describe what a heart circumcised by God is?

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?