

Small Group Discussion Guide

Genesis 17: A New Name, A New Identity

OVERVIEW

In Genesis 17, God renames Abram and Sarai, giving them identities rooted not in what they accomplished but in what God would do through them. This guide will help your group explore what it means to receive an identity from God, trust His timing, and walk in the newness of life He provides.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- God waited until Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 90 to fulfill His promise so that no human effort could take credit. When God acts, all glory belongs to Him.
- God introduced Himself as El Shaddai, meaning the all-sufficient, all-powerful God who is personally involved in the lives of His people, not just in control of the universe in a distant or abstract way.
- The name changes of Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah were not earned. They were given by God and reflected what He was doing in and through them.
- Circumcision was a sign that Israel's existence as a covenant people was a supernatural work of God, not a human achievement. In the New Testament, this finds its parallel in the circumcision of the heart and in water baptism.
- Abraham obeyed God immediately and without delay, and his obedience inspired his entire household to follow. That same day, every male in his house was circumcised.
- As believers, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works He prepared in advance. Our identity and purpose are received by faith, not manufactured by effort.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening

1. Have you ever had a nickname, either one you liked or one you did not? What was the story behind it, and what did it say about how others saw you?
2. When you think about how the world typically defines a person's identity, what are the most common sources people turn to? How has that shaped the way you see yourself?

Digging Into the Text

3. God waited 13 years between His last conversation with Abraham in chapter 16 and this one in chapter 17. Why do you think God allowed that gap? Have you ever experienced a long season of waiting on a promise from God? What did that season do to your faith?
4. God introduces Himself as El Shaddai, the all-sufficient or all-powerful God. Why is it significant that He introduces Himself this way before making His promise to Abraham? What does this name tell us about the kind of God we are dealing with?
5. God told Abraham to walk before Him and be blameless, even though Abraham had already been declared righteous by faith in chapter 15. What is the difference between earning a righteous standing before God and living in accordance with one you have already been given? Why does that distinction matter?
6. Circumcision was described as a sign that reminded the Jewish people that their entire existence as a covenant people came from God's supernatural provision. What are the signs or practices in your own life that remind you that your standing before God is His work, not yours?
7. Abraham laughed when God told him that Sarah would bear a son. The sermon described this as a laughter of joy and amazement rather than unbelief. Can you think of a time when God did something in your life that seemed too good to be true? How did you respond?
8. Abraham obeyed God that very same day and brought his entire household along with him. What do you think made it possible for him to obey so quickly and so fully? What tends to get in the way of that kind of immediate obedience in your own life?

Connecting to Your Life

9. The sermon described four categories of Abraham's offspring: natural descendants, the specific covenant line through Israel, the promised offspring culminating in Christ, and spiritual offspring through faith. As a believer, how does it change the way you see yourself to know that you are counted among Abraham's spiritual offspring?
10. The sermon pointed to Revelation 2:17, where God promises overcomers a white stone with a new name that only the recipient and God know. What does it mean to you that God has an intimate, personal identity for you that goes beyond any public label or role you currently carry?
11. Where in your life have you been trying to manufacture an outcome that God has asked you to trust Him for? What would it look like practically to lay that down and let El Shaddai work?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The sermon closed with three specific challenges. Use these as a framework for individual reflection and group accountability this week.

1. Stop trying to fulfill God's promise in your own strength. Identify one area of your life where you have been relying on your own resources rather than trusting God to provide. This week, bring that area specifically before God in prayer and release your grip on the outcome.

2. Walk before Him in the newness of life. Choose one ordinary, everyday part of your week and do it deliberately as before the Lord. Whether it is your commute, your work, your household responsibilities, or your conversations, ask yourself whether your attitude and actions reflect someone who has been declared righteous in Christ.

3. Obey God immediately and lead your household. If God has shown you something, do not sit on it. Take one step of obedience this week without delay. Then consider how you can invite the people in your home, your family, or your close community into that same obedience alongside you.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Take a few minutes at the end of your group time for each person to answer one of the following questions:

- What is one thing from this passage or discussion that you want to carry with you into this week?
- Is there a promise of God you have been waiting on? How can this group pray for you specifically in that area?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together by praying as a group, using the themes from the sermon as a guide. Acknowledge that God is El Shaddai, the all-sufficient God. Confess any areas where you have been relying on your own strength. Ask Him to do abundantly more than you could ask or imagine, and thank Him that your identity is secure in Christ.