

## Lesson Text

### Genesis 17:1-14 (NIV)

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.” 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. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

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.”

### Today’s Lesson Aims

- **Learning Fact:** To explain what God promised to Abraham and his descendants in the covenant.
- **Biblical Principle:** To know that God always keeps His promises!
- **Daily Application:** To think about ways God shows Himself faithful and keeps His promises in your everyday life.

Power Hour Lesson  
Summary for  
September 10, 2017

### “Circumcision”

Lesson Text:  
Genesis 17:1-14

Background Scripture:  
Genesis 17

Devotional Reading:  
Psalm 105:1-11

## INTRODUCTION

German immigrant Martin Hildebrandt is said to have been the first professional tattoo artist in the United States. He traveled from camp to camp during the American Civil War, tattooing both Union and Confederate soldiers. The tradition of getting a tattoo to signify service in the American military continues to this day.

The permanent nature of a tattoo as well as the pain associated with getting one makes it a rite of passage in some sense for many today. Ancient Israelites were forbidden to “print any marks” (tattoos) on their skin (Leviticus 19:28), but tattoos are mainstream in modern Western culture. One in three Americans between the ages of 18 and 50 has at least one tattoo.

Regardless of what one may think of this practice, such a permanent and visible mark is recognized as one of association. In today’s lesson, we learn why God gave Abraham and his descendants a permanent mark to show that they belonged to Him. However, this mark of circumcision was more personal and less visible.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

**Time:** 2066 B.C.

**Place:** probably Mamre

Abraham, as we see him renamed in Genesis 17:5, first appears in the biblical record as Abram in 11:26. There his birth to Terah is noted, and the remainder of [Genesis 11](#) records the family’s move from Ur of the Chaldees (in modern Iraq) to Haran (in modern Syria).

God called Abram to leave his family (or most of it) and to go to a land that God would show him (Genesis 12:1). Scholars are divided on whether the call in [chapter 12](#) is a repeat of an earlier call, in Ur, or is actually a record of the earlier call. In Stephen’s defense to the Sanhedrin, he affirmed that God called Abram when he was “still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran” (Acts 7:2). God promised to make of Abram a great nation, to bless him, and to make his name great (Genesis 12:2). He was age 75 when he left Haran for the land of Canaan (12:4).

God repeated His promise in [Genesis 13](#). Abram had separated from nephew Lot because the land could not support the livestock of both groups (13:5-12). Lot had taken the lush Jordan valley toward Sodom, so Abram was left with land that had lesser pasture. It seemed he got the worse part of the deal, but God reassured him of his future (13:16, 17). The promises are stated a third time in [Genesis 15](#). “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (15:6).

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The promises depended on Abram's having an heir, but we see him childless through [Genesis 15](#). Sarai, Abram's wife, proposed a solution: "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her" (16:2). Abram agreed, and so he became the father of Ishmael by Sarai's servant, Hagar. But Ishmael, born to Abram at age 86 (16:16), was not the child of promise.

God promised once again to multiply Abram's family and make him a "father of many nations," even though he and his wife did not have any children together. His descendants would be "like the dust of the earth" (13:16) and as the stars of the heavens (15:5). These two comparisons—earth and heaven—suggest that Abram would have a physical family, the Jews (Matt. 3:9), and a spiritual family made up of all who believe in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26-29).

### What Do You Think?

- How can we also worship in the spirit Abram exhibited?
- What can we do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in circumcising our hearts? Explain.

### POINTS TO PONDER

- God will always keep His promises!
- God also expects submission and obedience to His Will in our lives. We are to make Him Lord over everything!

### CONCLUSION

#### Deal Breaker

In any negotiation, certain factors are known as deal breakers. These are matters that must be satisfied or there is no transaction. In buying a house or car, not having a clear title is a deal breaker. If the seller cannot produce a title without encumbrances (liens, etc.) on the item for sale, then the wise buyer will walk away. The buyer will not accept promises such as, "I'll send you the title later, once I clear up the tax lien on the property." Failure to have a clear title in hand is a deal breaker.

Other situations don't have the same legal concern as a clear title, but they are deal breakers nonetheless. In warm, humid climates, lack of air-conditioning is a deal breaker to many home buyers. For parents, a home in an inferior school district is a deal breaker. These kinds of deal breakers vary from buyer to buyer, but we all have them.

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For Israel's covenant with the Lord, to not be circumcised was a deal breaker. Refusal of circumcision meant exclusion. No Israelite had an excuse for failure in this matter.

The reason it was so important was because it had significance beyond itself, beyond even the covenant to which it witnessed. The New Testament calls features of the old covenant "a shadow" of something more substantial to come (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6; compare 6:15).

#### **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

Our connection with God can result in intimacy greater than any other relationship!

#### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the spiritual circumcision that is done to all Christians by Your Spirit—the circumcision of the heart. Help us to live in the manner Your Word would have us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON**

Next week's lesson is "**Sabbath Observance,**" and explains the importance of God's command for us to rest. Study Exodus 31:12-18.

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