

TITLE AND NUMBER: 173. What's in a name?



REFERENCE AND KEY VERSE(S): Genesis 17:5-7

No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 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.

LOOKING FURTHER: Genesis 1:27; Genesis 17: 1-8; Isaiah 62:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17

What does this Bible passage tell us?

Some years ago, I was at a meeting with someone from another country. At the end of the meeting, he suddenly realised he had been calling me by the wrong name. He was very upset and insisted on taking me and my colleague for a very expensive lunch as an apology.

In some cultures, names are carefully chosen for their meaning. Several times through the Bible we see God give someone a new name to show that He had a special plan for their lives.

God changed Abram's name. Abram means 'Exalted Father'; Abraham means 'Father of many.' Interestingly, the two names were similar. When Abram was born, God had made him to be a father figure. Later in his life, God called him to go further, to be the father of nations.

The Bible tells us (Genesis 1:27) that God created each one of us in His image. We are each the person who God made us to be. But God wants to do more. If we follow God's plan for our lives, He will take the person He has already created and shape us into the person He has called us to be.

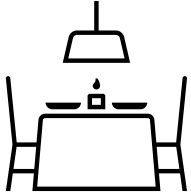
Verse 7 talks about an 'everlasting covenant' – an agreement that cannot be broken. God isn't just interested in us here and now, though that is encouraging enough. He wants us to be part of His plan for eternity.

For us, that 'everlasting covenant' is fulfilled when we enter into a relationship with Jesus through His death for us on the cross. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, 'If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.' Like Abraham, we can receive a new identity in Jesus, and live out the life He wants us to have.

Reflections:

- Reflect on the fact that God created everyone in His image; that includes you, your family members, your cell-mate and the prison officers. How might this help you to pray for them, giving thanks to God?
- Read Isaiah 62:1-5 where Isaiah contrasts negative situations and feelings with the hope that God promises to those who trust Him. What words would you like God to apply to your life? Pray asking Him to make you a new creation and to speak a new 'name' into your heart.

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for? It's okay to talk to God about this.

