

## **Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides**

### **March 19th**

#### **Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)**

1. When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you would grow up?

#### **Bible Study Questions**

1. Genesis 17 is about identity formation. Why is our identity so important?
  - What do you think are the sources that most American use to establish their identity? What is dangerous about this?
2. Read Genesis 17
  - What is the significance behind God introducing himself as “God Almighty?”
3. Naming was done by a father to express the destiny that he hoped would be fulfilled through his child. Why is God’s naming of Abram so significant?
  - a. Read Ephesians 1:5 and Revelation 2:17. What is the significance here for Christ followers today?
4. In 17:7-8, God promises that he will be Abraham’s God and the God of his descendants. What does it mean for a person or people to “possess” God? What does a mutual ownership look like between God and his people?
5. Circumcision was a well known ritual to either welcome a young man into a marriage family or a teen into the adult male community. It was a symbol of ownership and belonging. What is the significance of God doing this with Abraham and his descendents?
  - o Read Ephesians 1:13-14 and Revelation 14:1-6 (the 144,000 here is likely not literal, but symbolizing all that belong to the Lamb). What does it mean to you to be marked as God’s possession?

6. God told Abraham to walk faithfully and to be blameless as a code of conduct for being in God’s family. Later they would be given the law. What is the code of conduct expected for Christians? (John 15:9-17, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 1:6).
  - a. What in your life needs to change in order for you to better live out the code of conduct as being a child of God?

## March 19<sup>th</sup>: Identity Change Genesis 17

For us, one of the oddest parts of the Old Testament is God's commandment of circumcision. But when understood in the cultural context, it is a sacred moment in which God is forging the identity of a faith community.

- I. **God' Covenant identity forging covenant:** God decides to interact in the context of a covenant. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties that is based on a relationship. Central to this covenant is a changing of Abram's identity. This is the crucial step that must happen before he can receive God's blessing.
  - a. **Abram given new name: A claim of parental ownership and destiny (17:5):** It was a job of a Father to name his child and the name reflected the father's hope for the future. God is claiming the role of a parent and is describing Abram's destiny.
  - b. **Promise of shared possession between the two of them (17:7-8).** This would have been unheard of for a god to commit himself in this way.
  - c. **Circumcision: a mark of ownership by God (17:10):** Circumcision was a common practice during that time that signified either a groom entering into a family's protection or a young man entering into adulthood in a community. It was a symbol of ownership. By God declaring that all Israelite men should be circumcised from birth was to claim that they belonged to God.
  - d. **Abraham's code of conduct: walk faithfully and be blameless (17:1).** Abraham and his descendants are to live this way as a code of conduct. Later the law will be the code of conduct that governs the covenant.
- II. **Jesus covenant with the church transforms our identity:** We do not live under Abraham's covenant, but have been brought into a new covenant by Jesus (Luke 22:20). The details of this covenant are far beyond what we can cover in one message, but here are some parallels.
  - a. **Christ followers are adopted as God's children:** Ephesians 1:5 talks about our being adopted as God's children. Later in Revelation 2:17 it is said that God give us a new name.

- b. **Shared possession between Jesus and his followers:** This language is found in many places. One could point to the marriage imagery between Christ and the church. Another example is Jesus being the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.
- c. **The indwelling of the Holy Spirit marks those who belong to God:** Ephesians 1:13
- d. **Code of conduct: love and obedience:** Jesus told his disciples that they would be known by their love and obedience. (John 15:12-14)

### Conclusion

One's identity has a profound influence on their lives. For the Christian, their identity is not based primarily on their achievements, friends, or sexual choices, but in their positioning with God. Belonging to God and being the object of his affections is the grounding that should be able to sustain us through any challenge and press us on toward his calling.