

Circumcision – Teaching Notes

(Genesis 17:1-14; 9/10/17)

Introduction: A key idea in today's Sunday School material is that God established circumcision as a sign of the covenant that He made with Abraham and his descendants. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to live as if we are in covenant relationships with God.

Body:

Read Genesis 17:1-2

I. Great Promise. Abram was 99 years old. The Lord appeared to him. If Abram walked faithfully before the Lord, the Lord would make His covenant with Abram. Abram's number of descendants would be greatly increased.

Applications –

- **Obeying God at 99 years old.** Notice in vs. 1, 3 that Abram was 99 years old but still striving to live in line with God's will. First, it is a great blessing to make it to senior years. There are so many diseases, injuries, and so much violence today that robs people of the privilege of making it into their 70's and 80's, not to mention 90's. Second, there are too many who behave as if they are old enough to stop really responding to God's will for their lives. On one hand, the older we get, the less energy we have. However, on the other hand, we should use whatever strength we must glorify God, by obeying Him. We can use our influence to help people get saved and be disciples of Christ. We can pray for others and encourage their faithfulness. *Let's work on being responsive to God, no matter how old we may be.*

Read Genesis 17:3-8

II. New Status. Abram showed reverence for God by bowing. God promises great blessings. The blessings are for Abraham (note the name change "father of many nations") and his descendants.

Applications –

- **Letting God have His way.** Notice in vs. 5 that Abram offers no resistance to his name being changed. In like manner, we should let God have His way in our lives. "God's way" may include the changing of our name, identity, purpose, or direction in life. "God's way" is often bigger than we understand. However, "God's way" is always better for us than our own way. *Let's work on cooperating with God's will being done in our lives.* Prayerful study and obedience with the support of other disciples can help us with this application.

- **Physical/material blessings.** Notice in vs. 8 that God understood and provided for Abraham's material/physical needs. In like manner, we should thank God for His understanding and providing for our material/physical needs. "Yes," we have spiritual needs. But we also have physical needs like food, clothing, shelter, health care, recreation, and the like. *Let's live like we trust that God understands and can provide for our physical needs.* This kind of living should be known for our obedience, expectation, and confidence.

Read Genesis 17:9-14

III. Personal Mark. God establishes circumcision as a sign of His covenant. On the 8th day, males are to be circumcised. Those not circumcised are to be cut off from God's people as covenant breakers.

Applications –

- **Symbols.** Notice in vs. 10 that God established circumcision as a sign of the covenant. In like manner, Christian baptism has some similarities with the circumcision. Both were symbols of being in fellowship with God. Thankfully, baptism includes men and women. More important than the symbol is our actually living in accord with the symbol. In other words, if a person is both circumcised and baptized but still not striving to live by God's will, which includes loving people, the symbols are not helping that person. *Let's live like we are really in fellowship with God.*

- **Helping people be in fellowship with God.** Notice in vss. 12-13 that the circumcision was to be practiced by generations to come and those in relationship with God's people. In similar fashion, Christians should strive to have their descendants and friends to be in fellowship with God. Although, we are not as strict and legalistic as those in the text, we should do what we can to help our family, friends, and associates to be right with God. Living the Christian life of loving God and others, as we love our selves along with prayerful invitations can be the seeds that God causes to grow in the lives others. *Let's do our part in helping people to be in fellowship with God.*

- **Covenant breaking.** Notice in vs. 14 that covenant breaking was a serious matter. In similar fashion, God still considers covenant breaking a serious matter. For example, it is sin for us to read the church covenant each month and have so many people who fail to live up to even basic tenants like study, serve, give, worship with enthusiasm, and bring people with us, so we can grow together. *Let's work on being covenant keepers, instead of covenant breakers.*

Conclusion: Let's work on living like we are in covenant relationships with God. God has much for those who obey His will.