

Genesis 17:1-3

A discussion on how God re-engages Abram after Genesis 16

Comparing Genesis 15:1-2 and Genesis 17:1-2

*“I am the Almighty God; walk
before me...”*

1. What does “After these things” point back to?

Genesis 15:1 after Genesis 14

Genesis 15:1

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

Genesis 14 gives the background:

- 1 War and rescue: Abram had faced powerful kings after Lot was captured.
- 2 Refusal of Sodom’s reward: Abram would not let Sodom claim it made him rich.
- 3 Encounter with Melchizedek: Abram receives blessing and honours God with tithes.

Discussion prompt

How do these events help us understand why God says, “Fear not... I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”?

2. Why does Genesis 17 open this way?

Genesis 17:1 after Genesis 16

Genesis 17:1

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.”

Genesis 16 gives the background:

- 1 Sarai proposes Hagar as a human route to the promised seed.
- 2 Abram accepts the plan; Ishmael is born when Abram is 86.
- 3 Thirteen years later, God appears when Abram is 99.

Discussion prompt

How do the events of Genesis 16 help us hear the force of “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect”?

3. What phrase describes Genesis 17:1?

Possible ways to frame the tone

Possible descriptions

Corrective re-engagement

God resumes the covenant conversation after Genesis 16, but with a call to wholehearted walking.

Divine reset

Not a cancellation of covenant, but a return to God's way after human self-help.

Gracious correction

The Lord corrects Abram while still speaking covenant promise over him.

Covenant recommissioning

God redirects Abram toward the calling and promise that remain in force.

Discussion prompt

Which phrase best captures the tone of Genesis 17:1 — and why?

4. Was this the first recorded direct word after Ishmael?

A careful answer

A careful “Yes”

Genesis records Ishmael’s birth when Abram was 86, then the LORD appears when Abram is 99. That gives a clear 13-year narrative gap between Genesis 16:16 and Genesis 17:1.

But we should add a caution:

The text does not prove God never spoke to Abram during those years. It simply gives us no recorded divine speech to Abram between Ishmael’s birth and Genesis 17:1.

Discussion prompt

What does the 13-year gap add to the weight of God’s words in Genesis 17:1?

Does the gap make the encounter feel like God is taking up the matter from where Genesis 16 left it?

5. Shield & Reward vs Almighty God

Comparing God's self-revelation

Genesis 15:1

“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

Abram had just faced danger and refused Sodom's riches. God addresses protection and provision.

Discussion prompt

Genesis 17:1

“I am the Almighty God; walk before me...”

Abram had followed a human route through Hagar. God reveals His sufficiency and calls Abram back to wholehearted walking.

What did Abram need to know about God in each situation?

6. Closing reflection

Do not take lightly the chastisement of the Lord

Correction is not the same as rejection.

In Genesis 17, God corrects Abram's walk, but He also reaffirms the covenant. That means the Lord is not abandoning Abram; He is redirecting him.

Questions for the group

- 1 When God corrects us, do we hear only the pain of correction, or can we recognise the grace that He is still speaking?
- 2 How should a believer respond when God calls them back from self-help to trust and obedience?

Hebrews 12:5-6