



Week two  
Transforming  
Call

# Transforming Life

a **Lent Course** for 2012

produced by the Diocese of St Albans

[www.stalbans.anglican.org](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org)

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## The Bible Reading

Lent 2

**Genesis 17.1-7; 15-16**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

<sup>15</sup>God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

<sup>16</sup>I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

*You may prefer to save paper by only reproducing pages 2 & 3 and using bibles to read the passage.*

### Genesis 17.1-7; 15-16

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### Some Reflections

Last week we thought about the idea of God's covenants – those rather generous one-sided 'agreements' in which God offers his grace and favour to ordinary human beings in exchange for faith and commitment. Noah was the subject of God's covenant then, and this week we see Abram discovering what God's covenant with him was to mean for both him and his descendents.

Accepting God's covenant entailed a change of name for Abram. Names were hugely important in the Ancient Near East – as indeed, in many parts of the world, they still are. The name 'Abram' means *father exalted*, whereas the extended name 'Abraham' means the *father of many*, echoing God's words about him being the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

Often today we speak about the 'Abrahamic faiths' – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – all of which look back to Abraham as 'the father of the faithful'. (From a Christian perspective, of course, chapter 4 of St. Paul's letter to the Romans is a running commentary on what this means to us. It's worth reading Romans 4 straight through – it only takes about 5 minutes.)

Sarai too has her name changed. As a barren woman she will give birth in her old age; the new name is to mark that gracious gift from God. Occasionally at adult baptisms, or at confirmation, a person will take another name as a sign of their acceptance of the grace of God and of their faith and trust in him. He or she is a new creature in Christ and so wants to bear a new name.

A new name implies a new relationship with God; this relationship comes with a call to holiness of life. Often in the Old Testament, we read of people 'walking with God'. The call from God to Abram here is to 'walk before me, and be blameless.' (v 2) (Jesus makes a similar call to his disciples: 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' *John 5:48*). Whether Old Testament or New, the response to God's covenants is always obedience of heart and purity of life.

# Transforming Life

## Week two Transforming Call

### Questions for Discussion

God's call to Abram changed his life. In what ways has God's call changed you?

In his covenant with Abram, God made a promise to give a land to his descendents. What do you see as God's promise to you in his new covenant in Jesus Christ?

How on earth can we rise to the challenge to be 'blameless' in God's sight?

At Confirmation services, the words 'N, God has called you by name and made you his own' are said to each candidate, reminding them that God knows them personally. If you were to choose a name which was significant to your spiritual journey, what would it be?

### Ideas for Action

Each person to jot down

- ◆ One thing that has struck me
- ◆ What one thing am I going to do?
- ◆ What one thing will I pray about this week?



### Prayer

Spend some time in corporate silent prayer:

- reflect on God's call to you and the blessings that you enjoy – and give thanks
- ask for God's forgiveness for being far from blameless in your walk with him
- reaffirm your desire to live for him (even if you are 99 like Abram was!)
- ask God to help you do the things you've jotted down as 'ideas for action'.

### Close

Finish by saying this collect and then the Living God's Love prayer together:

Holy God, our lives are laid open before you:  
rescue us from the chaos of sin  
and through the death of your Son  
bring us healing and make us whole  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Living God, draw us deeper into your love;  
Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve;  
Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news.  
Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us  
to live your love  
with generosity and joy,  
imagination and courage;  
for the sake of your world  
and in the name of Jesus. Amen.

