

Creating a Covenant

Learning Objective: To create and honor a covenant as a way of understanding the meaning of the word *covenant* as it is used in the Bible

Activity: Read about God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 17:1–22.

A covenant is essentially an agreement between two people or two groups of people. A covenant can be an agreement between two basically equal people, such as two partners in a business; or a covenant can be between two unequal people, such as a boss and an employee. In the unequal situation, the boss usually is the one who initiates the covenant by searching for an employee. Another unequal covenant is the agreement parents have with children. Parents initiate the relationship by giving birth to the child, and parents generally are more in control of the terms of the agreement than the child is (at least parents like to think they are!).

The covenant God establishes with the people of God in the Bible is more like the second, unequal kind mentioned in the previous paragraph. We are clearly not God's equal, and those of us who realize that tend to be much happier in life than those of us who think we are God. God is the one in the Bible who initiated the covenant relationship by calling out to the people, first in a general way through Noah, then more specifically through Abraham and Sarah, and finally on a continual basis through their descendants.

All covenants have terms or expectations; for example, if an employee agrees to complete a job as outlined by an employer, then the employer will agree to pay the employee. Those are the general expectations of their covenant. In the Bible, God agrees to make a nation out of Abraham and Sarah's descendants—one that will be a blessing to all peoples. In response to God's goodness, the people agree to be faithful to God and follow God's commandments.

A Covenant: Review and Understanding Activities

1. Who initiates the covenant described in Genesis 17:1–22?
2. What are the terms or expectations of the covenant?
3. Abraham and Sarah go through a name change during this covenant. God was telling them that they are like new people now that they've come to know and love God. Discuss some ways we change names in our society.
4. How would it feel to go through a name change?
5. Use the form on p. 27 to create a covenant with your child that will help your child modify a particular behavioral pattern that may be disruptive to your family. You will also need to adjust your behavior as a way to help your child honor the covenant. You're in this together. Note: You may want to copy the form to use again in the future. A word or two of caution: Don't sign the covenant until both parties agree to all the terms or expectations. Be sure to enforce consequences, but do it in a spirit of forgiveness when either party breaks the covenant. God is merciful and parents should be as well.

Parent-Child Covenant

Child's responsibility: I agree to... _____

Parent's responsibility: I agree to... _____

Consequences for breaking the covenant:

Child

Parent

Rewards for honoring the covenant:

Child

Parent

Child's signature

Parent's signature

_____ Date

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