

# RENAMED

Week 1 | Abraham and Sarah | Teacher: Libin Abraham

Sermon Questions for 5.31.2026

## OPENER

Most of us have been given names we never chose: failure, not enough, too broken, unwanted. We carry them not on name tags but deep in how we see ourselves. This message opens a five-week series called Renamed, and it begins with one of the most significant renamings in all of Scripture: Abram becoming Abraham and Sarai becoming Sarah. Their story reveals something surprising about the way God works: he renames people not in light of their past, but in light of their future. He changes identity before he changes circumstances, because transformation begins with who you believe you are.

Abraham and Sarah spent 25 years living between a promise and its fulfillment, and many of us know that territory well. When disappointment keeps returning to the same area of your life, it has a way of renaming you. This sermon is an invitation to hear what God has been calling you all along, something different than what your pain, your failures, or your waiting has convinced you to believe.

## READ

Genesis 17:1-21 | Romans 4:16-21

## MAIN POINTS

### 1. God Renames Before He Changes Circumstances

God's first move with both Abram and Sarai was not to fix their situation but to change who they understood themselves to be. Abram, meaning "exalted father," became Abraham, meaning "father of multitudes." Sarai, meaning "my princess," became Sarah, meaning "princess of a multitude." Neither of them had done anything yet to earn a name like that. God names people according to the future he has planned for them, not the present they can see. This pattern matters because transformation in our lives always follows a shift in identity: before we live differently, we have to believe something different about who we are.

### 2. God Places His Name Into Theirs

The renaming of Abraham and Sarah was more than a label change. God inserted the Hebrew letter "He," the prominent sound within his own name, Yahweh, into both of their names. This was not cosmetic. By placing part of his own name into theirs, God was declaring that they would no longer carry his promise alone. He was joining himself to their story. The miracle was not that Abraham became stronger or Sarah became more capable. The miracle was that God drew nearer. His presence, not their performance, was what made the impossible promise possible.

### 3. We Try to Carry What Was Never Ours to Carry Alone

Abraham and Sarah's deepest struggle was not their barrenness. It was the same struggle many of us face: trying to accomplish God's promises through human effort. Abraham offered Eliezer as an heir. Sarah proposed Hagar. Abraham later asked God to just work through Ishmael rather than wait for Isaac. Each of these was an attempt to help God out, to replace faith with what was visible and provable. The sermon challenges us to see how often we do the same thing, trying to fix the marriage, overcome the addiction, or become who God says we are entirely through our own willpower, and wearing ourselves out in the process.

### 4. Resurrection Faith Believes God Over What It Sees

Paul looks back on Abraham and Sarah in Romans 4 and calls what they practiced "resurrection faith." Abraham's body was as good as dead. Sarah's womb was as good as dead. And yet they believed that what God promised, God was able

to do. Their situation was beyond human possibility, and that is exactly where God wanted them to be, so that when the promise was fulfilled, no one else could get the credit. Faith, Paul says, is believing what God has said over what we see and feel. God specializes in calling things into existence that do not yet exist, and in bringing life out of dead places.

## 5. God Transforms Bitter Laughter Into Joyful Worship

When God first told Abraham and Sarah they would have a son in their old age, both of them laughed. But it was not the laughter of joy. It was the laughter of disbelief, exhaustion, and grief. So when God told them to name the child Isaac, meaning "laughter," he was doing something only he can do: taking the very sound of their pain and redeeming it into a sound of wonder. Every time Abraham and Sarah called his name, they remembered that their doubts did not win, their barrenness did not win, and God kept his promise. Only God can take the place where you once cried and turn it into a testimony of joy.

## ENGAGE WITH GOD IN A GROUP

- The sermon opened with stories of names that carry meaning and memory. What is a name or label, spoken or unspoken, that you have carried in your life, and where did it come from?
- God renamed Abraham and Sarah before anything in their circumstances had changed. Why do you think God works that way? What does it tell us about how transformation happens?
- Abraham and Sarah spent 25 years between a promise and its fulfillment. Have you ever lived in that space with God? What did that season do to your sense of identity or your image of God?
- The sermon said that Abraham and Sarah's primary problem was not their barrenness but their tendency to carry God's promises through human effort. Where in your own life are you most tempted to "help God out" rather than trust him to come through?
- God placed part of his own name into Abraham and Sarah's names as a sign that he was joining himself to their story. What does it mean to you practically that God's presence, not your performance, is what makes his promises possible in your life?
- Paul calls Abraham's faith "resurrection faith": believing what God said over what he saw and felt. What is one area of your life right now where you are being asked to practice that kind of faith?
- Isaac's name, meaning "laughter," was God's way of redeeming the very sound of their pain. Is there a place in your story where God has already turned something painful into a testimony of his faithfulness? What does that give you hope for now?

## BOTTOM LINE

**God does not wait for you to earn a new name. He renames you before your circumstances change, places his presence into your story, and asks you to believe him over what you see, because his promises are fulfilled through his presence, not your performance.**