

GOD PROMISED A NEW COVENANT

JEREMIAH 17; 31



KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 145:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Like God's people, we all have sinful hearts that do not obey God or love Him rightly. Through Jesus' death on the cross, God made a new covenant. Those who trust in Jesus have their sin forgiven and have the law written on their hearts.

STORY POINT: God promised His people a new covenant and forgiveness of sin forever.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The prophet Jeremiah was a priest sent to speak the word of the Lord to His people. Jeremiah taught plainly about sin and how our disobedient hearts cannot be trusted. Jeremiah predicted God's judgment on Judah's sins through the nation of Babylon. Yet, Jeremiah also declared how God would make a new covenant with His people.

The people of Judah faced the same problem we face today: sin. Their failure to abide by and uphold the law was a constant reminder that they were sinful and fell short of God's standards. Jeremiah told the people that those who put their trust in mankind are cursed because men are sinful and imperfect. He also said that people cannot save themselves. But Jeremiah shared good news. He told the people that the person who trusts in the Lord will be strong and healthy, like a tree planted by water (Jeremiah 17:8).

Through Jeremiah, the Lord spoke of His everlasting love toward His people. He shared the promise of gathering His people, watching over them, and turning their mourning into joy. God promised His people a new covenant and eternal forgiveness of sin.

The old covenant required complete obedience to the law; yet no one can be justified by the law (Galatians 2:16). In His grace, God did what we cannot do. He promised a new covenant which would be accomplished by Him. Jesus is the fulfillment of the new covenant; He fulfilled the requirements of the law on our behalf. As Paul wrote, "For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering" (Romans 8:3).

Forgiveness that lasts forever only comes through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:11). As you prepare to teach on God's promise of a new covenant, take time to thank Him for His forgiveness in your life. Remind boys and girls of how God changes believers' hearts to hearts that love and obey Him.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "A Great Promise" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- cups, 3
- small object like a cotton ball

Session Starter (Option 2)

- block of wood with the word SIN carved in it
- block of wood
- permanent marker
- paper towel



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "God Promised a New Covenant" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 15, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- world map

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "The Lord is Good (Psalm 145:9)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- buy or bake heart-shaped cookies, 1 per kid
- cookie icing
- paper plates, 1 per kid
- plastic baggies (optional)

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ball
- music

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “ Have you ever made a promise you couldn’t keep? What happened? ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “A Great Promise” activity page.

| **SAY** “ Today, we will learn about a wonderful promise God made and how God always keeps His promises. ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: CAN YOU BE TRICKED?



Display three cups on a table. Place a small object, like a cotton ball, under one of the cups while the kids watch. Shuffle the cups around slowly at first, then increase the speed as the game progresses. Ask a kid to guess which cup has the object. Play several rounds, inviting different kids to guess where the object is. Consider allowing a kid be the cup-mover.

| **SAY** “ The Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9 that our hearts can trick us. We might think we’re doing right, but we can’t always trust our hearts. Just like this game tricked our eyes, our hearts can fool us. Today, we’ll learn how we need God to change our hearts so we can follow His ways. ”

OPTION 2: IMPOSSIBLE TO WIPE AWAY

Before the session, carve the word SIN into a block of wood. Pass the wood around to the kids, inviting them to feel the indentations of the letters. Then take the wood back and invite kids, one at a time, to make a mark on the wood using a permanent marker. Once all kids have made a mark, try wiping away the marks and the word SIN with a paper towel. Emphasize how it is impossible to wipe them away. Share how our hearts are like this marked-up piece of wood because we all sin.

Then hold up a clean block of wood. Tell kids that we are going to learn how God promised to give His people a new heart. Discuss how only God can forgive us and wipe away our sin forever.

| **SAY** “ Today, we will learn about God’s promise to make a new covenant through Jesus. This means He would forgive people’s sins and give them a new heart. Let’s get ready to hear how this promise came true. ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I'm excited you're here. If you have a Bible with you, will you hold it up? **[Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.]** Today, we will be learning from the book of Jeremiah. As we study from the book of Jeremiah, we will learn about a good promise God made and how that promise is for us today.

As we hear our Bible story, we will learn that **GOD PROMISED HIS PEOPLE A NEW COVENANT AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN FOREVER.** **[Display the Story Point Poster.]** As we have seen, God's people continued to sin and couldn't take away their sin on their own. But God had a plan. Through Jesus, God was going to make the way for people to be forgiven and have hearts that desire to love and obey God.

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY **What is God like?** **[Allow responses.]** **God is holy, good, and loving.** The Bible is a book about God, and throughout the Bible, we continually see how God is holy, good, and loving. He always does what is right and shows that He loves His creation.

Today, we will see how God's promise to provide a new covenant displayed His holiness, goodness, and love. A holy God must punish sin, but through the new covenant God promised to forgive people's sin. The new covenant would be accomplished by Jesus because Jesus would take the punishment for people's sin. God's forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus shows His goodness and love.

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY We've learned about some of the prophets God sent to Israel to warn them of their sin, but the people did not listen. Eventually, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed, and the people were taken captive to Assyria. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was all that remained of God's people. While Judah had some good kings who led the people to worship God, after the good kings died, the people returned to worshiping idols. Last week, we learned how God sent prophets to Judah to tell them to repent of their sin. Today, we will learn about another prophet, Jeremiah, who told God's people to repent and also shared the hope of a new covenant.



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Promised a New Covenant.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

GOD PROMISED A NEW COVENANT

“Before Babylon came and attacked Judah, God sent a prophet named Jeremiah to speak His words to God’s people. Jeremiah said, “The sin of the people of Judah is like words carved into a stone—it can’t be simply wiped away.”

Jeremiah shared more of God’s words, saying, “The person who trusts in other people is cursed, because people are sinful and imperfect. People cannot save themselves. **The person who trusts in the LORD, however, will be strong and healthy, like a tree planted by water.”**

Through Jeremiah, God also said, “Our hearts are deceitful, and we cannot understand them. But God knows our hearts, and God is trustworthy. He gives each person what they deserve according to their character.”

Even though people have sinful, deceitful hearts, Jeremiah shared how God promised to make a new covenant with His people. Jeremiah said, “Look, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with my people. It will be different from the old covenant I made with them when I freed them from Egypt. They broke that covenant, but they will not be able to break this one. **I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. All my people will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive them and never remember their sin.”**

Christ Connection: Like God’s people, we all have sinful hearts that do not obey God or love Him rightly. Through Jesus’ death on the cross, God made a new covenant. Those who trust in Jesus have their sin forgiven and have the law written on their hearts. **”**

STORYTELLING TIPS

Pass it: Pass around a small stone as you describe how the sin of people’s hearts is like words carved into a stone.

List it: On a dry erase board, write a list of God’s promises through the new covenant: God’s teaching on people’s hearts, He will be their God, His people will know Him, He will forgive their sin.



2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY The prophet Jeremiah was sent by God to warn the people of the seriousness of sin. God's people had God's law, but they couldn't obey it perfectly. They kept sinning and turning away from God. What did Jeremiah compare the sin of the people of Judah to? [Allow responses.] By comparing the people's sin to words carved into stone, Jeremiah helped them understand that people cannot take away their sin. Jeremiah explained that people are not able to save themselves. We can never obey God perfectly.

Why did Jeremiah compare the person who trusts in God to a tree planted by water? [Allow responses.] Trees receive water through their roots, so a tree planted beside water will never go dry; it will always be filled with life. When we trust in God, He gives us new life and fills us with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides us as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

What did Jeremiah say about people's hearts? [Allow responses.] People's hearts are untrustworthy and lead us to follow our own desires instead of God's. The people of Judah were unable to keep the old covenant because their hearts led them to sin. But God promised to make a new covenant with His people—one they could not break. Jeremiah shared that a day was coming when God would forgive sin forever. God would give people new hearts that desire to obey Him.

Jesus, God's sinless Son, came to earth, died on the cross for sin, and rose again. Jesus' death paid the price we deserve for our sin. Through Jesus' death on the cross, God made a new covenant. Those who trust in Jesus have their sin forgiven and have the law written on their hearts. //

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY The people of Judah were unable to keep God's law under the old covenant. We have also broken God's law by sinning against Him. But God sent Jesus to live a perfect life and die on the cross for our sin. When we trust in Jesus, we receive forgiveness of sin forever. Have you trusted in Jesus to save you? //

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 15, Session 3" Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can God be in all believer's hearts at the same time?
2. How can Christians show others that Jesus has changed their heart?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Point to the country of Libya on a world map as you tell kids about a man named Youcef who lives in Libya. Share how Youcef became a Christian after a friend gave him a copy of the New Testament to read.

SAY While Youcef was reading the New Testament, he learned about Simon of Cyrene and how he carried Jesus' cross on the way to Golgotha. As Youcef began to learn more about Simon of Cyrene, he found out that Simon was from the city of Cyrene in Libya.

Youcef wrote a book about his research. Since many people of North Africa are oral learners, he hopes to make his book into a movie so more people in North Africa will hear the gospel message. He hopes more people will believe the truths of the Bible and trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. „

Pray for Youcef as he continues to share the hope of the gospel with the people of North Africa. Pray for the people of North Africa and that they would trust in Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 145:9 together.

SAY Jeremiah reminded the people that their sin was great but hope was not lost. God did not leave His people in their sin, because just as our key passage reminds us, He is good and compassionate over all He has made. „

Provide the kids with several sheets of paper and some markers. Help the kids break the key passage down into smaller pieces, using only a few words at a time. Encourage them to work together to draw pictures for each of the phrases to help them remember each part of the key passage. Once complete, instruct kids to recite the key passage using their pictures.

Lead kids to sing "The Lord is Good (Psalm 145:9)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY God, Your Word reminds us how much You care for us. We praise You for being greater than the power of sin. Help us turn away from our own desires and follow You. Help our hearts love You more than anything else. Amen. „

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 31. Explain that the book of Jeremiah was written by the prophet Jeremiah. Share how the book of Jeremiah is in the Major Prophets division of the Old Testament because it is larger in size.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read Jeremiah 17:9-10 or ask kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY Have you ever heard the phrase ‘follow your heart?’ [Allow responses.] Jeremiah reminds us that our hearts can’t always be trusted. Because we are sinful, our hearts lead us to follow our own ways rather than God’s ways. God is always trustworthy, and His truth is unchanging.

Through God’s promise of a new covenant, we have the way for our hearts to be made new. Jesus did what we cannot do: He perfectly obeyed God. When we trust in Him, we are forgiven of our sin and God changes our hearts so that we want to obey God. We may not always obey God perfectly, but because of faith in Jesus, God still sees us as if we have done everything right.

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY How does God write His law on our hearts?

Tell kids that God does not write on our hearts with a marker or a pen. Explain that when we turn to God, He permanently changes the desires of our hearts. As believers, we will want to obey God’s law not because of written rules, but because we have a transformed heart that loves Him (Romans 6:17).

SAY Why should we obey God?

Help kids understand that we obey God because He loves us. Tell kids that we don’t obey God to earn His love, because through Jesus, we already have it. Because of sin, our hearts want to do what we want instead of what God wants. We can try to obey God perfectly, but we will sin. Through the new covenant, God promised to save us through Jesus and to change our hearts to help us obey Him.

SAY The people in the Old Testament broke the old covenant because they did not keep all of God’s laws. Why can’t the new covenant be broken?

Share how the new covenant cannot be broken because God Himself accomplished it. When Jesus came to earth, He obeyed every one of God’s laws perfectly. Jesus always did what the Father commanded. The new covenant was completed when Jesus died on the cross. His blood washes away the sin of those who trust in Him. Before Jesus died on the cross, He said, “it is finished.” Jesus did what God sent Him to do so people could have forgiveness of sins.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





LIVE

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: EDIBLE HEARTS



Before the session, buy or bake sugar cookies in the shape of a heart. Consider leading kids to wash their hands or use hand-sanitizer prior to touching the cookies. Provide kids with a heart-shaped cookie, paper plate, and cookie icing. Direct kids to decorate their cookies using the icing. Then invite kids to share their cookie designs with the group. Allow kids to eat their cookie or provide plastic baggies for kids to take their cookie home.

SAY Apart from Jesus, we don't love God and want to obey Him. We love ourselves more than we love God, and we follow our own way. But when we trust in Jesus, God changes us. He gives us new hearts—hearts of flesh that are soft toward Him, like these cookies. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and changes our hearts so we love Him and want to obey Him.

OPTION 2: PROMISE PASS



Lead kids to sit in a circle. Direct kids to pass around the ball while the music plays. When the music stops, the kid holding the ball answers a question about the promises found in the Bible story or completes a phrase you say, such as:

- Who said God would make a new covenant? (Jeremiah)
- God's new covenant means... (God loves us.)
- God will write His law on... (our hearts.)
- What did God promise to forgive? (our sin)

SAY Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. Just like the people of Judah, we need a heart change so that we can obey and follow God.

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.