



GOD'S UNBREAKABLE PROMISES

5 REASONS GOD NEVER FAILS

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An IF + RightNow Media Original. Written by Nancy Frazier, Alyssa Gossom, Laura Murray, and Rachel Forrest. Cover Art and Design by Vessel Creative.

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HOW TO STUDY

GOD'S UNBREAKABLE PROMISES

We are so glad you picked out this study! This six-week study guide was created for you to use on your own or in a group. Throughout the study, you will find reflection questions for your own personal time of study, and you will find group questions as well. Use these questions to facilitate conversation within your small group and dig deeper into each week's topic.

STUDY COMPONENTS:

1. Videos: The videos are a tool to help unpack the weekly topic of the study. Watch the video at the start of each week. We encourage you to watch and discuss the videos as a small group before diving into the daily reading.

2. The PDF (or web page): This is where you will find the daily reading and reflection questions.

This can all be found in two places:

- In the PDF. This is the most effective format for groups. If you need one or more copies, head to shoppe.ifgathering.com.
- IFequip.com. This is our web-based version of the study. Each devotional is added daily. If you access the study through this site, your group members will need to keep journals to write down their answers each day so they can refer to them during group discussion.

Note: If you are leading a group, it can be helpful to plan an “intro” group meeting to give an overview of the study format, watch the trailer for the study, and explain the schedule before diving in. This meeting also gives your group members time to get to know one another.

HOW TO STUDY

GOD'S UNBREAKABLE PROMISES

(CONTINUED)

TYPICAL WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

1. Get together with your group to watch the video. After week one, review what you learned through the daily readings from the previous week before watching the video.
2. Go over the discussion questions in the Leader's Guide with your group.
3. Do the week's reading and questions on your own (there are five days of content for each week).

HOW TO ACCESS THE WEEKLY VIDEOS:

- **Watch on RightNow Media.**

1. Log in to your RightNow Media account and search "IF:Gathering" to find *God's Unbreakable Promises* video series.
2. If you do not have a RightNow Media account, go to rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering to access the videos for free through an exclusive RightNow Media and IF:Gathering resource library. After creating an account, log in and search "God's Unbreakable Promises" to watch the series.

- **Watch on ifequip.com.**

WEEK
ONE

THE TRAGEDY AND THE HOPE



Watch

***“The Tragedy and
the Hope”***

*with Jennie Allen
(12 minutes).*

REWIND & REFLECT

How can you trust that God is good?

With the Bible at our fingertips, we have a story of God’s faithfulness right in front of us to show us one example after another of who God is. In this six-session study, we want to walk you through some of the promises and covenants God made with his people to understand more of the story of God and the big picture of his unfailing love for us.

Through this study, featuring teaching videos from Jennie Allen, Lauren Chandler, and Jada Edwards, you will discover:

- The story of God throughout the Bible, and what it means for you now.
- That God always keeps his word, even if we don’t.
- That God never fails, even when his people do.

God always keep his promises.

ACCESS THE SESSION ONE VIDEO AT [RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING](https://rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering).

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK ONE



REVIEW

Jennie started the series describing when she realized there was a big, overarching narrative of the Bible—and that, specifically, there were moments when God entered human history to unveil his plan through the covenants he made with his people. When did you first realize the significance of the covenants? What's been your understanding of the covenants?

The covenants tell the story of God's work on earth through specific moments in history. Jennie explained that a unilateral covenant is when God is faithful to keep his promise no matter the failure of the other person, while a bilateral covenant requires action by both God and his people. After hearing these definitions, what questions do you have about the covenants?

Jennie highlighted how covenants show that God, in his perfection and holiness, makes binding promises to us knowing how sinful and unreliable we are. How do God's covenants display his steadfast love for us?



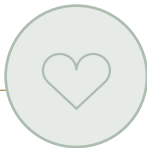
DIG IN

Read Genesis 3:8–19. In this passage, Adam and Eve hide from God after giving in to the serpent's temptation. God then tells the three of them the consequences of their actions. What specifically does God tell the serpent after seeing what he's done? What are some of the specifics he gives the serpent regarding his relationship to the woman?

Verse 15 explains that the woman's seed will bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent will bruise his heel. Jennie told us that this statement points us to Jesus, the promised savior. How does knowing that Jesus is alluded to as early as Genesis impact your understanding of his story?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK ONE CONTINUED

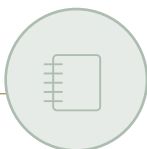


MAKE IT MATTER

The covenants, we'll cover in this series, will show us how the story of Jesus is revealed throughout the Bible. What difference does it make to know that these covenants are part of the big story of Scripture?

Jennie told us that even though every human has been unfaithful to God, he has continued to be faithful and has kept every promise. What's your reaction to knowing that God keeps his promises? How does seeing God as a promise keeper help you understand his love for his people?

Jennie gave us her hope for this series. She said, "I believe this story of God's work throughout history will remind you that there is a God who has a plan, and he is good at redeeming brokenness, healing the sickness, rescuing from death, and causing the chaotic storms of life to calm." What about God's overarching plan do you hope to understand in a deeper way through this series?



REFLECT

Jennie told us that we're going to learn about five covenants in this series and all of them will reflect how faithful God is to his people. Take some time to reflect on God's faithfulness as you prepare to watch the rest of this series.

Every covenant God made with humankind led up to the life and work of Christ. Our salvation is proof of God's loving covenants with his creation. Reflect on how it feels to know your life is part of such a large and evolving history. Find a friend this week and discuss the difference it makes in your life to know that God has a plan.

God Keeps His Word

A few years ago, Pew Research did a survey to find out what Americans mean when they say they believe in God. Although they found that a majority of people (56% to be exact) said they believe in God as described in the Bible, only 28% said they talk to God and that God talks to them, while almost twice as many (47%) said they talk to God but that God does not talk to them.¹ The thing about statistics is that they always portray numerically what many of us already know experientially. And these statistics are no exception. So many of us say we believe in God, we affirm his existence, we trust what Scripture tells us about him, and yet, we still find ourselves feeling disconnected from him.

Our lives are complicated and, too often, chaotic. We're daughters, sisters, mothers, friends, wives. We're students, teachers, lawyers, artists, politicians, doctors, CEOs. Our day-to-day lives pull us in what feels like a hundred different directions, from late nights at the office, to weekends spent chauffeuring kids, to trying our best to be the world's greatest aunt/boss/sister/girlfriend. Even so, the world continues to turn, rolling out so many hashtags, campaigns, social causes, cries for justice, we can hardly keep up. And while we do our best to manage our hundred-miles-an-hour lives, so many of us do so looking forward to the rest we hope we'll find at the other side of one more deadline or promotion, one more bake sale or booster club meeting, one more blind date or pound lost.

SCRIPTURE:

ROMANS

8:22–23

This is, after all, what it means to live in the twenty-first century, or so we tell ourselves. And while that may be true, our longing for rest, our longing for stability, for something we can depend on, someone we can trust, is as old as time. So, we do what so many Christians have done before us. We pray. We reach out to God—the God we believe in, the God of the Bible—only to find ourselves on the wrong end of a statistic, on one end of what can feel like a chasm of universal proportions.

It's one of the ironies of life that it's in the midst of the hard moments, when we feel most disconnected from God, that we're led to ask the deep questions of faith. Questions like, "Are you there, God? Are you working in the world? Do you keep your word?" The same questions that have been asked by countless generations before us.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to unpack these questions as we study the covenants we find in Scripture. And as we look at how God has worked in the world and in the lives of his people, we'll be reminded once again that not only is God there, but more importantly, he is here—with us, always present and always working in our world and in our lives.

Is there an area of your life—work, home, school, family, relationships, health—where you feel disconnected from God? Is there an area where you desperately need God to show up?

All God Makes Is Good

SCRIPTURE:

GENESIS 1:1, 26–28; 2:7,
21–22, 25

It's hard to imagine, isn't it, the world of Genesis 1 and 2? That world is a world where swarms of living creatures filled the earth and sky and water, where vegetation was fruitful, and where man and woman coexisted free of shame and grief and strife. That world doesn't seem much like our world at all. After all, in our world, animals face the threat of extinction, droughts destroy our vegetation, and man and woman are caught up in a never-ending battle for power and dominance.

And while with its images of idyllic paradise, Genesis 1 and 2 can be hard to relate to—not to mention downright discouraging when we find ourselves living in what can be described as anything but paradise. If we're going to understand the covenants, the relational contracts God makes with his people, we must begin by understanding something about the God who initiates them. And for that, there's no better place to start than at the beginning.

If Genesis 1 teaches us anything, it's that all that God does is good. He brought light into darkness, and it was good (vv. 3–4). He separated the waters from the land, and it was good (vv. 9–10). He made plants and trees to bear fruit, and it was good (vv. 11–12). God spoke an entire universe into existence, and it was very good indeed (v. 31).

Rather than focusing on a day-by-day retelling of how the world came to be, Genesis 2 draws us into the intimacy of God's creation of humanity. Here, God forms the man out of the dust of the ground. He breathes life into him. He creates a woman out of the man's rib and brings her to the man to be his indispensable companion. But what is most significant about this retelling of creation, what should stop us dead in our tracks, is that we see a God who took the time, took the trouble, took the energy to make humanity, not out of some feeling of loneliness or wanting for anything, but out of the overflowing abundance of his love.

We see in Genesis 2 that God acts to bring us into relationship with himself. From the light to the land to the animals to the vegetation, he formed all of creation in order to make a place where we could dwell in relationship with him. He created a world for us, a good world where we could be with him.

While our world may no longer resemble the unspoiled creation of Genesis 1 and 2, we can take comfort in knowing that these two truths—that all that God does is good and that all that God does is to bring us into relationship with himself—are not only true of every covenant God makes with his people but are also true of God himself. And that, we can always count on.

How does knowing that everything God does is good change the way you think about God? How does knowing that everything God does is to bring us into relationship with himself change the way you think about your life?

God Restores What Is Lost

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3:1–24

We experience it a hundred different ways: It's the call from the doctor telling us the tests are back, and it doesn't look good. It's the string of long nights spent at the office only to be passed over for the promotion. It's the hurricane that wipes out half a city in an afternoon, and the political unrest that doesn't seem to care who gets caught in the crossfire. It's the marriage counseling that didn't work; the guy who said he'd call but doesn't; the pregnancy test that comes back negative; the child who's losing her way—and we can't do anything to stop it.

No one has to tell us. No one has to convince us. Something's "off" in this world, and we know it. We feel it.

Between natural disasters, socio-political disruption, and personal disappointments, our lives hardly resemble the world of Genesis 1 and 2. And not without reason. While the first two chapters of the book of Genesis give us a glimpse of an idyllic paradise, only one chapter later paradise is lost.

Deceived by a snake and led by her own faulty thinking about God's explicit command, Eve takes fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, eats it, and gives some to her husband (Genesis 3:1–6). A moment later, the open, perfect fellowship of Genesis 2, what made it possible for the man and his wife to stand before each other naked without a trace of shame, vanishes, and for the first time Adam and Eve use God's creation to hide themselves, both from each other and from God (Genesis 3:7–8). Only four verses later, an already strained relationship is pushed to the limit as the man turns against God and his wife (v. 12). Before all is said and done, all of creation—the woman, the man, the earth—will suffer the effects of Adam and Eve's sin (vv. 14–19). As Genesis 3 comes to an end, God drives Adam and Eve out of the garden to make their life east of Eden.

It's all too familiar, what we see in Genesis 3. And if all we were left with was a picture of a man and his wife broken by sin, it would be almost unbearable. But the thing about God is that he's merciful. And so, in the midst of shame and hiding, blame and accusation, the pain of childbirth and the cursing of the ground, God made a promise, not to the man and not to the woman, but to the snake. God says, "Because you have done this . . . I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (vv. 14–15). Wrapped in that promise we find the foreshadowing of the gospel—the good news that God would send someone who would set right what Adam and Eve's sin had broken.

And God has been true to his word, moving heaven and earth to restore what was lost in Genesis 3. It is toward this movement of redemption that we now move.

*Is there a part of your life that feels broken beyond repair?
God is moving heaven and earth to restore what has been broken in your life.
What do you need to entrust to him?*

God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

DEUTERONOMY 7:9

For most of us, the word “covenant” isn’t one we hear on a regular basis. It’s not something we think about. It doesn’t play a role in the ins-and-outs of our day-to-day lives. So, even though we might have an idea of what a covenant is, we might understand its textbook definition, or have even heard it talked about in church, it can be hard to wrap our minds around it, to understand what it means when the Bible says God is “the faithful God who keeps covenant” (Deuteronomy 7:9).

Over the coming weeks, we’ll be exploring God’s work of redemption through a study of five covenants we find in Scripture: the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the New Covenant.

Covenants are often framed as contracts. Two parties enter into an agreement under some kind of mutual understanding. The covenant serves as the formal commitment that each party will keep his end of the bargain as well as outline any stipulations or consequences.

This is the way covenants generally functioned in the ancient Near East, and this is the way the biblical covenants we'll be studying functioned. But there's an added dimension unique to the biblical covenant. Each of the covenants mentioned above are highly relational in nature. We can think of them as divine DTRs—specific moments in time when God distinctively moved to define the nature of his relationship with specific people, under specific circumstances, for specific purposes.

The covenants we'll be studying function in one of two ways, as unilateral covenants or bilateral covenants. Unilateral covenants function as covenants of promise. One party commits himself wholly to some action with no obligation on the part of the other party. The Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants fit under this category. In bilateral covenants, on the other hand, each participant binds himself to specific obligations and both parties are responsible for meeting the stipulations of their agreement. We'll see how bilateral covenants work as we study the Mosaic covenant.

We'll begin our study in Genesis 9 with the Noahic covenant. Here, we'll see a renewal of God's commitment to all of creation. We'll then turn to the Abrahamic covenant just a few chapters later in Genesis 12, where we'll be reminded of God's great love for all people of the world. Our study of the Mosaic covenant will bring us to Exodus 24. As the only bilateral covenant in our study, this covenant will give us insight not only into God's nature but into our human nature as well. Next, we'll turn to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 to learn how God's promises to David would impact the entire cosmos. Finally, we'll finish our study with the New Covenant. It is here that each covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment.

While each of these covenants are unique in their own way, they all point to the same good news: God is faithful to keep his promises. And it is through the covenants that we are given an unobstructed view of God's redemptive work in the world and in the lives of his people.

*How does knowing God enters into covenants with faulty
humanity impact the way you understand God?*

God Is the Same Then as He Is Now

“Know the Lord,” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

JEREMIAH 31:34

We live our lives at lightning speed. And how can we not? We have families to raise. Careers to develop. Goals to reach. Things to learn. Relationships to grow. Instagram accounts to update. Dreams to actualize. In the midst of all the demands of twenty-first-century life, it can be hard to connect to ancient notions of promise and obligation, duty and responsibility. We might find ourselves asking: Why should a set of ancient covenants matter now? What do these contractual agreements God made with other people have to do with our lives today?

There’s no denying it. We lead very different lives from Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. But even with the myriad ways our lives are different, there’s at least one way our lives are the same. Just as every one of them felt the consequences of broken relationship with God all those centuries ago, we continue to feel the strain that comes with living in a world that’s not as it should be.

Adam and Eve experienced life in a world where the earth had been cursed and where shame, pain, dissent, and strife were felt. All of this after having tasted the unhindered goodness of creation and perfect fellowship with God. Noah felt the excruciating pain that comes with witnessing his world be ravaged by flood and experiencing the loss of life. He had to start over with only his family by his side. Abraham knew firsthand the heartbreak of childlessness. Moses was all too familiar with the feelings of incompetence. He knew imposter syndrome long before it had a name. David lived with the pain of broken family relationships. And Jesus—Jesus knew the worst pain of all, as he hung on a tree, betrayed by his friends, carrying the weight of all the sins of the world.

So, why should a set of ancient covenants matter to us now? Because just like these people spent their lives waiting for God to fulfill his promises of redemption, we also find ourselves waiting. No, we're not waiting for God to give us a descendant and make us into a great nation like Abraham did, but we're waiting for something. Maybe we're waiting for healing in our bodies, our hearts, our minds. Maybe we're waiting for restoration in our relationships. Or maybe we're waiting for companionship in the form of a child, a spouse, a friend. In our waiting, we can look to God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and find hope. Because, like all the other covenants, the end of our waiting is wrapped up in the fulfillment of God's New Covenant through Jesus.

Why study the covenants? Because for those of us who follow Jesus, there is no covenant whose blessings we do not enjoy.

As it turns out, our lives may not be all that different after all.

Do you find yourself in a season of waiting?

What are you waiting on/for?

How can knowing God is working to fulfill his promises bring hope to your situation?

WEEK
TWO

THE PROMISE OF SOMETHING BETTER



Watch

***“The Promise of
Something Better”***

*with Jada Edwards
(5 minutes).*

REWIND & REFLECT

1. What are some examples of God’s faithfulness from the last session?
2. God is a promise keeper, a faithful God who doesn’t go back on his word. How have you seen his faithfulness in your own life?

In session 2, we are going to talk about the promise God made with Noah, and what it means for us today.

ACCESS THE SESSION TWO VIDEO AT [RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING](https://rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering).

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK TWO



REVIEW

Jada introduced us to the covenant between God and Noah in Genesis 9, where God promises never to destroy humanity again through a flood. In what ways does this covenant display God's love for humanity despite their evil actions?

Before God made a covenant with Noah, humans grieved God because of their actions. Jada explained that this story gives us insight into an intimate God who feels pain and disappointment. How does seeing God brokenhearted over sin in this story impact your view of him?

Jada told a story about her son doing poorly on a test she had helped him study for. He became distracted when something else caught his attention, which she said can also happen in our relationship with God. How do you handle distractions in your life? In what ways have you been distracted when trying to do what God has called you to do?



DIG IN

Read Genesis 6:5–22. This chapter explores the increasing depravity and corruption on earth. In a hostile world, Noah walked with God. What is the reason God saved Noah and his family, according to the passage? How does the passage show that Noah was different than the rest of the world?

Jada explained that the moral decline in Noah's day is similar to what Paul described in Romans 1:18–32. What comparisons can you make between the people in Genesis 6 and Romans 1?

Read Genesis 9:8–17. After the flood, Noah and his family settled on new land, where God gave them commands and instituted a covenant. He gave the covenant a sign: a rainbow. What does God promise to Noah in this new covenant? Why do you think having the rainbow as a sign was an important reminder for Noah?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK TWO CONTINUED



MAKE IT MATTER

As often as we see rainbows, it can become easy to forget how important they are and what they represent for humanity. What is your typical reaction to seeing a rainbow? How could seeing a rainbow help you remember that God keeps his promises?

Jada talked about what it means to rest in God. She said, “Even when we fail, even when God’s standard hasn’t changed, his comfort is still available to us. He’s a God who continues to give promises even when we fail.” In what ways have you experienced God’s faithfulness even after failure?

Consider Jada’s reminder to rest in God’s comfort and truly get to know him. How could learning more about God’s character help you find comfort in him?



REFLECT

We learned in this session that studying God’s covenants can show us our own wrongdoing and need for forgiveness. What do you need to repent from this week? Spend some time being truthful with God about your struggles and say a prayer of thankfulness for his promises.

Re-read the story of the covenant between God and Noah in Genesis 6–9 this week. Ask God to show you what it means to understand and believe in his promises.

God Is Our Hope

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 5:28–31

Not long after Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden of Eden did sin begin wreaking havoc on the world. Genesis 5 recounts Adam’s genealogy and not two generations pass before a pattern begins to develop: “When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son, in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died” (vv. 3–5). As for Seth, he “lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died” (vv. 7–8). “All the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died” (v. 11). “All the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died” (v. 14). And so on.

But something happens as we continue reading. The pattern is interrupted when we come to the son of a man named Lamech. “When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, ‘Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands’” (Genesis 5:28–29). Rather than simply giving the name of Lamech’s son and an account of the years he lived, nestled between one death and another, we find an explanation. And just as quickly as the pattern is broken, it’s picked up again as we read that “Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died” (v. 31).

When we find these kinds of abnormalities in Scripture, we have to ask, what’s going on here? The name Noah literally means “rest.” So why the added explanation?

What we’ll find, as we delve into our study of the Noahic covenant, is that this “explanation” is not really an explanation at all. What reads like an explanation is actually a declaration of hope, a look forward to a promise of rest and relief in the midst of a world full of toil and struggle.

This is how we're first introduced to Noah, and what a way to make an entrance! In a world surrounded by death, Noah's birth breaks through with a promise of something better, a promise that there will come an end to the struggle and the toil. Pain and death will not rule forever. Something's coming, and it will bring us rest.

This is what the Noahic covenant invites us into: hope. And isn't that exactly what we're all looking for? No matter our circumstances, we could all use hope, because we, like Lamech—and Enosh and Seth and Adam—know what it's like to live in a world ravaged by sin. Sin has separated us from God, too, and we feel it. Death is in our world, too, and it robs us of the ones we love. But there's good news. Hope has broken through to remind us that there is one who is coming to bring us relief, and in him we will find our rest.

*Are you weary? Are there areas of your life where you feel worn out and listless?
What would it look like to find rest in those areas?*

God Remains Faithful

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 6:6-7

Hope requires much from us. It requires our affections, our vulnerability, our energy. And even when we give ourselves to it, when we are willing to embrace that in-between-ness of hope, that possibility that things may work out or that they may not, we do so risking what can sometimes be total heartbreak. It's hard work to hope, because there's always the possibility our hopes can be dashed.

We can only imagine that Lamech must have known that feeling as he watched his son Noah grow up, not only experiencing the pain of toil himself, but also living in a world that seemed to be turning ever more toward sin. Noah may have been born in hope, but how could hope possibly survive in a world like this?

Genesis tells us that humanity had become so corrupt, so wicked, they entertained "only evil continually" in their hearts (Genesis 6:5). This was a far cry from the garden of Eden in Genesis 1 and 2. Things were so bad that Genesis 6:7 tells us God was grieved "to his heart." In response, God said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens for I am sorry that I have made them."

Just as it seems that all hope is lost forever, a little word, three letters long, is introduced into the narrative. And that little word changes everything.

But. B-U-T. It may seem like making too big a deal over three little letters, but the truth is a coordinating conjunction has never looked so good, because this little word marks a big change in direction. Just as we read God had declared he would wipe out all living things, verse 8 continues, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”

Now, when we picture Noah, this righteous man who walked with God and was blameless in his generation, it can be easy to imagine a guy who had it all together. But the thing about people who seem too good to be true is that they usually are. And Noah was no exception. Noah stood out among his generation for the simple reason that he walked with God, living according to his will. So, while we may be tempted to think Noah’s righteousness earned him God’s favor, that couldn’t be further from the truth. God’s favor is never earned. It is always a gift of grace.

Noah’s father, Lamech, died in hope. It’s a hard reality, and one we’d rather not share, but if Genesis 6 teaches us anything, it’s that our hope need not be in vain. God is merciful, and he is good, and because his love is a condescending love—a love that stoops down to us because we could not possibly reach up to him—we can hold on to hope even in the midst of the harshest circumstances. Lamech would never know the satisfaction of a realized hope, but God would remain faithful. His rest would come.

“
**...but Noah
found favor
in the eyes of
the Lord.”**

*What are you hoping for today?
Does God feel worthy of your hope?*

God Is Love

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 7:11–16; 8:1

If we're honest, Noah's story would be easier left alone. It raises so many questions and gives us so few answers. But if we're going to understand the Noahic covenant and the God who initiates it, we have to be willing to grapple with the reality of the flood. And grappling with the reality of the flood means grappling with the reality of God's judgment.

God, "determined to make an end of all flesh," instructed Noah to build an ark and fill it with his family, two of every animal, and "every sort of food that is eaten" (Genesis 6:14–16, 19–21). Noah did as God instructed and, at the appointed time, went into the ark with his family and the animals (Genesis 7:1). When Noah was six hundred years old, it began to rain, and it didn't stop for forty days and forty nights (7:6, 11–12).

Humanity's wickedness, their corruption and violence, led to a flood so great it cost the life of every living creature (Genesis 6:17). What we see in Noah's story is a family, scared and living on a boat filled with animals, floating above a watery grave. Sin entered the world and made its home here, and there's nothing serene about it. What we see in the flood is the consequence of sin, the judgment of God.

It can be hard to reconcile how God can be good while at the same time be the destroyer of life. And while it would be easier to simply skirt the issue by couching it in language about how God's ways are not our ways, we would be better served by grappling with the tension.

Theologian Miroslav Volf tells a story about his own struggle to reconcile God's judgment with God's love. "I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God," he writes. "Isn't God love? Shouldn't divine love be beyond wrath?"² It wasn't until he saw his home in the former Yugoslavia ravaged by war that he came to realize it is precisely because God is love that he pours out his judgment:

*"My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry. . . . How did God react to the carnage? By doting on the perpetrators in a grandfatherly fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrators' basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them? Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love."*³

God's judgment is not incompatible with his love and mercy. And that is made ever so clear as Scripture tells us that "God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1). His judgment was poured out for a time, but in his mercy, and because of his love, he considered this one man, his family, and all the animals with him, and God made a wind to blow over the earth and made the waters subside.

Just shy of one year later, God would call Noah out of the ark with a blessing and a promise. Wrapped in that promise would come long-awaited rest.

*Is it hard for you to think of God as love in light of his judgment?
How might knowing that God's judgment is poured out of love change the way you understand God?*

God Will Never Give Up on Us

We can only imagine how Noah and his family must have felt as they finally stepped out of the ark and into the world. Almost a year had passed since their feet had touched steady ground. The world they knew had been washed away, and the world they were stepping into must have seemed strange and lonely.

Although we are not told what Noah was thinking or feeling as he made his way out of the ark, we do know that he recognized God had saved him. We know this because when Noah left the ark, he built an altar to God (Genesis 8:20). God was pleased with Noah, and in receiving his worship promised to “never again curse the ground because of man” (Genesis 8:21). The land bore the curse when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden; it was the land that had absorbed God’s judgment when humanity had given themselves over to wickedness (Genesis 3:17; 6:11–13). But from this point forward, the land would never bear the curse of sin again.

God turned to Noah and his sons and gave them a blessing and a mandate: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). If this sounds familiar it’s because it should. Because in this blessing and mandate, we see a mirroring of Genesis 2. God is remaking his creation, but unlike before, where he blessed a man and a woman who knew no sin, here he blessed these men even in their sin. And isn’t that the best news? God does not reserve his blessings for the sinless. He pours them out on us even when we can’t help but mess up.

SCRIPTURE:

GENESIS

9:12–16

Just to assure Noah that he can be trusted, God sealed his blessing by making a covenant. Although we call this the Noahic covenant, its benefits reach well beyond its namesake. And in this way, it is unique among the covenants, as God commits himself not only to Noah but to his descendants after him, and to every living creature on the earth. God would never destroy the earth by flood again, and to mark his commitment to humanity and all of creation, he gave a sign—a rainbow.

The Noahic covenant is a unilateral covenant, which means God entered into this commitment requiring absolutely nothing of his creation. In doing so, this covenant re-established what was already true of God's relationship with the world. God is the giver and sustainer of life—all life.

In the Noahic covenant we see God promising to be faithful even if humanity is not. And just as that was something Noah and his family could count on back then, it is also something we can count on right now. The good news of the Noahic covenant is that when we are faithless, God is faithful. When we are sinful, he is merciful. God will never give up on his creation. He will never give up on us.

How does knowing God has committed himself to his creation challenge the way you understand the world? How does it challenge the way you live in the world?

God Is Always Good

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 9:1, 28–29

When we read the Bible, these stories about men and women who lived centuries before us, we can struggle to see what their stories could possibly have to do with ours. And while it's true Scripture was written about particular people living in particular times, and written to particular people living in particular times, it was preserved for people just like us.

God blessed Noah, his family, and all of creation, and that blessing is so lavish, so extravagant, it reaches clear across time and space to us and every living creature on the earth today. We are inheritors of God's covenant with Noah. And just as God was faithful to keep his promises to Noah, we can be certain that he will be faithful to keep his promises to us.

But even though we are the beneficiaries of God's blessings through the Noahic covenant, we know all too well that life is not all rainbows and butterflies. In fact, it seldom is. Humanity has not given up its wicked ways, natural disasters still happen, and we still feel the "painful toil of our hands" (Genesis 5:29). And that's because, like Lamech, we're still waiting for our rest to come.

Lamech believed Noah would bring humanity rest from their toil, and while he wasn't wrong—rest would come through one of Noah's descendants—he ultimately took that hope to his grave.

Lamech died in hope. And even though God blessed Noah and renewed his commitment to all of creation, Noah also died in hope. He lived, just as his father and forefathers had lived, and he died just as they had died. The son that Lamech hoped would bring rest died.

But Lamech's hope was not in vain. Generations later, long after Lamech and Noah had died, a boy would be born, a descendant of Noah, who would ultimately fulfill Lamech's hope. He would overturn not only the curse on the land, but every curse. The curse of sin itself. That boy would be born in a manger to a young virgin named Mary, and they would call his name Jesus.

Through the Noahic covenant we see that all that God does is good. He is good when he spares the world of unbridled sin, and he is good when he spares the world through the life of one man. Through the Noahic covenant we see that all that God does is to bring us into relationship with himself. He re-establishes his commitment to the earth and to all living things that live on the earth, all so that humanity can be in relationship with him. And through the Noahic covenant we see that God is faithful even when humanity is not.

Lamech and Noah died waiting in hope. We are also called to live in hope, even as we wait. And so we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, and bring us rest."

Do you believe God is faithful in your own life?

Does your life reflect trust in a faithful God?

If not, how might your life change if you believed God would be faithful even when you're not?

WEEK
THREE

THE UNSTOPPABLE LOVE OF GOD



Watch

***“The Unstoppable
Love of God”***

*with Lauren Chandler
(8 minutes).*

REWIND & REFLECT

1. God didn't have to comfort Noah's family with the rainbow, but it's as if he knew that another rainstorm might freak them out after the "Big One," so he designed the combination of water and light to make the rainbow. Has God ever comforted you with some sort of sign after a difficult event or season? In what ways have you seen God as a comforter in your life?
2. How does experiencing God's grace long-term influence the way you talk to him? Do you pray differently now compared to earlier in your faith journey?

In week 3, we are going to look at the promise God made with Abraham, and what it shows us about God's unstoppable love.

ACCESS THE SESSION THREE VIDEO AT [RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING](https://rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering).

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK THREE



REVIEW

Lauren explained both Abraham's life before meeting God and God's covenant with him. What were you most familiar with from Lauren's summary of the covenant between Abraham and God? What stood out to you about Abraham's life prior to knowing God? About God's covenant with him?

As Lauren discussed in the session, God's call involved a lot of change for Abraham—his name, his location, his allegiance. Why do you think these changes were important for Abraham to experience? What changes in your own life have been vital to your faith journey? We can see God's steadfast love and faithfulness after Abraham lied to Pharaoh in Egypt and had a child with Hagar. God never removed his covenant, and he still fulfilled his promise to give Abraham a son through Sarah. What has God done in your life despite the decisions you've made along the way?



DIG IN

Read Genesis 12:1–7. Lauren pointed out that this passage is not necessarily about the material blessings of God but the blessing of having favor, protection, and an intimate knowledge of God. Considering how God asked Abraham to move homes and change his name, why do you think material blessings weren't the most important? How could favor, protection, and intimate knowledge of God be helpful to Abraham during this stark life change?

Part of the covenant included God blessing Abraham so that he—and his descendants—could be a blessing to other nations. How does God's covenant with Abraham display God's love for the world, not just for Abraham's family?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK THREE CONTINUED



DIG IN

Genesis 12 says that Abraham was seventy-five years old when God promised to bless him after he left his home, and Genesis 21:5 says he was one hundred years old when the Lord gave him his promised son, Isaac. How do you think Abraham felt during those twenty-five years of waiting? In what ways did he trust in God? How did he struggle to believe God?

Read Abraham's response to God's promise of a son in Genesis 17:15–21. These verses show us two themes we will see over the next five sessions: humanity's wavering trust and God's patience. In what ways have you doubted God, like Abraham did? How did that doubt impact your relationship with God?



MAKE IT MATTER

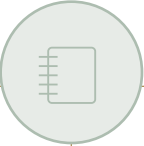
As Lauren reminded us, Abraham trusted and believed God, but in a moment of impatience, he took matters into his own hands. What do you think it looks like to wait patiently on God? In what ways have you been impatient with God?

Lauren talked about the difficulty of waiting patiently for certain dreams in her life she desperately hoped God would fulfill. She asked us, "What are you waiting for? What is something that might not be a promise in Scripture but is a longing God put in your heart?" How would you answer her question? What unfulfilled longing has been hard to wait for?

As we learned in this session, Abraham didn't get to see the entirety of his promise fulfilled but he trusted in God anyways. What could it look like for you to trust God despite how long it could take to see change?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK THREE CONTINUED



REFLECT

Abraham is a great example of how trusting God may sound simple but is harder than it seems. Spend some time reflecting on these questions: What did you learn from the covenant of Abraham about patience? What could it look like for you to practice patience right now? How could you trust God more in this season?

This week, find a friend you trust and confess something you've been impatient about and how it has impacted your relationship with God. Pray together and ask God to give you the endurance necessary to wait on him.

God Gives You Purpose

SCRIPTURES:

GENESIS:12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:15-21

God continues to show his faithfulness and love through the Abrahamic covenant. In this covenant, God makes promises to a man named Abram (not a typo). Genesis 12 begins with God telling Abram to leave his country and the family he knows with the promise of making Abram a great nation; he promises to bless him and make Abram's name great (Genesis 12:2).

As we continue to read in Genesis 12-17 we see the covenant get more detailed. God put before Abram's eyes the land he would receive (Genesis 13:14-15; 15:18-21). He told Abram of the son that would be born to him (Genesis 17:15-21), and he told Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth and stars in the sky (Genesis 13:16-17; 15:1-5).

In addition to words, God gave physical signs of his promises. He increased Abram's land and property (Genesis 13:5-6). He also performed a ceremonial act (Genesis 15:12-21) sealing the promise. As Abram was asking, "How will this all happen?" God responded with a physical sign of promise. In this ceremony, Abram was asked to bring animals and cut them in half and divide them. God then put Abram in a deep sleep. As Abram slept, God told him what would happen to him and his descendants (Genesis 15:13-16) and appeared physically as a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch between the animal pieces.

This ceremonial act was normative of that time for a promise between two parties. Each party would walk in between the sacrificed animals as a sign of their commitment to fulfill their responsibility in the agreement. Yet this act was unique. Only one party was committed to fulfill his responsibility in the agreement. Abram was asleep and God was the only one who walked through. This covenant is referred to as a unilateral covenant, which means that God was the only one required to keep the covenant. It did not matter what Abram did or did not do; God would keep his promises to Abram.

The promises that God gives come with a purpose. These promises were given to Abram so that Abram would be a blessing (Genesis 12:2). As God took the initiative to make this promise with Abram, Abram was to respond out of these promises and bless others. The language we find in Genesis 12:3 might lead us to think other nations needed to bless Abram first, but that was not the case. Abram was to begin the blessing to others, not wait for others to bless him and then receive a blessing. Just as God initiated this promise and covenant, Abram was to actively extend the gifts of the covenant to others.

What is it like for you to think about God making promises thousands of years ago to generations before you? How does this truth encourage and strengthen your trust in our God who fulfills his promises?

God Welcomes Our Honesty

We have all had those moments when we hear one thing, but our minds believe another. Our temptation is to ignore what doesn't make sense or to force it to make sense. Even if we are not active in our attempt, our minds are trying to resolve the conflict. What do you do when something doesn't line up in your mind? In your experience? Or maybe even your gut? We all do something.

Abram did something. Abram asked questions. God was saying one thing and Abram was experiencing another. God promised Abram offspring and descendants, yet he was still childless. God repeated his promise, yet Abram's situation stayed the same. After God repeated himself again saying, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great," Abram replied, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless?" (Genesis 15:1-2).

God, in his patience and graciousness, repeated himself and got even more specific. He said, "your very own son shall be your heir. . . . Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. . . . So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:4-5). It says that Abram believed the Lord, and God counted it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Abram's belief was aligned with God's ways.

SCRIPTURE:

GENESIS 15:1-21

We all need echoes, or reminders, of God's faithfulness. We get discouraged, we get weary in waiting, and we question who God is and what he will do. God welcomes our honesty, our questions, and our weariness. He sees our humanity, and he meets us in our frailty. Sometimes we are afraid to question God aloud. We may not have friends who let us question God. But God allows us to ask, to express, and to be honest with him about our confusion and discouragement.

And he is gracious to give us these reminders. We see them in the life of Abram, the lives of others in Scripture, and even in the life of Jesus. We need reminders, and God does not get upset that we ask. He is gracious to give.

As we learned earlier, God moves toward action and makes a promise (Genesis 15:7–21). Abram didn't have to do anything, and he didn't have to make sense of it all. God would completely and unilaterally take care of these promises. God would line it all up.

“
**‘your very own
son shall be your
heir. . . . Look
toward heaven,
and number the
stars, if you are
able to number
them. . . . So shall
your offspring be’**”

How are you tempted to respond when something doesn't line up in your life?

Do you ignore it or attempt to resolve it?

How does this part of Abram's story encourage you to respond when life doesn't line up?

God Is Merciful

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 12:1–20; 16:1–6; 21:8–21

Everyone experiences hardship. To be human is to face challenges, unknowns, and suffering.

Hardships are universal experiences. What is not universal is how we respond. The temptations may be the same, but our responses do not have to be.

It does not take long for us to see Abram pull back when he and his family hit a hardship (Genesis 12:10–16). As a famine hit the land, they took a detour in following God’s direction and went to Egypt. Not only did Abram take a detour, but he also moved into deceit to protect himself from further hardship.

When we come into hardships in our lives, we are tempted to take detours, to figure out a different way forward. There is wisdom in taking care of our families, those we love, and even strangers and least of these, but as we take these detours, we may consider whether we are supposed to.

Wisdom and fear can sometimes look incredibly similar. Wisdom comes from a place of peace and courage. Fear sounds like:

What will happen to us? Wisdom asks, God, how do you want us to move forward? Fear says, If we do not do this, then that will surely happen. Wisdom asks, God, show us the next steps as we entrust to you whatever will come.

As you read Abram's story, note how his detour is led by fear and this fear leads to deceit. His story is a reminder that fear, need for control, and deception lead one to another, cascading down, not only causing harm for us, but also for those around us.

The consequences of how we respond to hardship affect those around us. We see this with Sarai, Pharaoh and his house, and later in the suffering of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16:1–6). Sarai became a concubine of Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh and his household were afflicted with plagues. Later, Hagar and Ishmael were mistreated harshly and unjustly.

Abram's actions mattered. And with great gratitude we see God's mercy and grace as he freed Sarai (twice), lifted the affliction off of Pharaoh and his house, and ministered to Hagar and Ishmael, giving them promises as well. Abram's detours and deceit would not be the last word in their lives.

When you hit hardships, what do you typically do? Do you attempt to take over, ignoring how God has been leading and guiding? Do you deceive those around you to ease your fears? In hardships, how can you discern between walking in wisdom and following your fear?

God Sees and Saves

“Sarah said, ‘God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.’ And she added, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’”

GENESIS 21:1–7

Throughout Abram’s story we see his faults vividly. He detours and deceives people, and others continue to suffer the consequences of his actions. How many more chances would Abram get? How many more people would need to suffer?

Even as Abram detoured and deceived people, God saw and saved him. Woven throughout Abram’s story is God’s faithfulness, not only to Abram, but also to Abram’s servants and descendants.

One such example is found in Genesis 16. Abram detoured once again to try to fulfill the promises of God himself. Abram took his wife's servant, Hagar, and had a son with her. While Hagar was pregnant, Sarai cast her out. The Bible says God saw her in the desert and protected her (Genesis 16:13). Later, after Isaac was born, Hagar and her son, Ishmael, were once again cast out. God saw the great injustice toward Hagar and her son. Not only did God see Hagar and her son, he also added blessing to their lives (Genesis 21:18).

God's faithfulness extends through the covenant he made with Abram. God extended his love and faithfulness to others even when Abram was unfaithful.

In Abram's story we see our stories. We see the ways we use others to protect ourselves, the ways we deceive others because we are afraid, and the ways we take the fulfillment of God's word to us into our own hands. We are not so different from Abram.

As we sin, God remains faithful. As our actions cause suffering for others, God sees and saves us. This does not excuse us from doing good and living aligned with God's ways. It is a reminder that our actions are not more powerful than God's actions and that nothing can thwart God's promises to us and to others.

At last, in Genesis 21:1–7 we read of God's fulfillment of a descendant through the promise of a son, Isaac. Abram and Sarai could not bring God's covenant to fruition on their own, but God would do it, just as he promised. He would do so in an unimaginable and miraculous way—the pregnancy of a woman who was beyond childbearing years. He would do so in a way that no one could deny it was a work of his hands. With the promise of a son came new names for Abram and Sarai; they would be called Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:4–15). Sarah's pregnancy and their name changes were markers of God's covenant. Abraham's new name meant "Father of Multitudes," and Sarah's corresponded to mean "Mother of Nations." God saw and fulfilled his covenant to them.

*God saw and remained faithful to Abram, even when Abram was unfaithful.
How does God's faithfulness to Abram encourage you when you are unfaithful and sin against God?*

*As God took care of those who suffered the consequences of Abram's sin,
in what ways can you take care of those who have suffered the consequences of another's sin?*

God Does What He Says He Will Do

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 12:2; 22:15–18;
GALATIANS 3:14;
EPHESIANS 1:13; 2:8–10

Most of us have been on the receiving end of broken promises. A friend betrays us, a husband fails his promise to love us, a parent abandons us. Over and over again we experience broken promises. These are deep hurts and wounds that lead us to attempt to take care of ourselves, and question God's care for us. These places of pain and unhealed wounds lead us to attempt to control everything. We don't want to get hurt again.

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the promise that she would become pregnant. Similarly, we find ourselves laughing at God to hide our doubt and protect ourselves from disappointment. Both Abram and Sarai tried to secure the promise through Ishmael. They took things into their own hands, and we often follow their example through detours and deception. Our actions reveal that we are asking ourselves the question, what if God's promises won't hold?

But God does not make his promises with the expectation that we will fulfill them. He isn't cruel, he won't abandon us, and he never fails. God does what he says he will do.

In his grace, God doesn't allow us to minimize or guarantee his promises for ourselves. He is the guarantor of his promises. And he meets us in our distrust and when we try taking things into our own hands. He does not allow us to dismiss or secure his promises to us.

The most important promise of all, our salvation, he also guarantees. We cannot lose this salvation, nor can we earn it. God is the one who holds the promise of salvation as a gift by grace through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8–9). And he seals it by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). This gift gives us the freedom to trust God, the security to grow in faith, and the charge to be a blessing to others.

God first said to Abram that his promises and covenant would be so that Abram and his descendants would be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:2). Today, we are recipients of that blessing (Galatians 3:14)!

This gift of salvation and all the other promises of God are just that—gifts. When we see them in this way, we grow in our own generosity. When we receive what we have been given as a gift and guarantee from God rather than something we guaranteed for ourselves, we can live in a freedom that blesses others.

*As a result of this study so far, what has changed regarding
how you view God's promises and promise-keeping?*

WEEK
FOUR

WHEN WE MESS UP



Watch
“When We Mess Up”
with Jada Edwards
(5 minutes).

REWIND & REFLECT

1. When have you had to wait on God? How did that process impact your relationship with him?
2. God was patient with Abraham through his and Sarah’s failed attempt to “move things along” with Hagar and Ishmael. Believers are called to longsuffering—remaining patient with others or with difficult seasons of life. What have you learned when walking through a difficult season?

In week four, we are going to look at God’s promise to Moses and discover the way God never gives up on his people.

ACCESS THE SESSION FOUR VIDEO AT [RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING](https://rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering).

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK FOUR



REVIEW

Jada gave us a synopsis of the covenant between God and Israel. God provided Moses new commandments and a standard of holiness for the people of Israel to live by—all while Israel was down below building an idol. What about the Israelites' actions reminds you of what we've seen God's people do in the previous sessions? In what ways does God remain consistent despite his people's actions?

Jada pointed out that this covenant was bilateral, meaning that Israel needed to obey God in order to obtain God's blessing. It also meant that there would be consequences if they disobeyed. What were the consequences if Israel broke the covenant? How do you expect the Israelites respond at this point in the story? Why?

Jada called God a promise builder because he doesn't nullify his past covenant with Abraham or Noah when he makes the covenant with Moses. Why is it essential for us to know that God builds on his promises?



DIG IN

Read Exodus 19:1–8, then read Exodus 32:1–8. Having a set of clear-cut instructions sounds easy enough to follow, but, just like the Israelites, our sinful desires make it much harder to be obedient. How is the attitude of the Israelites in chapter 19 different than in chapter 32?

We can all lose sight of God's standards. But as we see with the Israelites' idolatry, distraction can have dire consequences. In what ways has being distracted caused you to sin against God? What was the outcome?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK FOUR CONTINUED



DIG IN (CONTINUED)

Jada referenced Galatians 3:17, which talks about God's covenants never dissolving a previous one. What difference does it make to know that God doesn't nullify his promises? This covenant between God and Israel reinforced the truth that God has a standard for his people.

As Jada explained, God's standard of holiness isn't defined by culture but by his word. What have you learned so far about God's standards for his people? How has the story of Moses helped you better understand God's desire for his people to be holy?



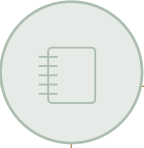
MAKE IT MATTER

We're reminded in this session that God's new covenants never annul the previous ones, which we can see is true in how Jesus came to fulfill the Law (the covenant with Israel) rather than abolish it. In what ways does seeing God's promises play out over history impact your ability to trust him?

Jada reminded us that sometimes we're tempted to think that the work of Jesus erased God's standard for people today. But God still requires holiness and has provided a path toward sanctification. What do you think his standard of holiness looks like for believers today?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK FOUR CONTINUED



REFLECT

Jada ended the session by reminding us that Jesus fulfilled the law and has given us grace. Our failures do not affect our standing with God, but the New Covenant of grace does not erase the standard of God's holiness either. How has God's forgiveness and grace been instrumental in your walk of faith? In what ways are you thankful for the forgiveness offered through Christ? Consider your own journey of pursuing God's holiness. What could it look like for you to choose holy living this week?

God Provides

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 50:22–26;
 EXODUS 1:6–10, 15–22; 2:1–10; 19:3–6;
 1 PETER 2:9

Sometimes provision doesn't look like protection. We didn't get the job we wanted. A relationship didn't work out. Our plans were interrupted. What is provided for us falls short of what we hoped and dreamed. Is there a grief and lament to this? Absolutely! In addition, there may be a protection that we weren't aware of.

When famine hit the people of Israel, God prepared a place with food and provision for them. He made a way for Joseph to care for his family and the nation of Israel. So, Abraham's descendants, now a people known as the Israelites or the Hebrews, moved into Egypt (Genesis 50:22–26).

The Israelites flourished in Egypt. They thrived so much that they became a threat to the new Pharaoh in power. To curb their growing strength, Pharaoh forced the Israelites to be the slave laborers of Egypt. Not only were they slaves, but because they were so numerous, Pharaoh tried to cut off any possible uprising through the infanticide of every young Israelite boy (Exodus 1:6–10, 22). What a twist and turn! Famine and flourishing, and now infanticide and slavery.

In the midst of this, we find some amazing women. Midwives who honored God (Exodus 1:15–21). A mother who trusted the future of her newborn son to God. A sister who shrewdly watched her baby brother land in the arms of a person of power. And a baby boy who was then raised in the care of women in power (Exodus 2:1–10). This boy would be the one God would call on to lead his people.

The Exodus story would not exist without failure and frustration. But God's faithfulness and protection would carry the Israelites, just as God's faithfulness and protection had carried the people before.

Eventually, Moses would have a conversation with God on Mount Sinai and God would say to him, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

In addition to being for the people of Israel, God's faithfulness would continue so that others might know his great love and mercy.

“

**You shall be
my treasured
possession
among all
peoples, for
all the earth is
mine; and you
shall be to me
a kingdom of
priests and a
holy nation.”**

Have you ever experienced a quick twist and turn from a great circumstance to a horrible one?

What was that like for you?

Did you receive care from others that you didn't expect?

What would it be like for you to be a person who cares for another in her crisis?

God Cares for His People

We don't often hear of the beginnings of a great leader. We don't hear about their sin, their insecurities, and how they may have questioned their callings. If we did, it likely wouldn't give us a lot of confidence in them.

We do, however, hear the beginning of Moses's story.

SUBHEADER HERE

God called Moses—a man orphaned and adopted; a man who took justice into his own hands, killed an Egyptian, and then hid the body; a man who acted like a hypocrite and then ran when he was called out; a man who stayed in hiding (Exodus 2:11–22). This sounds like the beginnings of a great leader, doesn't it?

And yet, God called Moses. The Bible tells us God called out of a burning bush, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Exodus 3:6–8). He continues, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10).

SCRIPTURE:

EXODUS

2:11–25;

3:6–13;

4:1, 10

Moses came up with every excuse in the book. He asked what he was supposed to say and do. He told God the people wouldn't believe him. He told God he wasn't good at speaking. But when Moses questioned his calling, God gave him many promises and help, including, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain" (Exodus 3:12).

God told Moses he was sending him back to Egypt to free his people. God would be with him. Moses no longer got to hide. He was called to come out and to be concerned for the people as God is. This time, Moses would need to follow God's ways of concern and justice.

God's concern is greater than one man. God's concern is for his people. His attentiveness to his people goes beyond one man's sin.

Before God called Moses we read, "During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew" (Exodus 2:23–25).

Moses's doubt and questioning would not stop God from fulfilling his promises to his people.

“

But I will be with
you, and this shall
be the sign for you,
that I have sent
you: when you have
brought the people
out of Egypt, you
shall serve God on
this mountain.”

*When have you questioned a call God has for you with the words, “I am not enough?”
Not smart enough, not educated enough, not pretty enough, not wealthy enough, not strong enough,
not good enough? God's concern was for more than Moses. How can believing God has a larger
concern in mind bring humility and trust in following God's call?*

God Always Leads Us Toward Life

SCRIPTURES:

EXODUS 19:1-6; 20:1-21; 24:3-18

In addition to the promise to be with Moses, God established a covenant with the Israelites through Moses. This is sometimes called the Mosaic covenant even though it is a covenant with all the people of Israel.

In Exodus 19:2b-6 we read, “There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.’”

The way Israel was to keep God’s covenant was to follow the rules and laws set up for them. These rules and laws were to show them the requirements for nearness to God and help them to be a blessing to others.

The Israelites made a promise to God: “Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do’” (Exodus 24:3).

Whereas the Abrahamic covenant was unilateral, the Mosaic covenant was bilateral. By using an if/then statement, there was an expectation of both parties to keep the covenant. If one broke the covenant, then the other party was not responsible to hold up their end of the covenant.

God spelled out the covenant generally through the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–21) and in detail in the rest of Exodus as well as Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (the Pentateuch or Torah). Anyone who reads these rules might think, Okay, I've got my marching order; all I have to do is stick to them. The problem with that thinking is, well, we're human. And that means we are not perfect. And neither were the Israelites.

These commandments were a way forward in life, in nearness to God, and toward being a nation that carried out the love, mercy, and goodness of God. God always leads toward life, and just because we are not perfect doesn't mean that God is not at work in and through us.

Even as God's goodness and mercy shows up no matter our performance or perfection, we are still hard on ourselves when we see our own mistakes.

It was painful for Moses to have his sin brought before him when he killed an Egyptian. It is also painful for us when we have our sin brought before us. Yet we have a choice when we see ourselves. We can run and hide, or we can turn to God.

And even if we run and hide, God still comes running after us. He came after Moses. He'll come after you. The question is, will we hear and receive his voice when he calls?

*How do you typically respond when you sin and fall short of perfection?
Does it cause you to doubt God's call for you?*

God Renews Our Hearts and Minds

SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 20:18–20; 34:1–10;
JEREMIAH 31:31–34;
HEBREWS 10:15–18

God's mercy has been present since the beginning of time. God's mercy has been a part of every covenant he has made with people. Even though the Mosaic covenant was bilateral, meaning there was expectation that both parties would fulfill their commitment, God knew the people wouldn't be able to keep the covenant. There was foreshadowing of Israel's unfaithfulness in Exodus 20 when they couldn't even listen to God speak because they were afraid of him (Exodus 20:18–20). They didn't know his mercy then, but God would show it to them again.

The people of Israel were quick to break the covenant. They created an idol to serve rather than God (Exodus 32). After this fast failure, God showed his mercy to Moses and the Israelites by renewing the covenant. He did so through the creation of a new set of tablets and by reminding Moses and the people of his great mercy, grace, patience, faithfulness, forgiveness, and steadfast love (Exodus 34:1–9).

God then said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you" (Exodus 34:10).

In this renewal God would put on display his marvels. These marvels would be on display so all could see the great goodness, mercy, and grace of God. His marvels would not be dependent on the obedience of his people, and even in their disobedience God would show his mercy and love. This is the great grace and mercy of God.

On this new stone set of tablets, God re-wrote the commandments. And God promised to rewrite the law on the hearts of his people in the future. God wrote his laws on our hearts. His law of love and mercy would not be on the hardness of stone but on our hearts and minds (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 10:15–18). As his people, our hearts and minds are renewed within us. And we have the Holy Spirit who reminds us of this law of love and grace written within us, that we might continue to live in the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.

*In what places of your heart and mind do you need to receive God's mercy and grace today?
As you receive it, may it then overflow to those around you.*

God's Own

SCRIPTURES:

EXODUS 34:9; 1 PETER 2:9-10

From the beginning, the Mosaic covenant was set up with brokenness woven through it. A broken leader and a fearful people were holding one part of the covenant, while a faithful and merciful God was holding the other. They needed God to save them out of physical slavery as well as the slavery of their sin. Even though they were physically freed, they lived in spiritual bondage, quickly turning against God's laws and ways.

As fast and furious as their inner rebellion was, God was quick to move with mercy. Moses cried out to God saying, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance" (Exodus 34:9).

We also have broken beginnings. We inherited this from our first mother and father, Eve and Adam (Genesis 3). And yet in his mercy, God does not leave us broken. Not only does he forgive us, he also restores us, as his own people and his inheritance. He takes us as his own.

We belong to God on a whole different level. We are not only forgiven, but we are also taken as God's joyful possession. We get to be his. We get to be his children. He doesn't forgive us then put us back out by ourselves. He forgives and says, Come in and be mine. I Peter 2:9–10 says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

We are his so that we can show and tell others of his great mercy and love. His forgiveness is never dependent on our fulfillment of law or perfection. His forgiveness calls us in to be his own.

*What are the broken places God is inviting you to receive mercy?
How does knowing you are God's own give you security and confidence?*

WEEK
FIVE

THE PROMISE IS A PERSON



Watch

***“The Promise is a
Person”***

*with Lauren Chandler
(8 minutes).*

REWIND & REFLECT

1. Holiness means “other than, set apart.” What does holiness look like practically? What does it not look like?
2. God is so uniquely different from humans. Why do you think God’s holiness can sometimes be hard for us to grasp?

In week five, we are going to look at God’s promise to King David.

ACCESS THE SESSION FIVE VIDEO AT [RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING](https://rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering).

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK FIVE



REVIEW

Lauren walked us through the story found in 1 Samuel of King Saul and how David came to reign after Saul's downfall. God was grieved by Saul's kingship and raised up David, anointing him to eventually become king. What specific details stood out to you from Lauren's retelling of the story? What was unique about the way David became king?

In the Davidic covenant, God promises David that he would establish a kingdom of David's lineage that will endure forever, which we now know is the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In what ways is this covenant different from what we've seen of the others in the series? How does this covenant tie into God's overarching plan to bless his people?

God's covenant with David was a unilateral covenant. Lauren explained that this covenant was rooted in God's generosity—he would accomplish his plan, and David wouldn't need to do anything to make it happen. How does the covenant with David impact your view of waiting for God to act in your life?



DIG IN

Read 2 Samuel 7:12–17. In this passage, God describes the covenant he's making with David, which focuses on future descendants once David dies. What does God promise for David's lineage? What does God's covenant with David reveal about God's character?

Wrapping up the idea of God's faithfulness, Lauren mentioned Romans 8:28, which says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." In what ways does this verse relate to God's covenant with David?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK FIVE CONTINUED



MAKE IT MATTER

Just as we've seen before with Abraham, the people of Noah's day, and Israel, David was loved deeply by God but had his fair share of downfalls. Lauren told us that the psalms show us how David confessed his sin to God, practiced repentance, and trusted God to fulfill his word. In what ways can you relate to David's life? How does the life of David serve as an example of what it looks like to follow God?

Lauren reminded us about God's faithfulness despite David's sin. God can use anything, even when it seems too bad to be redeemed. What experience, if any, in your life has made you believe nothing good can come from it? How does David's story help you realize your own hope for redemption?

What reassurance does it give you to see how God remained faithful to David? How does God's love for David help you understand his love for you?



REFLECT

Consider God's love for you this week. He is faithful to you no matter what you do—no sin, slip up, or scandal can make him love you less. Spend time over the next few days considering this question: Do I truly believe God loves me?

Then, take a moment to reflect on the times you've made mistakes or drifted away from God. Write down the ways God remained faithful to you in those times and thank him for never abandoning you.

God in the Waiting

SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 16; 2 SAMUEL 2:11; 2 SAMUEL 5:1–4; PSALM 27:14; PHILIPPIANS 1:6

“Good things come to those who wait.” We’ve all heard that saying. It often comes from well-meaning loved ones offering comfort in seasons of waiting. In 2 Samuel 5, we see the fulfillment of a long-awaited promise in the life of David. The tribe of Israel became a large nation ruled by David as their king.

David waited roughly fifteen to twenty years to see the fulfillment of this promise. When he was first anointed as king in 1 Samuel 16, though the Bible doesn’t give his exact age, many scholars estimate that David was around ten to fifteen years old. Later, David was anointed as king over Judah, and we are told that he waited another seven and a half years before his final coronation over all of Israel at thirty years of age.

Yes, as we can see in David’s life, good things often do come to those who wait. But we can see in this promise fulfilled that how we wait and what we are waiting for also matter a great deal. During his season of waiting, David had plenty of opportunities to try to gain the kingdom by his own efforts. Instead, David waited for the Lord. Though he had been promised the kingdom nearly two decades earlier, David trusted the Lord to fulfill his promises.

The book of Psalms is full of David's reflections on waiting: "Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!" (Psalm 27:14); "Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield" (Psalm 33:20); and "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7a), just to name a few. Like David, we must wait patiently and expectantly on the Lord. He may not always answer our prayers the way we want him too, but it does not mean he's not good.

Perhaps you've been waiting a long time to see God move in your life. Maybe, like David, it's been decades, and you're beginning to wonder if God is going to show up. Whatever season of waiting you're in, may you be encouraged by this event in David's life to wait on the Lord. God has told you that he will complete the good work that he began in you when he saved you and called you to himself (Philippians 1:8). And we know that his plans for us are good and worth waiting for (Romans 8:28).

So, trust Jesus, and wait for him. He is your refuge. He will not fail you.

*What does waiting on the Lord look like for you today?
How can you wait with confidence?*

God Is Sovereign

SCRIPTURES:

2 SAMUEL 7:8–17; GENESIS 22:18;
PSALM 89; PSALM 132:11

What do you think of when you hear the word “covenant”? For some, it may bring pictures to your mind of your wedding day, when you and your spouse pledged yourselves to one another in the covenant of marriage. You may have spoken vows aloud in the presence of many witnesses, pledging to spend your lives dedicated to love and cherish one another until death do you part.

In 2 Samuel 7, we find God making a covenant with David. Unlike a covenant of marriage, though, God’s pledge to David wasn’t in response to any vow from David or conditional upon David’s performance at all. The covenant with David was unilateral, like the ones with Noah and Abraham. In fact, God knew David would fail to uphold his side of the arrangement. But God’s promise was rooted in his character, rich in love and faithfulness.

Sometime after David was anointed as Israel’s king, God gave Israel rest in the land from all of its enemies. In this time of peace, David resolved to build a house for the Lord to dwell in among his people. But God rebuked David and reminded him that throughout Israel’s history and David’s own life, his presence had been with his people. Then, he made a promise to David: he would establish David’s house—his legacy and dynasty—for eternity.

This messianic promise from 2 Samuel 7 is a pivotal moment in the history of salvation. God revealed his purpose for David's family, that through his lineage God would accomplish the plan he set into motion when he pledged to bless the nations of the earth through Abraham's descendants (Genesis 22:18). The 2 Samuel passage is often referred to as the Davidic covenant. Though the word "covenant" is absent from the text, it is confirmed later in Scripture, specifically in Psalm 89:3–4: "You have said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations."'"

Psalm 89 testifies to the Davidic covenant as a beautiful witness of how God's sovereignty—his power and authority—confirms his gracious promises to his people. God's redemptive character described in the psalm compels us to turn our hearts to him and remember his faithfulness when our circumstances and feelings would cause us to question if God has abandoned us (Psalm 89:38–39, 46). The psalmist reminds us that when all looks dark, God promised David an eternal throne, and he will not remove his steadfast love or betray his promise (vv. 33–34).

“
**‘I have sworn
to David my
servant: I
will establish
your offspring
forever, and
build your
throne for all
generations’”**

*Are you in a place of wondering where God is amid your difficult circumstances?
How can God's covenant with David encourage you today?*

God Redeems His Wayward People

When Samuel was sent to find Israel's new king from among the sons of Jesse in 1 Samuel 16, God gave him this one command: do not focus on what he looks like, because I know the state of his heart. So, when God revealed that it was David who would be the next king, Samuel may have been a little confused—David was the youngest and smallest, a simple shepherd boy—but Samuel anointed David, showing trust in God's wisdom and plan.

The Bible doesn't tell us whether Samuel knew that this decision would have eternal messianic implications for the redemption of mankind. But the beginning of Matthew's Gospel emphasizes how David's kingship was a part of God's plan to call a people to himself and to bless the nations through them, the plan he set into motion when he called Abraham to follow him.

As we read the list of names in the genealogy at the beginning of Matthew, we may be tempted to skim over it to get to the "good stuff," the stories about Jesus and his life. But let's not miss the rich beauty that is woven into this genealogy. The word "genealogy" comes from the Greek word *genesis*, which means beginning or origin. The genealogy in the first chapter implies that, much like the book of Genesis, the book of Matthew is a book of beginnings; God is doing something new among his people.

SCRIPTURE:

MATTHEW 1:1–6;

PSALM 78

And Matthew sets the stage for this new beginning by detailing this list of ragtag men and women—liars, prostitutes, adulterers, and foreigners—that led up to “Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). Matthew established Jesus’s messianic identity by demonstrating how his lineage was intertwined with the covenants God made with Israel. When Matthew called Jesus “the son of David,” he linked Jesus’s identity to the Davidic covenant and the promise that David’s offspring would have an eternal throne. Then, he linked Jesus to Abraham and the promise that Abraham’s descendants would be a chosen people set apart to bless the whole world.

In doing so, Matthew shows how God had a plan from long ago to graciously redeem his wayward people. From the promise to Abraham of a chosen people to the promise to David of an anointed ruler, God was setting apart a people for himself through whom he would send a Messiah, the anointed one, who would rescue his people from their sins.

*How does it encourage you and challenge you to see the connections between
the covenants we’ve studied and the list of names in the genealogy?
What does it say about God’s character?*

God Remains Faithful

“...if we are faithless,
he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.

2 TIMOTHY 2:13

“Pride goeth before the fall”—it’s a phrase you’ve undoubtedly heard before, a paraphrase of Proverbs 16:18. It is a warning to not think so highly of yourself that you let your guard down. There is no place so dangerous in our walk with God as the moment when we think we’ve got this and we’re doing well on our own. That is the place we find David in 2 Samuel 11, when temptation caught him in a place of vulnerability, and he failed to overcome.

David awoke from a late afternoon nap, walked out onto the terrace of his palace, and looked down on the city below. He saw a beautiful woman bathing. He inquired about her and learned that her name was Bathsheba, and she was married to one of David’s top warriors, Uriah. While Uriah was away at battle, David summoned Bathsheba, and, in an abuse of his kingly power, he had sexual relations with her before sending her home. Later, she informed David she had conceived, and David conspired to have Uriah killed on the battlefield. After Uriah died, David took Bathsheba as his wife and she gave birth to a son, who later died as a consequence of David’s sin.

SCRIPTURE:

2 SAMUEL 11;

PROVERBS 16:18;

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6–13;

2 TIMOTHY 2:13

Surely David did not wake that afternoon and plan to become an adulterer, conspirator, and murderer. But sin is crafty, and the temptation to sin most likely will not overwhelm us all at once. Rather, it often builds as one small compromise after another before you find yourself, like David, in a desperate place you never intended to go, damaging yourself and those around you with your destructive decisions.

Interestingly, no mention is made of David's relationship with the Lord until the very end of this chapter when we read that David's actions "displeased the LORD" (2 Samuel 11:27). From what we read in Scripture of David's response, we can infer that David trusted in his own cleverness to get himself out of this situation rather than going to God for help. The end result? Death. And the fallout would impact David's family relationships for generations to come.

David's failure teaches an important spiritual truth: when sin comes knocking, we must humble ourselves before God and submit ourselves to his Spirit to help us overcome. Paul says it this way in the New Testament: "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:12–13).

Thankfully, David's failure is not the end of the story. Even though David was unfaithful, God remained faithful. The fulfillment of God's promises to David did not rest on David's performance, and David was not to be the anointed one who would rescue God's people. Instead, a son of David would rise who would be the promised heir to reign eternally and establish God's kingdom forever.

How does God's faithfulness to David in spite of his failure comfort you when you face temptation and struggle with sin? (Check out 2 Timothy 2:13.)

God Is in Control

SCRIPTURE: 2 TIMOTHY 1:9–10; TITUS 3:5;
EPHESIANS 1:3–10; 2:4–9

Embedded in the heart of God’s covenantal promises is this powerful truth: before God created a single star in the heavens or set the universe in motion, he planned to send his Son into the world to redeem rebellious and disobedient humanity and to reconcile us to himself through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. From before the foundation of the world, God desired to know us and to call us into a relationship with him. And this was not because of anything we’ve done or will do, but it is utterly a gift of his grace, out of his will and good pleasure.

This is the theological concept of the sovereignty of God, and it has far-reaching implications for our lives. If this idea is new to you, don’t be overwhelmed: the sovereignty of God is simply the idea that “God is king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver of the entire universe.”⁴ Abraham Kuyper, a theologian from the early twentieth century, said it this way: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”⁵

God’s sovereignty is expressed and displayed in a variety of ways throughout Scripture, from the divine names of God to his work in creation and his providential involvement in events in world history. The covenants also display his sovereignty, revealing his gracious work of redemption to choose a people for himself through whom he would send the Messiah to save his people and restore them into a right relationship with him.

This imparts incredible meaning and purpose to our lives. We were not created by happenstance or because of some random collision of atoms and molecules that resulted in human life. Rather, our very existence is born out of the heart of God to accomplish his will on this earth. When we embrace this truth, we discover that the mundane parts of our lives take on incredible significance. Our daily commutes become opportunities for communion with God. Bumping into our neighbors becomes a divine appointment to share the good news about Jesus. And our homes become barracks for training in righteousness and godliness as we embrace a kingdom-minded mission to advance the gospel.

God's sovereignty also speaks comfort into our suffering. Because we know God is in control, we can trust he has a purpose for every circumstance in our lives, including the difficult and painful ones. By faith, we can believe that his purpose for our pain is for our good and his glory. And we can rest in the knowledge that there is nothing outside of his reach.

How does the sovereignty of God impact your life today?

WEEK
SIX

GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS WORD



Watch
***“God Always Keeps
His Word”***
with Jennie Allen
(7 minutes).

REWIND & REFLECT

1. God continues to work through history to accomplish his purpose. In what ways does a better understanding of God’s sovereignty cause you to worship him differently?
2. What situation in your life today can you release/find peace with/relax about as you accept being part of God’s plan?

In our final week, we are going to talk about God sending Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of his promise.

ACCESS THE SESSION SIX VIDEO AT [RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING](https://rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering).

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK SIX



REVIEW

Jennie wrapped up the series by connecting the dots between all the covenants. The seed promised to Eve in Genesis continued through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David—eventually being revealed in Jesus. Why do you think it's important to understand the covenants in order to also understand the work of Jesus? What other connections were you able to make throughout this series?

Understanding each covenant in the Bible can feel overwhelming—they consist of intricate details, multiple characters, and span across the entirety of the Bible. But we learned that even though each covenant is different, they all display God's faithful promise to save his people. How has seeing God's plan play out over history influenced your trust in him? In what ways, if any, do the covenants feel more personal to you after this series?



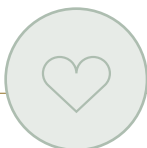
DIG IN

Read Jeremiah 31:31–33. Jennie explained how this passage describes the New Covenant God would make with his people. This covenant is all about intimate connection and relationship, which we know is through the salvation brought by Jesus's death and resurrection. In this passage, how does God differentiate this future covenant from the ones he made in the past? How does God describe the relationship he desires with his people in this New cCovenant?

Re-read Jeremiah 31:31–33 and read 2 Corinthians 5:17–19. The passage in Jeremiah is God describing an inward transformation and intimate connection that hasn't been done before. As believers, we know that we've been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and he lives in us. In what way does the passage in 2 Corinthians display what God desired for the New Covenant as described in Jeremiah?

LEADER'S GUIDE

WEEK SIX CONTINUED



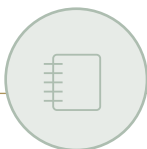
MAKE IT MATTER

Jennie said, “Sometimes to see the way forward, we have to look back. The covenants show us what God has planned for us, what he’s already done for us, and what a faithful, good God he is.” How has looking back through these promises helped you understand God’s plan for your life?

Considering how these biblical figures we’ve learned about didn’t get to experience the full extent of the promise in Jesus, how does it feel to know that you are part of the fulfilled promise of Jesus?

Jennie ended the session reminding us of another promise—Jesus is coming back. Therefore, we should pray, encourage others, forgive others, and remain hopeful for the future.

What could it look like for you to encourage, forgive, or pray with a friend this week? What could you share with them about what you learned in this series?



REFLECT

Since the beginning of time, God has had a plan for his people. Before this series, you might have felt like Jennie—not realizing that the covenants contributed to the overarching plan God had to save his people. How much of a fuller picture do you have regarding God’s plans, his faithfulness toward us, and the significance of his covenants after watching this series? What questions do you still have, if any?

Take some time to reflect on God’s continued faithfulness displayed in each of the covenants we discussed. Pray and ask God to help you remember all that you’ve learned about his faithful love and promises the next time you’re in a season of struggle.

God Had a Plan

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 3:10–12, 20; HOSEA 1:2; JEREMIAH 11:10; PSALM 78

Would you agree to marry someone you knew would be unfaithful to you? I think most of us would answer that question with a resounding “No!” But that is exactly what God did when he established his covenant relationship with Israel. We see this demonstrated beautifully through the prophet Hosea. God commissioned Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer who would be unfaithful to Hosea. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer acted as a living parable for God and his covenantal relationship with his unfaithful bride, Israel. And in Hosea’s commitment to Gomer, we are given a picture of God’s unfailing love and faithfulness to his people despite their unfaithfulness.

We might be inclined to judge Israel for her unfaithfulness. After all, how can you witness the miraculous wonders that God performed on your behalf to save you over and over again and still turn away from him? The New Testament helps us to understand Israel’s continuous rebellion. Drawing from various passages in Psalms, Paul wrote to the church at Rome that “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. . . . no one does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10–12).

You see, Israel's unfaithfulness was a result of our human condition: we are incapable of living up to God's perfect moral standard. And the law is incapable of making us good. Later in that same chapter, Paul said, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (v. 20). The law reveals our sin like a spotlight on a dark night. It makes us aware of the ugliness inside of us and how we are helpless to purge it from ourselves.

At this point, you might be tempted to despair. You might wonder what the point of seeking righteousness or trying to be good is if you're incapable of actually doing it. And that's how we should feel when we look at ourselves rightly through the lens of God's perfection and see how we don't measure up, because that brings us to the place of realizing that we need help. We need someone outside of ourselves to remove our sin and to bring us into a right relationship with God.

God knew that, too. And he had a plan.

How has the knowledge of God's law made you more aware of your sinful nature?

God Rescues

“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord.”

HOSEA 2:19–20

When Adam and Eve listened to the deceitful serpent and took their fateful bites of the forbidden fruit, God made a promise: one day, the offspring of man would crush the serpent’s head and triumph over sin and death. Years later, God made a promise to a man named Abraham, establishing him as the father of a multitude of nations through whom the entire world would be blessed. God made a promise to David, giving him a kingdom and the pledge that his throne will be established eternally.

All throughout Scripture, a savior was promised and foretold. Humanity would not be left crushed under the weight of sin and condemned under the judgment of law. Instead, a rescuer would come who would redeem God’s people. Isaiah declared that he would be our wonderful counselor, giving wisdom beyond our finite human abilities. He would be called mighty God and everlasting Father, titles that recognize his divinity, authority, and protective care. And Isaiah declared that this promised Son would be the Prince of peace, bringing reconciliation where there has been conflict and division, and there would be no end to his peace.

SCRIPTURE:

ISAIAH 9:6–7;

GENESIS 3:15;

JEREMIAH 31:31–34;

EZEKIEL 36:26–27;

HOSEA 2:18–20

Other Scripture authors revealed that this chosen one (the Messiah) would establish a New Covenant between God and his people. Not only would he be the one to sit on David’s throne to rule eternally, but he would usher in a day when God would remove our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh, hearts willing to submit to him in love and obedience. The prophet Hosea described this New Covenant as a marriage between God and his people, where his people are married to God “in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy . . . [and] in faithfulness” (Hosea 2:19–20). Best of all, in this new covenant, we will “*know* the LORD” (Hosea 2:20, emphasis mine).

These promises of a savior reveal that God had a plan to repair what sin broke back in the garden and that what he offers humanity is so much more than just a get-out-of-hell free card. He offers peace, justice, faithfulness, mercy, righteousness, and steadfast love. And he wants us to know him.

These are the things that our stony hearts, marred by sin, desperately long for and our broken world desperately needs. Not a day goes by where our headline news is absent of stories of injustice, conflict, violence, war, oppression, outrage, and hatred. We are messed up people, the blind leading the blind, destined to fall into pits of our own despair.

But we don’t have to stay there. A rescuer has been promised.

Which title of the promised one discussed in today’s study resonates with you most?

God Reconciles

SCRIPTURES:

HEBREWS 9:11–15; MATTHEW 5:17–18;
ROMANS 10:4

The night before his crucifixion, Jesus dined with his disciples in celebration of the Passover. At this meal, commonly known as the Last Supper, Jesus lifted a cup of wine and declared, “This cup . . . is the New Covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). At this declaration, Jesus revealed that his death would inaugurate the New Covenant the Old Testament prophets (such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel) prophesied that God would make with his people in the last days. At last, the promises of restoration and reconciliation foretold from the days of Adam and Eve would be accomplished. God and humanity would once again be in fellowship with one another without the stain of sin and death.

This kind of reconciliation could only be accomplished through Jesus. The writer of Hebrews stated it plainly: Jesus “entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12). Jesus’s finished work on the cross means that the payment for sin has been made once for all and will never need to be repeated. Through him, we are able to have an eternal redemption from the oppression of sin and broken fellowship with God.

So, what does this mean for the former promises of God? Are those covenants obsolete because of Jesus? Jesus answered this question in the Sermon on the Mount: his life, death, and resurrection did not abolish the law and the prophets, but rather he is the fulfillment of them (Matthew 5:17). The law revealed Israel's need for a savior. It showed God's people how to live and what he expected from them—faithfulness, holiness, and a self-sacrificing love for God and others. But because of their hardened and idolatrous hearts, they were unable to live up to God's standards, as is true for us apart from Jesus. Jesus perfectly embodied the spirit of the law, thus fulfilling it, so we are no longer bound to obedience to the old covenants, but instead we live in the freedom of the New Covenant secured by Jesus on the cross.

Though we are no longer bound to the old covenant, we are still called to live differently as God's people. But now, in Jesus, we are empowered to live as God desired for his children, because “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, [will] purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). No longer are we condemned under a law we could never fulfill, but instead, through our renewed relationship with God the Father through the sacrifice of his Son, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to holy living. Because of God's Spirit dwelling within us through Jesus, we can live in faithfulness, righteousness, holiness, full of love for God and for others, as God has called us to do.

How does the New Covenant inspire you to faithfulness in your walk with God?

God Is Gracious

SCRIPTURE: EPHESIANS 2:4–12; ROMANS 6:23

God created the universe, and it was good. In his image, he created people, and he gave them a lush world of abundance with one command: do not eat from this forbidden tree. Deceived by Satan, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and all of humanity was condemned under the curse of sin and spiritual death. But God made a promise: he was going to redeem his people, and one day he would send a rescuer to restore humanity to fellowship with him.

For years, God was faithful to his promise, providing the law to show people how to live as he intended. Though humanity continued to turn away from him in rebellion and disobedience, he continued to be faithful, renewing his promise of restoration again through David. Finally, he fulfilled the promise through Jesus, his own Son, whose life, death, and resurrection completed all of the covenantal promises God made with his people and paved the way for all people to come to know God as Father and Lord.

This is the gospel, and it is the good news for all people everywhere. The way is open for all to come to God, and the only thing required is simply to receive it. It's a gift, entirely free, overflowing from the heart of God "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

This was God's plan all along. Before he even spoke the world into motion, he chose us and desired for us to be a part of his family, adopted into it through his Son, and it was all according to his purposes and a display of his grace (Ephesians 1). Why? Because of his great love (Ephesians 2:4). He could have left humanity condemned to death, the rightful judgment for sin. But because of his great love and the riches of his mercy, he offers us life. And it is freely given, so that in our redemption he receives the glory due his name.

And this free gift is available to all people. There is no one outside of the reach of God's grace and none are exempt from the redemption available through him. So, whatever your past, your skin color, your socioeconomic status, your family structure or relationship status, this good news of grace is for you. He desires to know you. He offers you the abundant life of his kingdom. His Son, Jesus, bled and died to bear the weight of your guilt and shame. And he rose again to raise you up with him to live in victory over sin and death, and to proclaim his goodness for the rest of your life.

What does the gospel mean to you? How have you responded to it?

God Will Never Fail

SCRIPTURES:

REVELATION 21:1–5; HEBREWS 10:36–39;
ISAIAH 11:1–9

We live in a broken world. The curse of sin is far-reaching, its effects apparent from the devastation of natural disasters to the evil of the human heart. Suffering, sickness, pain, and heartache are daily reminders that this isn't how it's supposed to be.

And that is where the beauty of the gospel bursts forth in a colorful array. The salvation of God's people is not just good news for humanity, but for the whole world. God's redemptive plan goes beyond our salvation to include the renewal of this world to the wholeness and perfection he designed at creation. The prophet Isaiah described it this way:

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the
young goat, and the calf and the lion
and the fattened calf together; and a
little child shall lead them. . . for the
earth shall be full of the knowledge of
the LORD as the waters cover the sea”

ISAIAH 11:6–9

One day, God is going to make all the wrong things right in our world. When that day comes, peace will prevail among all of God's creatures. Wolves and lambs will live together in harmony. Little children will play with lions and leopards. There will be no more tears, pain, mourning, or death. All things will be made new. The knowledge of God will fill the earth as God himself once again dwells with his people.

Peace. Harmony. God's presence. What a beautiful world it will be.

Does it sound too good to be true? For us who still endure the brokenness of sin's curse on this world, the new earth can sound like a far-fetched reality that is out of reach. We might be tempted to not believe the end of all things that Scripture promises.

But God knows us too well. When he gave his vision of the new earth, he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true" (Revelation 21:5). It's almost like God knew we'd have trouble accepting the revelation of this beautiful new world, so he gave us this reminder to trust him. His word is truth. He hasn't failed us, yet. And he never will.

So, Scripture ends with these final promises:

All things new. Trustworthy and true. Amen.

How do the final promises of Scripture of the things to come encourage you today?

Notes

¹ “When Americans Say They Believe In God, What Do They Mean?,” Pew Research Center, Pew Research, April 23, 2018, https://www.pewforum.org/2018/04/25/when-americans-say-they-believe-in-god-what-do-they-mean/04-25-18_beliefingod-00-00/.

² Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 138.

³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴ Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 829.

⁵ James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 461.