



CELL

PROMISE KEEPER

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## SESSION ONE: GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

In today's session we explore the importance of God's covenant with Noah. We are reminded of this covenant every time we look into the sky and see a rainbow. Its colours signify God's promise never again to flood the Earth. It is a promise made with the whole of creation and reminds us of God's faithfulness to his people.

## SESSION TWO: GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

God's covenant with Abram required very little. If Abram could just wait patiently for God, then he was promised descendants as numerous as the stars. As Abram and his wife Sarai grew older, the waiting became harder, and the temptation to give God a helping hand was overwhelming. Discover what happened when Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands and tried to micromanage God's plan for their life.

## SESSION THREE: GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

God's covenant with David promised that the saviour of the world would be his direct descendant. His closest friend and adviser, Nathan, shared the word of the Lord with David, and David was overjoyed at the prospect. Just a few years later, however, Nathan had a different message to share with David. In today's session we explore what happens to the promises of God when we fall short of the standards he has set for us.

## SESSION FOUR: GOD'S NEW COVENANT

Throughout the Old Testament, the people of God continued on a cycle of promise-breaking with God. They were unable to keep their side of the covenant promise, and the prophets of the Old Testament began to prophesy about a new covenant. In today's session, we explore what the prophets had to say, how the new covenant was fulfilled, and what it means for us as Christians today.

Any text in italics represents notes for the leader. It gives more context around the Scripture/activity. You may choose to share verbatim, summarise or not share at all.

# GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

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## WELCOME

The rainbow has come to mean many different things to many different people. It is often used as a symbol for the LGBTQ+ community, but is also used as a way for families to remember babies that have sadly died. Throughout the Covid pandemic the rainbow was a reminder of the hard work of keyworkers in the NHS and other services striving to keep us safe.

 Can you think of any other contexts where the rainbow has been used?

In today's session, we are going to focus on the covenant God made with Noah and the way that the rainbow was used as a reminder of that covenant. First, let's see how familiar you are with rainbows.

**Leader's notes:** For this activity, you will need the 'Rainbowtastic' presentation. The first question on the presentation is: How many of you have seen a rainbow? It's very unlikely there's anyone in the group that hasn't seen a rainbow, but the following 15 slides show a range of rare and unusual rainbows. Show and discuss each one.

At the end of the presentation, ask the group which kind of rainbow they would most like to see in real life.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Ask the group to describe how a rainbow is formed.


Watch the clip to find out.

 **Watch: How rainbows form and what shape they really are – Colourful Weather – ABC Australia (3:01)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oz6yyGn-DbY>


 What one thing did you discover about rainbows that you didn't know before?

## WORD


Throughout January, we will be looking at the different covenants God made with his people throughout the Bible.

 What is a covenant?

Watch the clip to find out more about covenants, and then discuss the questions.

 **Watch: What is a covenant, and how does it relate to interpreting Scripture? (2:05)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQL7kVF0fOA&t=124s>

## DISCUSS

 How are covenants different from / similar to the contracts we use today?

 How is a relationship impacted by either the keeping or breaking of a covenant?

 How do covenants help us to understand our relationship with God?

You may be familiar with the story of Noah and the ark from books you read as a child or even films like *Evan Almighty*. Noah's story is told across Genesis 6 to 9 at the start of the Old Testament. The clip we're about to watch is not aimed at your age group but gives us a summary of the story before we focus on the covenant God made with Noah.

 **Watch: Noah's Ark (3:38)**


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzYjy6lhRag>

God resolved to change his relationship with his creation.

 **Read Genesis 8:20-22 (MSG)**

<sup>20-21</sup> Noah built an altar to God. He selected clean animals and birds from every species and offered them as burnt offerings on the altar. God smelled the sweet fragrance and thought to himself, 'I'll never again curse the ground because of people. I know they have this bent toward evil from an early age, but I'll never again kill off everything living as I've just done.'

<sup>22</sup> For as long as Earth lasts,  
planting and harvest, cold and heat,  
Summer and winter, day and night  
will never stop.'

 What did God resolve to do in these verses?

 **Read Genesis 9:1-16 (MSG)**

<sup>1-4</sup> God blessed Noah and his sons: He said, 'Prosper! Reproduce! Fill the Earth! Every living creature – birds, animals, fish – will fall under your spell and be afraid of you. You're responsible for them. All living creatures are yours for food; just as I gave you the plants, now I give you everything else. Except for meat with its lifeblood still in it – don't eat that.'

<sup>5</sup> 'But your own lifeblood I will avenge; I will avenge it against both animals and other humans.'






<sup>6-7</sup> Whoever sheds human blood,  
by humans let his blood be shed,  
Because God made humans in his image  
reflecting God's very nature.  
You're here to bear fruit, reproduce,  
lavish life on the Earth, live bountifully!'

<sup>8-11</sup> Then God spoke to Noah and his sons: 'I'm setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you – birds, farm animals, wild animals – that came out of the ship with you. I'm setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth.'

<sup>12-16</sup> God continued, 'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I'm putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth. From now on, when I form a cloud over the Earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life. When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth.'

<sup>17</sup> And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I've set up between me and everything living on the Earth.'

## DISCUSS

-  What responsibility does God give humankind in verses 1-4?
-  How do you think we are doing when it comes to living up to that responsibility?
-  What warning does God give his people in verses 5-7?
-  What is special about the covenant God makes in verses 8-11? Is it just with humans?
-  In a biblical sense, what does a rainbow represent?

Verse 17 reminds us that the covenant was established between God and 'everything living on Earth'. All creation was included in the promise of God's grace and faithfulness.


## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Noah is considered to be a person of great faith and gets a mention in the faith hall of fame in Hebrews 11.

Read Hebrews 11:7 from the *Amplified* translation of the Bible.

<sup>7</sup> By faith [with confidence in God and His word] Noah, being warned by God about events not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his family. By this [act of obedience] he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

— HEBREWS 11:7 (AMP)

 How did Noah demonstrate his faith and trust in God?

## WITNESS

**Leader's notes:** The aim of this activity is to create rainbows as a representation of God's grace, faithfulness and love for his creation. Each part of the rainbow will have a different Scripture reference linked to God's grace and faithfulness. Even though a list is provided, encourage the group to find their own verses. A link is provided for the craft element of the activity, and suggested Bible verses are shown below.

 **Paper Rainbow Craft | LetsTryThisAtHome**

<https://letstrythisathome.com/2015/05/04/paper-rainbow-craft/>


The finished rainbows could be used in a variety of ways:

- \* A tree could be set up, as shown in the link, for the rainbows to be displayed at church
- \* The young people could give their rainbow to someone at home, members of the church, or members of the church who are unable to attend due to old age or illness
- \* The young people could keep the rainbows for themselves.

### Suggested Bible verses

2 Thessalonians 3:3	2 Timothy 2:13	Hebrews 10:23
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24	Deuteronomy 7:9	Lamentations 3:22-23
Psalms 36:5	Psalms 89:8	Psalms 91:4

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 Which of the Bible verses resonated most with you today? Explain why?

## WORSHIP

The rainbow represents the promise God made to all creation. In our time of worship today, we are going to give thanks for that creation.

**Leader's notes:** You will need an A3 printout of a rainbow or a sheet of paper and the felt-tip colours to create a rainbow. Ask the young people to write down aspects of creation linked to the different colours filling each band of the rainbow –

eg luscious green fields, the petals of a rose in bloom, the gloop of freshly made custard (they can be as creative as they like)

God, in his faithfulness, created all these aspects of the rainbow shown before us. He created (share some of the examples the young people have given). In his covenant with Noah, God promised that no matter how much sin runs rampant in our world, he will never destroy it again.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Read Genesis 9:17(MSG)

<sup>17</sup> And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I’ve set up between me and everything living on the Earth.’

— **GENESIS 9:17 (MSG)**

Spend time in prayer as a group thanking God for his creation and for the rainbow, a demonstration of his grace and faithfulness.

# GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

God's covenant with Abram required very little. If Abram could just wait patiently for God, then he was promised descendants as numerous as the stars. As Abram and his wife Sarai grew older, the waiting became harder, and the temptation to give God a helping hand was overwhelming. Discover what happened when Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands and tried to micromanage God's plan for their life.


## WELCOME

In today's Scripture, Abram is invited to look up to the heavens and take in the amazing view of the stars filling the night sky.

See how much you know about the stars and planets in this space trivia quiz.

 **SPACE TRIVIA QUIZ #1 - 10 Astronomy & Space Trivia Quiz Questions and Answers - YouTube (5:10)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJhLLigp-1o>

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 Would you like to travel to space to see the milky way and star-filled skies yourself? If so, why? If not, why not?


## WORD

Our focus today is on the covenant God made with Abram (his name was not changed to Abraham until chapter 17). God called Abram to leave his country and then made a promise to him.

 **Read Genesis 12:2-3:**

<sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation,  
 and I will bless you;  
 I will make your name great,  
 and you will be a blessing.  
<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
 and whoever curses you I will curse;  
 and all peoples on earth  
 will be blessed through you.'

Abram was promised a great nation, but his wife Sarai was unable to have children. Relying only on the direct spoken word of God, rather than Scripture, Abram kept waiting for God to fulfil his promise. As time passed on, Sarai and Abram weren't getting any younger. We find Abram in Genesis 15 starting to get concerned about God's plan.

 **Read Genesis 15:1-6 and discuss the questions.**

<sup>1</sup> After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:  
 'Do not be afraid, Abram.  
 I am your shield,  
 your very great reward.'

<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, 'Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'





<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh

and blood will be your heir.’<sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’

<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

— GENESIS 15:1-6

## DISCUSS

-  Why do you think Abram was afraid?
-  What was Abram’s main concern?
-  How does God reassure Abram that he will have a son? Is Sarai mentioned at this point?
-  As God encourages Abram to look up to the stars, what promise does he give to him?

Abram chose to trust God. Genesis 15:7-20 outlines the details of the covenant God made with Abram. Throughout this process, God clearly outlined the path ahead for the people of Israel. This was a one-sided covenant where God made promises to Abram, expecting nothing in return. The promise of as many generations of descendants as the star-filled skies was made – but could Abram and Sarai hang on to see it fulfilled?

### Read Genesis 16:1-15 to find out what happened next.

<sup>1</sup> Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar;  
<sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, ‘The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.’

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.’

<sup>6</sup> ‘Your slave is in your hands,’ Abram said. ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarai ill-treated Hagar; so she fled from her.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, ‘Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?’

‘I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,’ she answered.

<sup>9</sup> Then the angel of the Lord told her, ‘Go back to your mistress and submit to her.’ <sup>10</sup> The angel added, ‘I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.’

<sup>11</sup> The angel of the Lord also said to her:

‘You are now pregnant  
 and you will give birth to a son.  
 You shall name him Ishmael,  
 for the Lord has heard of your misery.

<sup>12</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man;  
 his hand will be against everyone  
 and everyone’s hand against him,  
 and he will live in hostility  
 towards all his brothers.’






<sup>13</sup> She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’ <sup>14</sup> That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.


— GENESIS 16:1-15 (NIV)



DISCUSS

-  What cunning plan did Sarai formulate to 'help' God fulfil his covenant promise?
-  How should Abram have responded to Sarai's request?
-  Why do you think Sarai despised Hagar once she was pregnant?
-  Sarai and Abram veered away from the path God had set for them. How did they try and solve the problem?
-  What promise did God make to Hagar?

In the last session, we read how God sent a rainbow as a symbol of his covenant to Noah. Abraham's covenant sign was slightly different and a little more painful!

 **Read Genesis 17:1-27 to find out the next part of the covenant story.**

**The covenant of circumcision**

<sup>1</sup> When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.'

<sup>3</sup> Abram fell face down, and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup> No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.'

<sup>9</sup> Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner – those who are not your offspring. <sup>13</sup> Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'




<sup>17</sup> Abraham fell face down; he laughed and said to himself, 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?' <sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to God, 'If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!'

<sup>19</sup> Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. <sup>20</sup> And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.' <sup>22</sup> When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

<sup>23</sup> On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. <sup>24</sup> Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, <sup>25</sup> and his son Ishmael was thirteen; <sup>26</sup> Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. <sup>27</sup> And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

— GENESIS 17:1-27 (NIV)

### DISCUSS

-  How did Abraham react to God's promise that Sarah would give birth to a son?
-  How did God fulfil his promise to Abraham and Sarah?
-  What problems did Abraham and Sarah's micromanagement of God's plan cause?

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Watch the clip if you would like to discover more about the story of Abraham, Sarah and their servant Hagar.

 **Hagar – Bible Study – Jesus in all of Genesis 15-16 (3:23)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4uMWc4yQjM>




-  How does the clip help you to understand the importance of trusting God's promises?

### WITNESS

Abram and Sarai struggled to trust the promise God had made to them. As they waited for their son to arrive, they wondered if they'd missed something. Maybe they had misheard or misunderstood, or maybe the promise only related to Abram.

Abram and Sarai went into overthinking mode.

Think of a situation where you have prayed to God and have then waited for a response.


-  How have you fallen into the overthinking trap?
-  How do you relate to Abram and Sarai's situation?
-  In what ways have you tried to micromanage God?

God took Abram into the darkness and asked him to look up to the stars. The God who created the stars assured Abram that his promises were true, and yet still Abram and Sarai tried to outmanoeuvre God.


**Leader's notes:** For this activity, you will need some cardboard stars or star-shaped Post-it Notes. The group is going to spend time reflecting, reading and discussing promises found in Scripture and reminders of the importance of waiting on God and trusting in him. Write the following Scripture references on the stars, stick them around the room, or place them on the floor. Share the Scripture readings together, and then write a short phrase on the star that sums up its message. Discuss with the group which message particularly resonates with them in their current situation.

#### Suggested Scripture references

John 3:16	1 John 2:24-25	1 John 3:2	Isaiah 41:10
James 4:7-8	Deuteronomy 31:8	Psalms 27:14	Isaiah 40:31
Lamentations 3:25	Exodus 14:14	Psalms 62:5	Proverbs 20:22
Psalms 20:7	Proverbs 3:5-6	Psalms 56:3-4	John 14:1


-  If you were going to commit to memorising any of the Scripture verses you've heard today, which one would it be? Explain why you have chosen it.


### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  Which of these Scripture verses do you think would have helped Abram and Sarai? Explain your choice.

## WORSHIP

Our faithful God keeps his promises. We do not need to micromanage or 'help' God to fulfil his plans for our lives. Yes, we need to actively participate in our life of faith, but that doesn't mean trying to second-guess God and giving him a helping hand answering our prayers.

 What prayers are you waiting for God to answer?

 What promises are you waiting for God to fulfil?

If you feel comfortable, then share them with the rest of the group.

**Leader's notes:** Give each member of the group their own cardboard star or star-shaped Post-it Note.

As you listen to the music, spend time in prayer, asking God to fulfil his promises to the group in his own way and in his own time. Write down a Scripture promise, lyric from the song, or encouraging phrase to remind you throughout the week that God keeps his promises.

 **Hope Darst – Promise Keeper (Official Lyric Video)**

<https://youtu.be/H8XivMN3Ado>

Your vow's a covenant unbroken  
 You made it known through history  
 Your love will never be unfaithful  
 Never walk out on me  
 Never walk out on me  
 I have no reason to doubt you  
 Who you have been, you'll always be  
 And though the future's still unfolding  
 With everything I've seen  
 How could I not believe?

*You are a promise keeper  
 Your word will never fail  
 My heart can trust you, Jesus  
 I won't be overwhelmed  
 My eyes are gonna see  
 Miracles and victories  
 You are a promise keeper  
 And your word will never fail*

You will return all that's been stolen  
 There's nothing that you can't redeem  
 And though the story's still unfolding  
 With everything I've seen  
 How could I not believe?

You are...

*You are a promise keeper  
 Your word will never fail  
 My heart can trust you, Jesus  
 I won't be overwhelmed  
 My eyes are gonna see  
 Miracles and victories  
 You are a promise keeper  
 And your word will never fail  
 I know your word will never fail*

I'll see your goodness in the land of the living  
 I'll see your goodness right here, right now  
 You know the ending before the beginning  
 I know that you have worked all things out, I know  
 I'll see your goodness in the land of the living  
 I'll see your goodness right here, right now, I will  
 'Cause you know the ending before the beginning  
 I know that you have worked all things out  
 I know, I know...

*You are a promise keeper...*

Jonathan Lindley Smith / Ethan Gregory Hulse / Hope Rachelle Darst

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What is the one thing you have learned about God's promises from the story of Abram and Sarai?

# GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

God's covenant with David promised that the saviour of the world would be his direct descendant. His closest friend and adviser, Nathan, shared the word of the Lord with David, and David was overjoyed at the prospect. Just a few years later, however, Nathan had a different message to share with David. In today's session we explore what happens to the promises of God when we fall short of the standards he has set for us.

## WELCOME

Today's Scripture is all about God's covenant with David. However, it's also about a special friendship between two people who felt confident to challenge each other when times got difficult.


Use the quote to help you identify these famous fictional friendships.

Feel free to give the group a clue if they are finding it tricky.

1. 'Why is it when something bad happens, it's always you three?' A quote from Professor McGonagall about Harry, Ron and Hermione.
2. 'Come, Mr \_\_\_\_\_!' he cried. 'I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you.' Sam and Frodo.
3. 'My buddy \_\_\_\_\_ says, 'You got to put your behind in your past.' Timon and Pumbaa
4. 'Yes, trust. It's what friends do.' Marlin and Dory
5. 'After all, one can't complain. I have my friends.' Eeyore talking about his friends in the Hundred Acre Wood.

Think of another fictional friendship and write down a clue for the rest of the group to guess. Share it with the group and see if they can guess your fictional friendship.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY



 If you could be close friends with any fictional character, who would you choose? Explain why.

## WORD

In the sessions so far, we have explored God's covenant with Noah and Abraham. Today we will discover more about God's covenant with David. Watch the clip to find out where this covenant fits in God's story.

 **Watch: David the Priestly King (4:39)**

<https://youtu.be/JCP2zWajIGc>

-  When you think about the covenants made between God and humankind, who usually lets the side down, loses trust, or breaks the covenant? Why do you think that is?
-  How does David's faith in God change from the time he bravely defeated Goliath through to his later years as king?

One of David's closest friends and advisers was the prophet Nathan. He was given the job of sharing God's covenant promise with David.

 **Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (MSG) and discuss the questions.**

<sup>12</sup> Before long, the king made himself at home and God gave him peace from all his enemies. Then one day King David said to Nathan the prophet, 'Look at this: Here I am, comfortable in a luxurious house of cedar, and the Chest of God sits in a plain tent.'

<sup>3</sup> Nathan told the king, 'Whatever is on your heart, go and do it. God is with you.'

<sup>47</sup> But that night, the word of God came to Nathan saying, 'Go and tell my servant David: This is God's word on the matter: You're going to build a "house" for me to live in? Why, I haven't lived in a "house" from the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt till now. All that time I've moved about with nothing but

a tent. And in all my travels with Israel, did I ever say to any of the leaders I commanded to shepherd Israel, “Why haven’t you built me a house of cedar?”





<sup>8-11</sup> ‘So here is what you are to tell my servant David: The God-of-the-Angel-Armies has this word for you: I took you from the pasture, tagging along after sheep, and made you prince over my people Israel. I was with you everywhere you went and mowed your enemies down before you. Now I’m making you famous, to be ranked with the great names on earth. And I’m going to set aside a place for my people Israel and plant them there so they’ll have their own home and not be knocked around any more. Nor will evil men afflict you as they always have, even during the days I set judges over my people Israel. Finally, I’m going to give you peace from all your enemies.

<sup>11-16</sup> ‘Furthermore, God has this message for you: God himself will build you a house! When your life is complete and you’re buried with your ancestors, then I’ll raise up your child, your own flesh and blood, to succeed you, and I’ll firmly establish his rule. He will build a house to honour me, and I will guarantee his kingdom’s rule permanently. I’ll be a father to him, and he’ll be a son to me. When he does wrong, I’ll discipline him in the usual ways, the pitfalls and obstacles of this mortal life. But I’ll never remove my gracious love from him, as I removed it from Saul, who preceded you and whom I most certainly did remove. Your family and your kingdom are permanently secured. I’m keeping my eye on them! And your royal throne will always be there, rock solid.’

<sup>17</sup> Nathan gave David a complete and accurate account of everything he heard and saw in the vision.

— 2 SAMUEL 7:1-17 (MSG)

## DISCUSS

-  What was David’s original plan to honour God?
-  What was God’s response to David’s plan to build him a temple?
-  What covenant promise does God make with David?
-  God took away his love from King Saul, but what does he promise to David?



God promises never to remove his love from his children, even if they make mistakes. David was about to put that to the test.

Despite God’s faithful covenant with David, the king makes choices that damage his relationship with God.



Watch the clip to find out more.

 **David and Bathsheba – Bible Study – 2 Samuel 10-12 (4:59)**

<https://youtu.be/PMtDRKxjfGs>

-  What poor choices does David make?
-  In what way does David misuse the power that God gave him? What were the consequences?


Skim through the genealogy of Matthew 1:1-17.

-  Whose name do you notice?
-  What happened to God’s covenant with David?

Despite David’s sins and failures, God remained faithful to the covenant promise he made. Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, a direct descendant of David.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

As always, David communicated his feelings through psalms. Read the psalm he penned when he realised how far he had fallen from God’s plan for his life.

-  What can David teach us about sharing our failures with God and starting out on a new path?


## Psalm 51 (MSG)


<sup>1-3</sup> Generous in love – God, give grace!  
 Huge in mercy – wipe out my bad record.  
 Scrub away my guilt,  
 soak out my sins in your laundry.  
 I know how bad I've been;  
 my sins are staring me down.  
<sup>4-6</sup> You're the One I've violated, and you've seen  
 it all, seen the full extent of my evil.  
 You have all the facts before you;  
 whatever you decide about me is fair.  
 I've been out of step with you for a long time,  
 in the wrong since before I was born.  
 What you're after is truth from the inside out.  
 Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.  
<sup>7-15</sup> Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out  
 clean,  
 scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life.  
 Tune me in to foot-tapping songs,  
 set these once-broken bones to dancing.  
 Don't look too close for blemishes,  
 give me a clean bill of health.  
 God, make a fresh start in me,  
 shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my  
 life.

Don't throw me out with the trash,  
 or fail to breathe holiness in me.  
 Bring me back from grey exile,  
 put a fresh wind in my sails!  
 Give me a job teaching rebels your ways  
 so the lost can find their way home.  
 Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation  
 God,  
 and I'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways.  
 Unbutton my lips, dear God;  
 I'll let loose with your praise.  
<sup>16-17</sup> Going through the motions doesn't please  
 you,  
 a flawless performance is nothing to you.  
 I learned God-worship  
 when my pride was shattered.  
 Heart-shattered lives ready for love  
 don't for a moment escape God's notice.  
<sup>18-19</sup> Make Zion the place you delight in,  
 repair Jerusalem's broken-down walls.  
 Then you'll get real worship from us,  
 acts of worship small and large,  
 Including all the bulls  
 they can heave on to your altar!


## WITNESS

In order to set his relationship right with God, David had to acknowledge the mistakes he had made. God's covenant promise and deep love for David remained, even when he fell short of the standards God had set for him. For nearly a year, David continued to deny his wrongdoing and it took a loyal friend to set him back on track.

 Do you have any friends who are willing to lovingly set you back on track when you are going down the wrong path? How do they do this?


 If the answer is no, then would you like friends like this? If not, why not?

Nathan was there in the highs of David's life when God made a covenant with him, and in the lows when he called out David's abuse of power.


 Why is it important to have people in our lives who will challenge the choices we make?

Watch the clip to discover more about what accountability looks like within the Church.

 **Is accountability Biblical? (3:28)**  
[https://youtu.be/xZDe1Q9w\\_48](https://youtu.be/xZDe1Q9w_48)

 Do you recognise the description of an accountable church in your own church family?

 Did you discover anything new about the importance of accountability within the Church? If so, what was it?


 In what ways can accountability go wrong within the church community?


**Leader's notes:** After a discussion around the topic, ask the group to create a 'How to be a Nathan' checklist. The aim of this activity is to consider the best way to lovingly hold each other accountable for the choices that we make. The 'How to' guide can also include what not to do, and the group may share experiences where they have not felt support when their choices were discussed. Once the group has come up with their 'How to' guide, ask them which aspects of the list they find challenging and which ones they will try to do over the coming weeks

and months.

Holding each other accountable isn't easy, but Nathan gives us the perfect example of the importance of lovingly challenging our friends when we see them in spiritual danger.

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY


 What is your response to the following quote?


 How does it compare to the way your church or Christian friendship group operates?

**“‘We need accountability. Left to our own devices, we will soon devise or succumb to all kinds of evil. As Christians, we know that we need other believers to hold us accountable to the standards of Scripture. Passages such as Ecclesiastes 4:12 remind us that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken”. The Bible tells us that “iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17) and that we are to “stir up one another to love and good works ... encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Life is far too difficult and we are far too sinful to live in solitude. We need community. We need accountability. And God has anticipated our need by giving us the local church as the primary means of this accountability.’**

— TIM CHALLIES

### WORSHIP

 What was the sign or symbol for Noah's and Abraham's stories? Rainbow and circumcision.

 What do you think the sign was for David's covenant?


David was promised that his descendant would reign over God's Kingdom.

As you listen to 'King of kings' and consider the words of Psalm 100, reflect on God's covenant with David and the difference its fulfilment makes in our lives today.

 **'King of kings' – Saddleback Worship (5:57)**

<https://youtu.be/8D-T34ScetE>

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 As you reflect on everything we have discovered today regarding God's covenant with David, what one thing will you take away with you and apply to your everyday faith?


# GOD'S NEW COVENANT

Throughout the Old Testament, the people of God continued on a cycle of promise-breaking with God. They were unable to keep their side of the covenant promise, and the prophets of the Old Testament began to prophesy about a new covenant. In today's session, we explore what the prophets had to say, how the new covenant was fulfilled, and what it means for us as Christians today.

## WELCOME

**Leader's notes:** For this starter, the group can either work together or in smaller teams. Give each team a 'Promises' handout. The aim of the activity is for the group to find an example of a scenario or a lyric where a promise was kept, and a promise was broken.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY


 Do you have your own experience of a promise kept and a promise broken? If you feel comfortable, then share it with the group.

## WORD





Throughout our sessions this month we have explored the different covenants God made with his people. In today's session, we will look at the 'new covenant'.

**Leader's notes:** To help unpack the details of the new covenant, we will use the 'What is the New Covenant?' clip from Got Questions Ministries. Timings are given to stop the clip and discuss the questions, as time will be needed to process the information. Additional information about the new covenant is provided in the link below.

 <https://www.gotquestions.org/new-covenant.html>



 **Watch: What is the New Covenant? – Got Questions Ministries (3:56)**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXNnmwGs\\_ac&t=171s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXNnmwGs_ac&t=171s)

### PART 1: 0:00-31

-  What is the new covenant? *God promises to forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned towards him.*
-  Who is the mediator of the new covenant? *Jesus*
-  What forms the basis of the promise God makes with humankind? *The death of Jesus on the cross*
-  Which prophets predicted the new covenant in the Old Testament? *Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel*

### PART 2: 0:32-1:06

*The screen should show the covenant predictions of the prophet Moses.*

-  What are the main differences between the covenant God made with Moses and the new covenant Moses predicts in Deuteronomy?
-  What did a total change of heart look like for the people of Israel? What would it look like for us today?

### PART 3: 1:07-1:28

*The screen should show Jeremiah 31:31,33.*

-  How does Jeremiah describe the difference between the old and the new covenant?



PART 4: 1:29–2:19

The screen should show Ezekiel's list of provisions of the new covenant.

What do you think is meant by the following statement?

'The Old Covenant was written in stone.  
The New Covenant is written on our hearts.'

How does Ezekiel describe the difference between the new and old covenant?

PART 5: 2:20–3:02

What do you think the statement 'we are no longer under the law, but under grace' means?

The benefits of the new covenant are described in Hebrews 8:6, but how do the following translations help you understand these words more?

<sup>6</sup> But as it is, Christ has acquired a [priestly] ministry which is more excellent [than the old Levitical priestly ministry], for He is the Mediator (Arbiter) of a better covenant [uniting God and man], which has been enacted and rests on better promises.

— HEBREWS 8:6 (AMP)

<sup>6</sup> But now Jesus has taken on a new and improved priestly ministry; and in that respect, He has been made the Mediator of a better covenant established on better promises.

— HEBREWS 8:6 (VOICE)

<sup>6</sup> But Jesus' priestly work far surpasses what these other priests do, since he's working from a far better plan. If the first plan – the old covenant – had worked out, a second wouldn't have been needed.

— HEBREWS 8:6 (MSG)

PART 6: 3:03–3:29

The screen should show the 'Final Thoughts'.

What opportunities are we given through the new covenant?

As Christians, we are part of this new covenant.

What, if anything, does that mean to you?

In what ways do you find it difficult to grasp?

What difference should it make in our everyday lives that we are part of this amazing covenant of grace with God?

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Watch the Bible Project clip about covenants to link our understanding from this month's session together.

Watch: Covenants – Bible Project (5:35)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v4jKkFj3TI>

## WITNESS

Our covenant relationship with God is at the core of what it means to be a Christian. Over the past month you have considered different covenants within the Bible, but the new covenant is different.

Wikipedia says this:

**‘Christians view the New Covenant as a new relationship between God and humans mediated by Jesus upon sincere declaration that one believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and God.’**

 What are the key components of the new covenant?

Your task for today is to create a way to communicate the new covenant in a clear and simple way.

**Leader’s notes:** *Discuss and list the different ways that people try to communicate a clear message and evaluate their pros and cons. Think about what works well for different groups of people. The group can work together or divide into smaller groups. Give them time to plan and share their ideas about how they would communicate the message of the new covenant to someone who knows nothing about it.*

### Possible ideas

- \* Social media campaign
- \* Poem / song lyrics
- \* Advertising for outside a church or on public transport
- \* Advert to be shown at the cinema
- \* Summary of a description they could use with a friend
- \* Comic strip for ‘Kids Alive!’

 What is the best way to communicate our covenant relationship with God?

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Discuss the following quotes that reflect on the new covenant of grace we have with God because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.


**“ ‘The law works fear and wrath; grace works hope and mercy.’**  
— MARTIN LUTHER

**“ ‘I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be. But still, I am not what I used to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.’**  
— JOHN NEWTON

**“ ‘Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift of God not to sin. Grace is power, not just pardon.’**  
— JOHN PIPER

**“ ‘God specialises in giving people a fresh start.’**  
— RICK WARREN





**“ ‘Every decision you need to make, every task you need to accomplish, every relationship you need to navigate, every element of daily life you need to traverse, God has already perfectly matched up with an equivalent-to-overflowing supply of grace. If you don’t agree with that, then you either lack a proper appreciation for what you have, or you are doing things that you’re not supposed to be participating in right now.’**  
— PRISCILLA SHIRER

 Which words have spoken to you the most today? Explain why?

## WORSHIP

**Leader's notes:** Give each member of the group the words for 'Take my life and let it be'.

We're going to spend time reflecting on a new version of the song 'Take my life and let it be'. Read through the lyrics of the song.

-  Which lines have been added to the original song?
-  How do they add to the meaning of the lyrics?
-  Which lines and phrases stand out for you?
-  Which aspects of these lyrics do you find challenging in your own faith journey?

As the music plays, take time to turn your heart towards God, either reaffirming the commitment you made to serve him or making a new promise to follow him every day.

### Take My Life (I Am Yours)

 [salvationist.ca/files/salvationarmy/maga/Salvation%20Worship/Volume\\_3/Take\\_my\\_life/Media/Take\\_My\\_Life\\_I\\_Am\\_Yours\\_Lyric\\_Video.mp4](https://salvationist.ca/files/salvationarmy/maga/Salvation%20Worship/Volume_3/Take_my_life/Media/Take_My_Life_I_Am_Yours_Lyric_Video.mp4)

Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my voice and let me sing  
Always, only for my King;  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from thee,  
Filled with messages from thee.

*'Cause I am yours, even when the doubt sets in,  
Even when I'm running in the opposite  
direction.  
And I am yours, when the night is dark and I  
can't see,  
You're always standing next to me  
And I am reminded that I am yours,*

That I am yours.  
Take my will and make it thine,  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart, it is thine own,  
It shall be thy royal throne.

#### Chorus

#### Interlude

I am yours, I am yours.  
Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
At thy feet its treasure store;  
Take myself and I will be  
Ever, only, all for thee,  
Ever, only, all for thee.  
'Cause I am yours.

Frances Ridley Havergal, Laura Rowsell

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### Prayer

Heavenly Father,  
We are yours, even when the doubt sets in,  
Even when we're running in the opposite direction.  
We are yours, when the night is dark, and we can't see,  
You're always standing next to us  
And we are reminded that we are yours,  
That we are yours.  
Amen.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Depending on your group, you may want to download the sheet music to join in with the song. You may also want to spend time learning the song to share with the rest of the church.

 [salvationist.ca/samagacb/salvation-worship/full-song-list/take-my-life-i-am-yours/](https://salvationist.ca/samagacb/salvation-worship/full-song-list/take-my-life-i-am-yours/)

# PROMISES

	Promise Kept	Promise Broken
Book		
Song		
Film		
TV Programme		
Sports		
News		