

Courageous Renewal



Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31:31-34;
Ezekiel 36:26-27; Hebrews 8:6



In this session we explore the new covenant and what it reveals about renewal and courageous discipleship. Throughout Scripture, God remains faithful to his promises, yet human faithfulness is fragile. The new covenant shows that lasting change does not begin with greater effort but with God's renewing work within us. Through Jesus, God restores the broken partnership between humanity and himself, offering forgiveness, transformation and new life. Courageous renewal begins as we learn to trust God's grace at work in us and to live as people shaped by that grace in the world.

You will need:

- Small stones or pebbles (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Paper

**Say:**

At the start of the year lots of people make New Year's resolutions. They decide they're going to change something about their life, their habits or the kind of person they want to be.

Ask:

- What, if any, New Year's resolutions did you make this year?
- If you made one, how is it going so far?

Say:

There's a pretty good chance that many New Year's resolutions made across the country have been broken, or even totally forgotten.

Ask:

Why do you think it's so hard to keep changes going, even when we really want them?

Say:

Many New Year's resolutions are shaped around behaviour or around habits we want to change or improve. They often begin with genuine motivation, but they rarely address what is happening beneath the surface where lasting change actually takes place.

As we explore the new covenant today we will be thinking about a different approach to change, one that does not rely on greater effort but on the renewal that God brings from the inside out.

 **Bridge****Ask:**

When you think about change that really lasts, what do you think makes the biggest difference?

 **Amplify****Say:**

Over the last few weeks we've explored the different covenants God made with his people. With Noah we saw God promise to preserve life, even in a broken world. With Abraham we saw God promise a future that depended on trust, not control. With David we saw that even when leaders fail, God's steadfast love does not disappear. In every story God remains faithful - and yet human faithfulness is fragile. Today we're going to look at what God does about that problem. This is where the new covenant comes in.

Leader's notes:

To help unpack the details of the new covenant, we will use the 'What is the New Covenant?' clip from GotQuestions Ministries. Timings are given to stop the clip and discuss the questions.

Watch:

What is the New Covenant? - Got Questions Ministries (3:56)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXNnmwGs_ac&t=2s

Part One - 0:00-0:31**Ask:**

- 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 covenant? *Jesus*

- What forms the basis of the promise God made with humankind? *The death of Jesus Christ on the cross.*
- Which prophets predicted the new covenant in the Old Testament? *Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.*

Say:

When the Bible speaks about the new covenant, it often does so by looking back to the covenant God made through Moses.

Through Moses, God gave his people the Law to guide them in learning how to live as a redeemed community. Over time, however, it became clear that knowing the Law was not the same as experiencing inner transformation.

The prophets do not criticise the Law itself. Instead they draw attention to a deeper issue within the human heart. It is for this reason that God promises a new covenant.

Part Two - 0:32-1:06**Leader's notes:**

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

Ask:

- What differences do you notice between the covenant God gave through Moses and the new covenant Moses points towards 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 Three - 1:07-1:28**Leader's notes:**

The screen should show Jeremiah 31:31,33.

Ask:

How does Jeremiah describe the difference between the old and new covenants?

Part Four - 1:29-2:19**Leader's notes:**

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

Ask:

- 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 old and the new covenants?

Part Five - 2:20-3:02**Ask:**

- 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?

⁶ 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)

⁶ 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)

⁶ 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 Six - 3:03-3:29**Leader's notes:**

The screen should show the 'Final Thoughts'.

Ask:

What opportunities are we given through the new covenant?

Say:

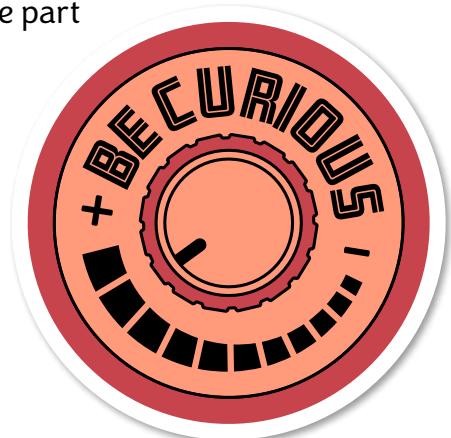
As Christians, we are part of this new covenant.

Ask:

- 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?

Say:

The new covenant reveals that courageous discipleship begins not with greater effort, but with the renewal that God brings from the inside out.



 **Bridge****Leader's notes:**

If the group would like to know more about the covenants, then watch and discuss the following clip together.

Watch:

The Covenants – Bible Project (5:14)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HjlGul8ljM

 **Sound Check****Say:**

Our covenant relationship with God sits at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Over the past month we have explored different covenants across Scripture and seen how God consistently takes the initiative, remaining faithful even when human faithfulness is fragile.

The new covenant is different, not because God changes his character, but because God addresses the problem that has been present all along.

Ask:

How would you describe the new covenant?

Say:

Under the new covenant, God promises forgiveness and restoration through Jesus. Rather than asking people to carry the weight of covenant faithfulness alone, God commits himself fully to the relationship. Through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the broken partnership between God and humanity is restored and God's Spirit is given to bring renewal from the inside out.

The new covenant is not centred on rules written on stone, but on transformed hearts shaped by grace.

Leader's notes:

You may want to display the above description of the new covenant for the young people to refer to during the Sound Check activity.

Say:

One of the challenges of faith is learning how to communicate what we believe in a way that is honest, clear, and rooted in lived experience. The new covenant is not simply something we explain. **It is something we live.**

Your Sound Check task today is to think about how you might communicate the new covenant to someone who knows nothing about it.

Leader's notes:

As a group, or in smaller groups, discuss different ways people communicate important messages. Consider what works well, what can be misunderstood and what feels real.

Invite the group to choose one of the following approaches or to come up with their own, and begin shaping a simple way to communicate the new covenant.

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 Kid's Alive!

Ask:

What do you think is the most helpful way to communicate our covenant relationship with God?

Say:

Words, images and creativity all matter, but ultimately the new covenant is made visible through lives shaped by grace. As people who are being renewed from the inside out, we become living witnesses to God's faithfulness.

In that sense, we are not only invited to talk about the new covenant. We are also invited to live it out in the way we follow Jesus each day.

**Ask:**

How does understanding the new covenant change the way you think about what it means to follow Jesus?



**Selah****Leader's notes:**

If possible, give each person a small stone or pebble to hold. If that's not practical, ask them to imagine holding one.

Say:

Selah is a moment to pause and be still. It is not a time to analyse ourselves or decide what needs to change. It is a space to bring our lives honestly before God.

In Scripture, the old covenant is described as being written on stone, while the new covenant is written on the heart. This image reminds us that God's work is not about external pressures or performance but about inner renewal.

Leader's notes:

Invite the group to hold the stone in their hand.

Ask them to think quietly about one area of their faith that feels hard, fixed, or slow to change. There is no need to name this out loud or explain it to anyone else.

Allow a brief pause.

Say:

As you hold the stone, imagine placing it before God. In prayer you may wish to bring before him the part of your life that feels most in need of renewal, trusting that his love and grace are at work.

**Coda****Say:**

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from this session about the importance of courageous renewal?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.