



Stories of God's **PROMISES**

Small Group Booklet
January - February 2017

STORIES OF THE PROMISES OF GOD

God's story is your story – every human being ever created has a place in this story. The Bible narrative gives us four major plot movements – creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. This is our story as well: we are created, we sin, are forgiven and restored. As we read through the Bible stories and examine the characters in them, we focus on our own spiritual journeys. We see how God always honours his promises and we are empowered to tell our stories and renew our promise to serve him.

God wants a friendship with us. This friendship is expressed as a Covenant relationship, On the one side God promises to strengthen, guide and sustain us. In return we promise to trust God with our lives.

This study examines three of the Biblical records of the Covenant story. It begins with God's Covenant with Abraham, and continues with the story of Moses and concludes with Jesus.

God's Covenant promises can speak to us as well. The question is whether we trust God enough to believe that these promises will be valid for us today. Trusting the promises of God can change our life-story!

This series is intended as preparation for the annual Methodist Covenant Service. May these three weeks lead you to discover your own Covenant Relationship with God..

**God Bless you!
Pete Grassow & Nadja Atkinson**



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Week 1: God's promise to Abraham

Read the Bible together:

Genesis 12:1-9

This is the most important moment in the story of Abram (renamed Abraham in Genesis 17). It describes Abram beginning a new chapter in his life's story – which was only possible because he chose to obey God. All other events in Abram's life would not have taken place if it were not for the obedience Abram showed in vs4. Take note: Old age is no barrier to beginning a new story in life!



For reflection and discussion: *Tell of a moment when your faithful response to God began a new chapter in your life's story.*

Genesis 15: 1-6

The important thing about Abram is that his story is part of a larger history – a God-story. This is a story that will become a blessing not only to Abram but to his descendants who will follow. **See also Genesis 12 vs 2.** Notice that the promise in God's Covenant is that the next chapter of life will be a blessing – but it may not be easy, quick or comfortable.

For reflection and discussion: *Give an instance in your life's story that took you in a direction you had not planned – but which turned out to be a blessing.*

Genesis 17: 1-8

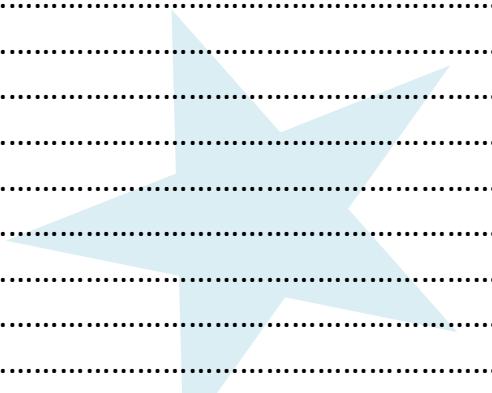
Abram has his name changed to Abraham - from "exalted father" to "father of many". This speaks of the leadership role assigned to him by God. As he proved willing to step out in faith, and as he was willing to travel to uncomfortable places, so he proved to be righteous

(Genesis 15:6). God now gives him a greater responsibility – that of the patriarch of a nation. Another chapter in his story is about to begin.

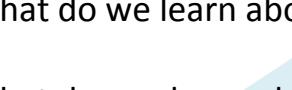
For reflection and discussion: Tell a story of taking on greater responsibility, and of the challenges in mentoring other people.

Personal reflection:

Re-read the passages by yourself and reframe the above story with you as the main character. List the promises God is making to you for your life through this story.



Questions:

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 1. What do we learn about God in this story?
 2. What do you learn about people in this story?
 3. What application / adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?



Daily Devotions / Further Questions:

Day 1

Genesis 12:1 (NKJV) Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you”.

If God asked you to leave everything and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, would you be able to trust God enough to do so?

Day 2

Genesis 12: 2 (NKJV) “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing”.

Do you believe in your heart of hearts that you are a blessing to God and to other people? Why or why not?

Day 3 *Genesis 12:17 (NKJV) Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*

Do you give thanks to the Lord when you are blessed with something?

Day 4 *Genesis 15:1 (NKJV) After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”*

Can you live as if God is your shield and your exceedingly great reward?



Day 5 *Genesis 15:6 (NKJV) And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

Do you trust God and believe that God's promises apply to your life too?

Day 6 *Genesis 17:7 (NKJV) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.*

Does God head up your family?

Day 7 *Genesis 17:8 (NKJV) “Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”*

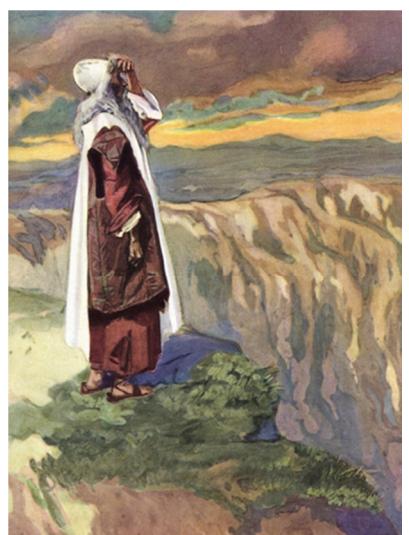
Are you living in an everlasting covenant with God?

Week 2: God's promise to Moses

Read the Bible together:

Exodus 19: 1-20

The story of Moses and the children of Israel take place when the children of Israel escape a life as slaves of the Egyptians. God calls Moses, and God liberates his people from bondage. They cross the Red Sea on dry ground. They receive food from the sky and water from the rock. And in three months they arrive at Mount Sinai. Here God makes a solemn covenant with Israel to confirm and undergird the covenant he made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. In a short space of time the story of these



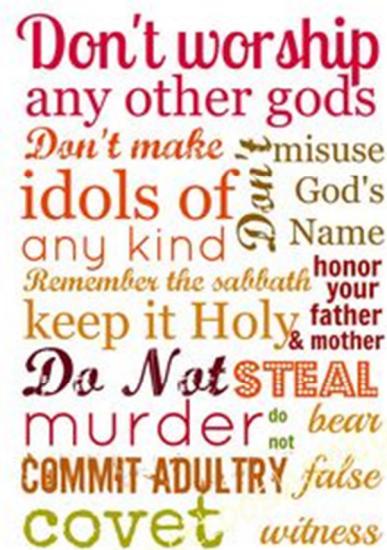
Israelites changed from being slaves, to learning to live without anyone giving commands. This is difficult for people who have never taken responsibility for their own lives. For this reason, they are given a set of “life-commandments”. (**Read Exodus 20: 1-17**).

The Commandments gave the children of Israel laws that were life affirming and freed them from the moral decay that was so much part of their world. The Commandments also reveal the nature and expectations of the One who created humankind. Since the beginning of time, God has dreamed of the way people should relate to the One who made us – and of the way we should relate to each other.

For reflection and discussion:

1. *How do you feel about rules and regulations?*
2. *What do the Ten Commandments reveal to us about God?*

The Covenant that God established with Moses and the Children of Israel was not intended only for a particular time and space in history. This provided a framework for the story of life that transcends history. For this reason many legal systems throughout the world show resonance with the Ten Commandments. And for this reason we draw on them today for our own life-stories.



For reflection and discussion:

1. *How does the story of Moses challenge our Christian community today?*
2. *Are there things about South Africa and our nation's future that worry you? Reflect on these, and if possible share these with your small group so that you can pray together for our land.*

Personal reflection:

Re-read the passages by yourself and reframe the above story with you as the main character. List the promises God is making to you for your life through this story.

Questions:

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do you learn about people in this story?
3. What application / adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?

Daily Devotions / Further Questions:

- Day 1** *Exodus 19:1 (NKJV) In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.*
Has God ever released you from something (bad habit, situation, and/or people)?
- Day 2** *Exodus 19:3-4 (NKJV) And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.*
God calls you and promises to protect you. Is this a reality for you?
- Day 3** *Exodus 19:5 (NKJV) “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine.”*
You are God’s treasure. Are you aware that you are God’s treasure?
- Day 4** *Exodus 19:6 (NKJV) “And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*
We are the ones that need to spread the Good News to the world. Are you actively taking part in spreading God’s kingdom?
- Day 5** *Exodus 19:7-9 (NKJV) So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever.” So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.*
Do you do “all that the Lord has spoken”? Can people see this in your life?



Day 6

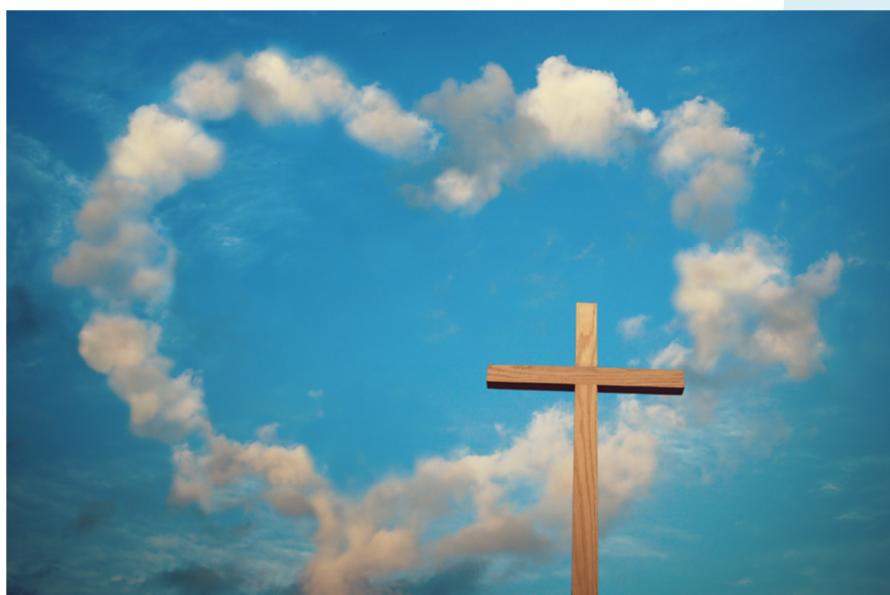
Exodus 19:10-15 (NKJV) Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain. "So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives."

Moses got the people physically and spiritually ready to meet God. Do you have a holy reverence for God? Are you ready to renew your Covenant promise on Covenant Sunday?

Day 7

Exodus 19:16-20 (NKJV) Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thundering and lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Do you bring others to meet God?



Week 3: God's promise to you ...

and yours to Him

Read the Bible together:

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Sadly while God was faithful to his people the people seemed unable to stay faithful to the story of God's Covenant. Many prophets were sent by God to note this point. (**Isaiah 65: 1-3a, Jeremiah 11: 6-8a.**) The amazing thing is that God has never abandoned the human race. Instead, as the prophet Jeremiah reminds us, God chose to begin a new Covenant Story with humankind. *"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"* (**Jeremiah 31:31**).



For reflection and discussion:

Tell a story of feeling abandoned by God and of recovering your experience of God's presence.

Romans 2:17 – 24, Romans 3: 19-20

God sent Jesus to initiate a new Covenant relationship. This is no longer a Covenant based on knowledge of the law. Instead the new Covenant story is a relationship based on a willingness to get to know God through faith in Jesus.

For reflection and discussion:

Describe a moment when God closed one chapter in your life – to open a new one that was richer, deeper and more fulfilling.

Personal reflection:

Re-read the above passages by yourself and reframe your life's story.

Questions:

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do you learn about people in this story?
3. What application / adjustment do you need to make in your life due to the truth discovered in this story?

Daily Devotions / Further Questions:

Day 1

Matthew 5: 14-17 (NKJV) "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men and women, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."



How is the story of your life reflecting the light of Jesus?

Day 2

Matthew 5: 21-24 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother or sister without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother or sister, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to them, and then come and offer your gift."

Who is in your life's story that you need to forgive?

Day 3

Matthew 5: 33-37 (NKJV) “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”

Do you keep your promises? Reflect on the Covenant Promise at the end of this booklet.

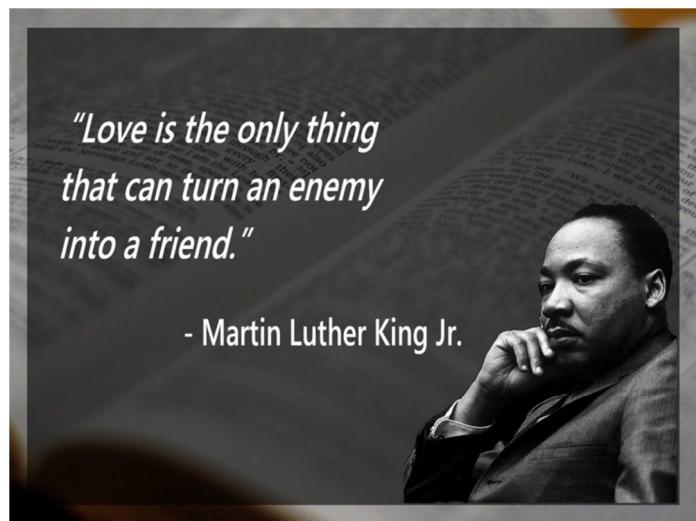
Day 4

Matthew 5: 38-39 (NKJV) “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.”

Rid your life’s story of the desire to take revenge.

Day 5

Matthew 5: 43-45 (NKJV) “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons and daughters of your Father in heaven.



Identify people who have been ‘enemies’ to you. Pray that God might bless them.

Day 6

Matthew 6:1-7 (NKJV) “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before people, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men and women. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret.”

The day will come when we will have to stand accountable to God for our actions and promises. Are you ready?

Day 7

Matthew 6: 5-8. (NKJV) “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by people. Assuredly, I say to

you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him."

For thought: God is well pleased with you – and wants to bless you.

On Covenant Sunday we renew our Covenant with God! Are you ready?

Please read the Covenant Prayer carefully so that you can commit to each line.

Lord God, Holy Father, since you have called us through Christ to share in this gracious Covenant, we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience and, for love of you, engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will. We are no longer our own but yours.

WESLEY'S COVENANT PRAYER (MODERN)

**I AM NO LONGER MY OWN, BUT YOURS, GOD.
PUT ME TO WHAT YOU WILL, RANK ME WITH WHOM YOU WILL.
PUT ME TO DOING, PUT ME TO SUFFERING.
LET ME BE EMPLOYED FOR YOU OR LAID ASIDE FOR YOU,
EXALTED FOR YOU OR BROUGHT LOW FOR YOU.
LET ME BE FULL, LET ME BE EMPTY.
LET ME HAVE ALL THINGS, LET ME HAVE NOTHING.
I FREELY AND HEARTILY YIELD ALL THINGS TO YOUR
PLEASURE AND DISPOSAL.
AND NOW, O GLORIOUS AND BLESSED GOD, FATHER, SON AND
HOLY SPIRIT,
YOU ARE MINE, AND I AM YOURS.
SO BE IT.
AND THE COVENANT WHICH I HAVE MADE ON EARTH,
LET IT BE RATIFIED IN HEAVEN.
AMEN.**

Resources:

<http://considerthegospel.org/blog>

www.dictionary.com

Google Images

Lucado Life Lessons Study Bible

Serendipity Bible

Life Application Study Bible

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