

Talk It Over

Our Covenant God Is...
(Week 4)
...All About Covenant Keeping

SMALL TALK

1. Was there ever a promise kept or a promise broken that impacted your life significantly? How so?

VIEWPOINT

2. Can you think of any covenant keeping commitments that we as followers of Jesus are responsible for in the New Covenant?
3. **READ 2 Corinthians 5:15.** How does this summary statement serve us well as a moral compass in our covenant relationship with God?
4. **READ 1 Peter 3:21.** Is it “baptism” that “now saves you” or the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that saves you, to which baptism serves as our covenant commitment “pledge”? How does the qualifying statement “through the resurrection” support your answer?

The context is a comparison of Noah's Ark to Baptism.

The ark ...provided a judgment-proof salvation to those people who were inside the ARK.

The ark itself bore the brunt of the storm (which was a judgment from God).

Those who are “in Christ” passed through a judgment unscathed as well in baptism. In our baptism we passed through the death, burial, “in Christ” uniting with him, to be raised with him in victory. Through Jesus' victory and resurrection we are given resurrection power through His Spirit to “Pledge” ourselves to Jesus. Our pledge is to maintain a good conscience before him, and to serve him as our King.

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Did you know that when you committed to Jesus you also “pledged” yourself to him in Covenant to promote his best interests in His Kingdom?
6. Jesus gave us His Word and His Spirit to help us grow in Christlikeness. Do you think, feel, and act more like Jesus now than before committing to him? How so?

PRACTICE!

7. Which life practice needs your attention most right now to grow in Christlikeness: 1) Devote Daily, 2) Pursue Relationally, 3) Guide Biblically, 4) Live Authentically, or 5) Engage Missionally?

Our Covenant God Is...All About Covenant Keeping

Gary Thomas tells this story in his book, *Sacred Marriage*.

A businessman moved over slightly as a young man crowded into the airplane seat next to him. They both fastened their seat belts, and the businessman good-naturedly inquired as to whether the young man was traveling on business or pleasure.

"Pleasure," the young man replied. "I'm on my honeymoon."

"Your honeymoon?" the businessman asked, mystified. "Where's your wife?"

"Oh, she's a few rows back. The plane was full, so we couldn't get seats together."

The plane hadn't started rolling yet, so the businessman said, "I'd be happy to change seats with her so that the two of you can be together."

"That's okay," the young man replied. "I've been talking to her all week."

Some people think covenant keeping is a grind. It's not! Life is a grind until we learn how to be covenant keepers.

What is Covenant Keeping?

"Hesed" (or *cHesed*) is an important and rich Hebrew term about faithfulness to your covenant promises.

"Hesed" can be translated with the nuance of "loyalty", "faithfulness", "love", "loving kindness" and "steadfastness" (as in follow-through in the context of fulfilling covenant expectations). **"Hesed"** was the central word for keeping covenant commitments.

Deuteronomy is filled with the use of **"hesed"** as God keeping his covenant.

God revealed himself as a Covenant making God who can be counted on to keep his covenants! Because God is a covenant keeper, he calls us to be covenant keepers.

Being In COVENANT means keeping covenant commitments like:

- Returning good for good received
- Initiating good as the first move, creating the “hesed” chain reaction of “paying it forward.”
- Advancing the best interests of the covenant partner

Never forget that GOD IS OUR COVENANT PARTNER.

- Many New Testament words are used for the Covenant concept *Hesed*. **Mercy** is a big one. *Mercy* is doing what is best for others the way God does in covenant. **Grace** is another. A more frequent one is *Agape!*
- *Agape* is unconditional love, doing what is best for another person. It is love motivated by covenant keeping!
- Love others unconditionally. When we do, we are promoting God’s interests. God’s Will.

I. Jesus **SHOWS** Us How

Only Jesus was the perfect Covenant Keeper’’! And as such he said things like this.

Luke 6:40 (CSB) A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

John 13:15 (CSB) For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

If you want to be a covenant keeper, then...

Imitate how Jesus thinks, feels, and acts.

Jesus does not only SHOW us How to be a Covenant Keeper...

II. **JESUS IS HOW to be a covenant keeper**

Some of the smallest words in the New Testament are the most powerful words of the New Covenant, words like, “in”, “with”, “for”, “to”, and “through” Jesus Christ.

Let’s take a moment to look at just two of these now.

1) **“In Christ”**: It is only possible to keep covenant if you are **“In Christ”**

Romans 8:1–2 (CSB) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,² because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

2) **“For Christ”**: All Covenant Keeping is **“For Christ”**.

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2 Corinthians 5:15 (CSB)

And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.

True NORTH in the moral compass is living FOR CHRIST.
You are heading SOUTH when you are living FOR SELF.

You don’t need to figure out the details of your FUTURE. You just need this compass. Live FOR CHRIST NOW. As you do, Jesus will lead you by his Spirit, step by step into his story for you, his will for

you. You can't live FOR CHRIST on your own, you need to rely on his Spirit.

I. Jesus SHOWS Us How

II. JESUS IS HOW to be a covenant keeper

III. Covenant always requires COMMITMENT

- Covenant commitments had ceremonies. Marriage has a covenant commitment ceremony we call a wedding. **Questions are asked and answered with pledges / vows / commitments.**
- Moses asked for a commitment, received the commitment, then sprinkled the people with blood.
- The New Covenant commitment is made at baptism. Questions are asked, a profession of commitment is given.
- Let's look at a notoriously difficult passage to to get at this concept.

*1 Peter 3:21 (CSB) Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but **the pledge** of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

- Some translations use the word “appeal” rather than “pledge” precisely because of the difficulties of this verse.
- This statement is difficult because on the surface it sounds like “baptism saves you”, but it isn't the water ceremony that saves you, and it isn't even the commitment you make that saves you as if it is all up to you.
- To understand what is going on here, as is always the case for accurate interpretation, you need to understand the context.
- The context is a comparison of Noah's Ark to Baptism.

1 Peter 3:20 (CSB) ...in the days of Noah...in it [the Ark]...eight people were saved through water.

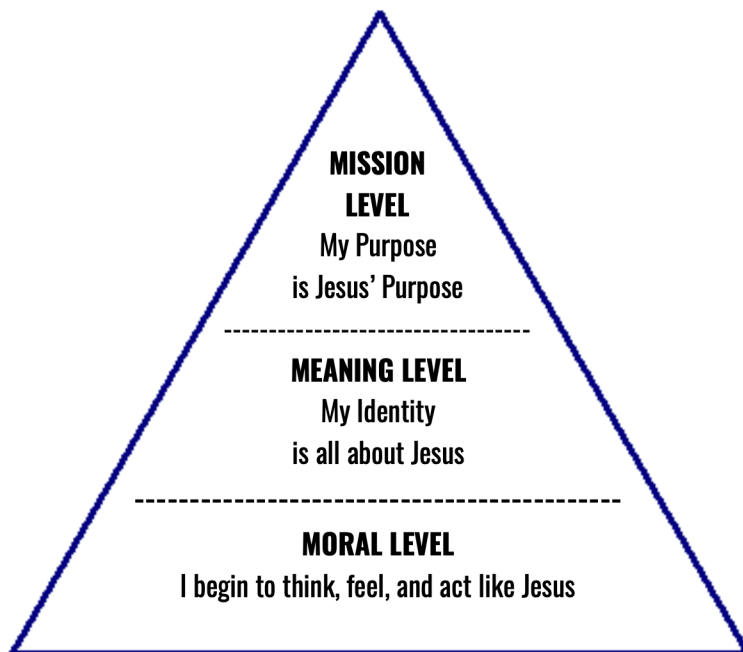
- The ARK provided a judgment-proof salvation to those people who were inside the ARK.
- The ARK itself bore the brunt of the cataclysmic storm (which was a judgment from God) and it saved the people in it.

- Those who are “in Christ” pass through a judgment unscathed also. This judgement is pictured in Baptism, as the judgement of our sin on the cross, in the death and burial of Jesus. In baptism we make a commitment to be “in Christ” and “in Christ” we come through the waters of baptism picturing judgment, and yet saving us through the resurrection of Christ.

But wait? What was this *pledge* of a good conscience toward God?

- It is our pledge to maintain a good conscience before him, and serve Jesus as our Lord and King. This pledge is only made doable or maintainable by the resurrection power of Jesus made available to us through his Spirit!
- Baptism is our pledge to live no longer for SELF but FOR JESUS!
- Now we pray “His kingdom Come, his will be done” (Like Jesus, we pray, NOT my will, but your will).
- We live for the success of the Gospel.

CHRISTLIKENESS



WE PURSUE CHRISTLIKENESS

Jesus saved us for a purpose. Jesus took the initiative. So, we take initiative as he did. This is covenant keeping.

COVENANT ALWAYS IMPLIES COMMITMENT

- Would all of you who have already made a commitment to JESUS and officially made a commitment to us here at VVCC as your Church in membership please stand. (Thank you).
- If you have already made a commitment to JESUS and yet have not **officially** made a commitment to VVCC, but consider this your church of choice, would you please stand. (Thank You)
- If you are interested in pursuing Jesus and what a commitment to Jesus means please stand?
- If you don't know where you stand but you are interested in more, and you are at least willing to look at a handout this commitment please stand? (does that cover everyone?)
- If you are online...the handout PDF is available online.

Let's firm up our Covenant Commitments! If you are willing, read it, sign it, and turn in the last page next Sunday!