

Our Covenant God Is...
(Week 1)
...All About Relationship

SMALL TALK

1. What is the best news you heard last week? What made it so special?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Jeremiah 31:31-34.** What was the covenant that God made with Israel's forefathers (vs. 31-32; see Genesis 17:1-14; Exodus 19:1-6)
3. What does the New Covenant promise according to Jeremiah?
4. How will the New Covenant supersede or fulfill the Old Covenant? (Jeremiah 31:33-34, also consider Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-7)

GETTING PERSONAL

5. How would you describe the difference between the Old and New Covenants to a friend? (see below "PRACTICE!" for some help in this)
6. What is your part of the covenant? What is God's part of the covenant?

PRACTICE!

We encourage you to read the handout "**It's All About Relationship**" to understand: (1) what God did to establish a covenant relationship with you, (2) what this restored relationship looks like, (3) how to enter into this relationship, and (4) some of the amazing results a relationship with Jesus offers.

Share it with your friends. Talk it through together in the suggested sessions. One of VVCC's life practices is to **"Live Missionally"**.

P.S. In the near future we plan to offer a training session on how to invite a friend to go through this with you.

Our Covenant God Is...All About Relationship

We live in a world of struggling and broken relationships. The world is filled with pain. We have all experienced our own share of relationship pain, and if we are honest with ourselves, we know it wasn't always 100% the other person's fault.

I'd like to begin with a Personal Question:

- Have you ever been so convinced you were "right" that you said or did things you know deep down was not "right"?

I'd like to follow that up with a General Solution Question:

- Do you know someone who thinks the solution to our broken world is MORE: police, politicians, prisons, laws, lawyers, judges, religion, education, or money?
- Is the problem of our broken world primarily legal? Economic? Religious? Psychological? Educational? or OTHER?

I. Don't Trust human SOLUTIONS for SPIRITUAL problems

Jeremiah was written about 550 B.C. He had witnessed the fall and destruction of Jerusalem, and the deportation of his people to Babylon. Prophets had been warning God's people for years, but to no avail. They had slipped into such a fallen state that they looked to paganism more than their God, or their covenant.

Jeremiah 17:5 (CSB) This is what the Lord says: Cursed is the person who trusts in mankind. He makes human flesh his strength, and his heart turns from the Lord.

This is NOT saying we are never to trust someone. This is saying, Don't trust human solutions for spiritual problems.

Are problems partially improved through good human solutions? Partially improved, certainly! But if you keep looking for human answers rather than God's answers, watch out. Only God has a

solution for our spiritual problem. And 4 verses later, we learn why this is true.

Jeremiah 17:9 (CSB) The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?

The human heart is so corrupt and incurable that human solutions are like trying to apply a small “band aid” to a bazooka sized hole in someone’s chest, and saying, “*There, there, it's not so bad; you are going to be just fine.*”

God knows—and deep down when we really think about it, we also know—we need something better than a band aid for the problems in our own heart!

The Good News is that God offers a solution that is more than adequate!

Jeremiah 31:31 (CSB) “Look, the days are coming”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

This is a prophecy about a permanent and adequate solution God would offer.

II. God’s solution was revealed through God’s COVENANTS

Jeremiah 31:32 (CSB) This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master”...

God’s solution is a particular kind of relationship with him, a New Covenant Relationship.

Covenant is a particular kind of relationship by a formal agreement specifying the covenant parties, its terms, and promises.

- God is a covenant making God, with a relational strategy to solve our spiritual problems.
- He established different covenants in stages to set up the permanent solution. From the beginning he had a plan for this promised New Covenant.
- The New Covenant was a better covenant. How was it better?

Jeremiah 31:33 (CSB) “Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the Lord’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Another prophet named Ezekiel also confirmed this.

Ezekiel 36:26 (CSB) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27 (CSB) I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.

Our Covenant God is all about relationships and he offers a plan to restore not only our relationship with him, but with each other.

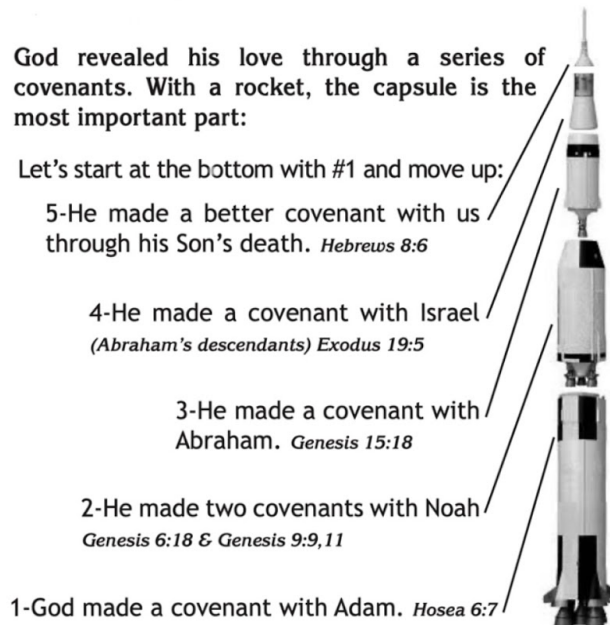
- Covenantal relationship is a worldview.
- Covenant is an approach to life based on covenants God initiated.
- Covenant keeping becomes our life philosophy. It is how we think, and live.
- Whatever we experience in marriage mirrors our relationship with a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.
- Now broaden that. What we experience in all relationships mirrors our relationship with a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.
- The Bible is the written record of God’s covenants as God revealed his unfolding plan in stages.
- The New Covenant is how God brings his people into a permanently reconciled and eternal relationship with Himself.

- Jesus' victorious crucifixion and resurrection is the basis of the New Covenant, and our faith looks back to it and also forward in hope because of this New Covenant assurance of its complete victory. In the same way, Old Covenant faith was effective because it also looked back and forward to God's faithfulness in His Covenant.. Their forward looking faith, though they did not know it, was what made the Old Covenant practices effective because it anticipated Jesus' victorious crucifixion and resurrection.
- The Old Covenant was only a provisional solution: The New Covenant is the point of the entire story!
- Jesus established the New Covenant, authorizing the Apostles to formalize it. This was first done by oral proclamation, then by written proclamation (what is now our New Testament).

Covenants are different from contracts. Contracts are negotiated. Covenants are not. Covenants are formal, defining who is in or out of a covenant.

The New Covenant superseded and replaced the Old Covenant, as taught by the Apostles. We will be getting into this a bit in weeks to come. There is a continuity, but also a discontinuity between the old and new covenants. All of the old covenants lead us to the New Covenant: the capsule, the prize, the

treasure.



III. Jesus invites you to the **NEW COVENANT!**

Luke 22:20 (CSB) In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Hebrews 8:6 (CSB) But Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been established on better promises.

Whereas, *contracts* are written to protect SELF, *covenants* are agreements made to advance the best interest of the OTHER party.

Matthew 11:28–29 (CSB) "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

A "Yoke" is a farm apparatus, stable-gear that joins two draft animals at the neck so they can work together as a team. The "easy yoke" means that it makes the load easy. But how? Not only do you pull as a team,

but the stronger animal pulls more weight, and you are not the strong one. The “easy yoke” makes it possible for the weaker animal to walk in this covenant partnership with the stronger animal. All we need to do is keep in step with Him!

Jesus used the term “Yoke” as a Covenant term, just as Jeremiah did.

Jeremiah 2:19–20 (CSB) Your own evil will discipline you; your own apostasies will reprimand you. Recognize how evil and bitter it is for you to abandon the Lord your God and to have no fear of me. This is the declaration of the Lord God of Armies. ²⁰ For long ago I broke your yoke; I tore off your chains. You insisted, “I will not serve!” On every high hill and under every green tree you lay down like a prostitute.

Notice the Marriage covenant imagery of unfaithfulness. This is spiritual adultery described as they served pagan gods on the high hills of God’s promised land! It repulsed God. He broke the covenant yoke with them, because they broke its promises, and rejected not only their covenant obligations, but they also rejected their covenant God.

But God who is a covenant making God who is filled with lovingkindness and mercy promised to bring a long term solution for people with a wayward heart to find an adequate, and eternal solution.

“Have you come to the place in your life where you could say for sure that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?”

“If you could be sure would you want to be?”

I am supplying you with a booklet that explains how to enter into a covenant relationship with God and know that for sure. It is also a wonderful tool to learn how to use in order to help someone else know for sure they have an adequate and eternally permanent solution to their spiritual problems.

HANDOUT “It is All About Relationship”

