

## Talk It Over

## Relationship Goals (Week 4) Covenant Keeping

### SMALL TALK

1. What are some ways you and your spouse drive each other crazy? If you're single, what's a personal trait that can drive other people crazy?
2. How have your relationships—whether romantic or platonic—changed over time?

### VIEWPOINT

3. What is a covenant? What can we learn from God's covenants? **READ Genesis 9:17; 12:1-2; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6**

**Genesis 9:17 (NIV)** So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

*[Read the promises of this covenant in Genesis 9:1-7]*

**God keeps his promises.** Noah stepped out of the ark onto an earth devoid of human life. But God gave him a reassuring promise. This covenant had three parts: (1) never again will a flood do such destruction; (2) as long as the earth remains, the seasons will always come as expected; (3) a rainbow will be visible when it rains as a sign to all that God will keep his promises. The earth's order and seasons are still preserved, and rainbows still remind us of God's faithfulness to his Word.

*Handbook of Bible Application.*

**Genesis 12:1-3 (NIV)** The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. {2} “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. {3} I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

**Many of God's covenants include us.** When God called Abram, he moved out in faith from Ur to Haran and finally to Canaan. God then established a covenant with Abram, telling him that he would found a great nation. Not only would this nation be blessed, God said, but the other nations of the earth would be blessed through Abram's descendants. Israel, the nation that would come from Abram, was to follow God and influence those with whom it came in contact. Through Abram's family tree, Jesus Christ was born to save humanity. Through Christ, people can have a personal relationship with God and be blessed beyond measure.

**God's covenants require a personal response.** God promised to bless Abram and make him great, but there was one condition. Abram had to do what God wanted

him to do. This meant leaving his home and friends and traveling to a new land where God promised to build a great nation from Abram's family. Abram obeyed, walking away from his home for God's promise of even greater blessings in the future. God may be trying to lead you to a place of greater service and usefulness for him. Don't let the comfort and security of your present position make you miss God's plan for you.

*Handbook of Bible Application.*

**Luke 22:20 (NIV)** In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. **Jesus established a new covenant between us and God.** In Old Testament times, God agreed to forgive people's sins if they brought animals for the priests to sacrifice. When this sacrificial system was inaugurated, the agreement between God and man was sealed with the blood of animals ([Exodus 24:8](#)). But animal blood did not in itself remove sin (only God can forgive sin), and animal sacrifices had to be repeated day by day and year after year. Jesus instituted a "new covenant" or agreement between humans and God. Under this new covenant, Jesus would die in the place of sinners. Unlike the blood of animals, his blood (because he is God) would truly remove the sins of all who put their faith in him. And Jesus' sacrifice would never have to be repeated; it would be good for all eternity ([Hebrews 9:23-28](#)). The prophets looked forward to this new covenant that would fulfill the old sacrificial agreement ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)), and John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)).

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**Hebrews 8:6 (NIV)** But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

**God's new covenant in Christ offers us forgiveness.** This passage contains a quotation from [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) and compares the new covenant with the old. The old covenant was the covenant of law between God and Israel. The new and better way is the covenant of grace—Christ's offer to forgive our sins and bring us to God through his sacrificial death. This covenant is new in extent—it goes beyond Israel and Judah to all the Gentile nations. It is new in application because it is written in our hearts and minds. It offers a new way to forgiveness, not through animal sacrifice, but through faith. Have you entered into this new covenant and begun walking in the better way?

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4. **READ Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 10:8; 6:12; Luke 6:36; Romans 15:7.** What does covenant keeping look like?

**Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Matthew 10:8 (NIV)** ... Freely you have received; freely give.

**Luke 6:36 (NIV)** Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

**Romans 15:7 (NIV)** Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you,

in order to bring praise to God.

## GETTING PERSONAL

5. There are three different approaches to marriage: casual, contractual, and covenantal. Which kind of approach to marriage did you experience while growing up?
6. What do you think causes couples to seek casual and contractual approaches to marriage, rather than covenantal?
7. What do you think causes people to seek casual and contractual approaches to God and church rather than covenantal?
8. How can we challenge each other to really live compelled by the Spirit's prompting to share God's good news for His glory?

## MAKING PROGRESS

9. What's your biggest takeaway from the entire *Relationship Goals* series?" What's the most covenant-keeping thing you can do for your relationships this week?

## RELATIONSHIP GOALS

### Week 4: Covenant Keeping

Sometimes I love to put on the Bible College professor hats (My dad was a missionary / preacher / Bible college professor). Today I get to do that a bit, as we take look at the whole Bible in one giant theme... its like a Jet tour... seeing the whole thing in 30 minutes. Sometimes big picture synthesis helps a lot.

God did not reveal himself in the abstract. He is a relational God who created us to be relational beings, and he reveals himself to us NOT in the abstract but in relational terms. Today we look at Covenant Keeping.

Covenant describes a particular kind of relationship, and it is always formally entered into because it is a particular kind of committed relationship.

A covenant is not casual, but a formal relationship. In our culture there are three different approaches to marriage: casual, contractual, and covenantal. God designed marriage to function within a covenantal model, one that he modeled for us.

In the history of humanity there are many kinds of covenants besides the marriage covenant and these are all formal commitments and usually entered into with ceremonies. These covenants all have the 3 basic elements: 1) formally identifying the parties involved, 2) identifying the terms of the covenant, and 3) identifying the promises or benefits of the covenant.

**The entire Bible** is one continuous story about God's covenants with us and how we live in a covenant relationship with God. The Old Testament is the writings that go with the Old Covenant. The New Testament are the writings that go with the New Covenant. The Old Testament anticipated the New Covenant. And the New Covenant fulfilled and superseded the Old Covenant, and yet we can only fully understand the New Covenant with the foundational background that the Old Covenant laid out in preparation for the New Covenant.

*Exodus 31:18 (NIV) When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the **covenant law**, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.*

These were the accepted terms (or family rules) of those who wished to live in Covenant with God.

## Covenant VIDEO

At the dedication of Solomon's Temple many years later, Solomon prayed...

*1 Kings 8:23 (NIV) ... "LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep **your covenant of love** with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.*

### I. You are **BLESSED** to be a **BLESSING**.

There was one very interesting covenant made to Abraham (and repeated to Isaac, and Jacob).

*Genesis 12:2-3 (NIV) "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**. {3} ...and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you**."*

### II. **IN** and **THROUGH** Jesus

*Genesis 22:18 (NIV) and through your **offspring** all nations on earth **will be blessed**, because you have obeyed me."*

*Galatians 3:16 (NIV) The promises were spoken to Abraham **and to his seed**. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning **one person, who is Christ**.*

And so the promise that through Abraham's seed the whole world would be blessed ultimately finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

In Isaiah, God declared that the future coming servant, the Messiah, would *be* the covenant for the people.

*Isaiah 42:1-3 (NIV) {1} "**Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen***

**one in whom I delight**; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. {2} ... {3} A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

**Isaiah 42:6 (NIV)** “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and **will make you to be a covenant** for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

**Luke 22:20 (NIV)** ...after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup **is the new covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus did something to remove our alienation from God. He accomplished it through the cross purifying us from our sin, and his resurrection giving us new life. By this he was able to make a peace treaty, the New Covenant, that reconciles our broken relationship with God. We now join in a oneness with God through Jesus. This new covenant is better than anything previously experienced.

### **A. Uniting with Jesus Is The New Covenant**

This New Covenant is a covenant of love defines who we are. Jesus brought us into a personal loving relationship of intimacy with God; we become the **children of God** and the **bride of Christ**, God’s Son. This is the New Covenant that the Old Testament anticipated. This New Covenant relationship is more than a religion; it is a loving personal relationship. This covenant unites us to Christ spiritually, and we receive His Life by His Spirit.

### **B. Loving like Jesus is Covenant Keeping**

He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. Jesus becomes our life, our source, our power, our model, our example. Keeping covenant means living like Jesus.

**Hosea 6:6 (NIV)** For I desire **mercy** [ *chesedh* ], not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

The concept of Covenant Keeping is summarized in this Hebrew Word *cHesed*. One who is in covenant is to be a covenant keeper.

*cHesed* is “keeping covenant”, sometimes translated as “kindness”, “Steadfast love”, “loving kindness”, “mercy”, “covenant loyalty”.

*cHesed* is all of these things, but you need to understand WHY it is all these things. In Covenant

- It is in covenant that we are blessed to be a blessing
- It is in covenant that we who are blessed have every reason to return the “Kindness”, “Steadfast love”, “Mercy” and “Covenant Loyalty” to God who has given all of this to us in covenant.
- *cHesed* is advancing the best interests of one’s covenant partner.
- Our covenant partner is Jesus who loved us when we were far from God, and he gives us his mission to love others like he loved, who are also far from God.

### **What Does Covenant Keeping Look Like:**

- Freely you have received, freely give (Matt 10:8)
- As you have been forgiven, forgive. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Forgive and you will be forgiven. (Matthew 6:12)
- Accept as you have been accepted. (Romans 15:7)
- Love because you have been loved. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Be kind and compassionate, because God was kind to you. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Be merciful because God was merciful to you (Luke 6:36)

Covenant Keeping affects EVERY relationship. Because God loved us, we can love our spouse. Because God loved us when we were alienated and far from him, covenant keeping means loving others even when they are alienated and far from him. Covenant keeping means we love even when someone is less than lovely, or lovable.

As God sent Jesus, Jesus now sends us. Let us be Christ Centered, Kingdom Living, Devil Kicking, Covenant Keeping! These are our relationship goals! Let’s be like Jesus.