

GOD PROMISED A NEW COVENANT

JEREMIAH 17; 31



KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 145:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Like God's people, we all have sinful hearts that do not obey God or love Him rightly. Through Jesus' death on the cross, God made a new covenant. Those who trust in Jesus have their sin forgiven and have the law written on their hearts.

STORY POINT: God promised His people a new covenant and forgiveness of sin forever.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The prophet Jeremiah was a priest sent to speak the word of the Lord to His people. Jeremiah taught plainly about sin and how our disobedient hearts cannot be trusted. Jeremiah predicted God’s judgment on Judah’s sins through the nation of Babylon. Yet, Jeremiah also declared how God would make a new covenant with His people.

The people of Judah faced the same problem we face today: sin. Their failure to abide by and uphold the law was a constant reminder that they were sinful and fell short of God’s standards. Jeremiah told the people that those who put their trust in mankind are cursed because men are sinful and imperfect. He also said that people cannot save themselves. But Jeremiah shared good news. He told the people that the person who trusts in the Lord will be strong and healthy, like a tree planted by water (Jeremiah 17:8).

Through Jeremiah, the Lord spoke of His everlasting love toward His people. He shared the promise of gathering His people, watching over them, and turning their mourning into joy. God promised His people a new covenant and eternal forgiveness of sin.

The old covenant required complete obedience to the law; yet no one can be justified by the law (Galatians 2:16). In His grace, God did what we cannot do. He promised a new covenant which would be accomplished by Him. Jesus is the fulfillment of the new covenant; He fulfilled the requirements of the law on our behalf. As Paul wrote, “For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering” (Romans 8:3).

Forgiveness that lasts forever only comes through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:11). As you prepare to teach on God’s promise of a new covenant, take time to thank Him for His forgiveness in your life. Remind boys and girls of how God changes believers’ hearts to hearts that love and obey Him.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "Can You Trust It?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- dry erase boards, 2
- dry erase markers, 2
- erasers, 2

Session Starter (Option 2)

- heart-shaped papers with sentences printed in size 1 or 2 font, 4
- magnifying glasses, 4



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- items or pictures of items that are considered outdated such as a floppy disk, a rotary phone, vintage can opener, bread box, VCR, etc.

Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- "Better Promises" activity page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "God Promised a New Covenant" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 15, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- world map

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "The Lord is Good (Psalm 145:9)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)
- dry erase board
- dry erase marker



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “ If you could make anything that you own brand new again, would you? What would you choose to make new? Maybe a toy, bike, or art supplies. ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Can You Trust It?” activity page.

SAY “ Today, we will learn how God promised to provide the way for people's hearts to be made new and for sin to be forgiven. ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: SINFUL HEARTS ERASED



Before the session, draw hearts on two dry erase boards, making sure the total number of hearts equals the total number of kids. Form kids into two equal teams. Challenge teams to send one kid at a time to write the word SIN in a heart. The team to have all kids fill every heart with SIN wins.

Then repeat the challenge, but this time direct teams to compete erasing each SIN. The team to erase all the SIN wins.

SAY “ We all have sinful hearts. Unfortunately, unlike our game, we cannot just erase our sin. There is nothing we can or cannot do to take our sin away. Thankfully, God has provided the way for sin to be erased forever. Today, we will learn how **GOD PROMISED HIS PEOPLE A NEW COVENANT AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN FOREVER.** ”

OPTION 2: DO YOU SEE AND UNDERSTAND?

Before the session, in size 1 or 2 font, print the sentences, *Our hearts are deceitful, and we cannot understand them. But God knows our hearts.* Print four copies. Cut the papers into heart-shaped pieces. Form kids into four groups and ask groups to read their sentences aloud. The font should be small enough that kids cannot read the sentences.

Then give each group a magnifying glass. Invite kids to use the magnifying glass to read their sentences. Discuss how the magnifying glass helped them see so they could begin to understand what was on the paper.

SAY “ Today, we will learn that our hearts cannot always be trusted because they are sinful. We don't always understand why we have certain desires or behave the way we do. But God always knows our hearts. He doesn't need a magnifying glass to be able to see and understand what is in our hearts. We'll learn that when we look to Jesus and trust in Him, God forgives our sin and gives us new hearts that want to follow Him. ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m excited you’re here. If you have a Bible with you, will you hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today’s Bible story has some good news! As we study from the book of Jeremiah, we will learn about a good promise God made and how that promise is for us today. [Invite kids to find Jeremiah in their Bible.]

As we hear our Bible story, we will learn that **GOD PROMISED HIS PEOPLE A NEW COVENANT AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN FOREVER.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] As we have seen, God’s people continued to sin and couldn’t take away their sin on their own. But God had a plan. Through a Messiah, Jesus, God was going to make the way for people to be forgiven and have hearts that desired to love and follow God. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ What is God like? [Allow responses.] **God is holy, good, and loving.** The Bible is a book about God, and throughout the Bible, we continually see how God is holy, good, and loving. He always does what is right and shows that He loves His creation.

Today, we will see how God’s promise to provide a new covenant displayed His holiness, goodness, and love. A holy God must punish sin, but through the new covenant, sin would be forgiven because Jesus would take the punishment for sin. God’s forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus shows His goodness and love. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ We’ve learned about some of the prophets God sent to Israel to warn them of their sin, yet the people did not listen. Eventually, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed, and the people were taken captive to Assyria. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was all that remained of God’s people. While Judah had some good kings who led the people to worship God, after the good kings died, the people returned to worshipping idols. God sent prophets to Judah to tell them to repent of their sin. Today, we will learn about another prophet, Jeremiah, who told God’s people to repent and also shared the hope of a new covenant. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Promised a New Covenant.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

GOD PROMISED A NEW COVENANT

“ Before Babylon came and attacked Judah, God sent a prophet named Jeremiah to speak His words to God’s people. Jeremiah said, “The sin of the people of Judah is like words carved into a stone—it can’t be simply wiped away.”

Jeremiah shared more of God’s words, saying, “The person who trusts in other people is cursed, because people are sinful and imperfect. People cannot save themselves. The person who trusts in the LORD, however, will be strong and healthy, like a tree planted by water.”

Through Jeremiah, God also said, “Our hearts are deceitful, and we cannot understand them. But God knows our hearts, and God is trustworthy. He gives each person what they deserve according to their character.”

Even though people have sinful, deceitful hearts, Jeremiah shared how God promised to make a new covenant with His people. Jeremiah said, “Look, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with my people. It will be different from the old covenant I made with them when I freed them from Egypt. They broke that covenant, but they will not be able to break this one. I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. All my people will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive them and never remember their sin.”

Christ Connection: Like God’s people, we all have sinful hearts that do not obey God or love Him rightly. Through Jesus’ death on the cross, God made a new covenant. Those who trust in Jesus have their sin forgiven and have the law written on their hearts. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Review it: Review the old covenant God made with His people at Mount Sinai. Tell kids that under the old covenant God’s people were commanded to obey all of God’s laws. Share how the old covenant displayed guilt because no one could perfectly obey God’s laws.

Recite it: Invite kids to recite Jeremiah 31:34 with you.



2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Jeremiah was a prophet to Judah during the reign of the last five kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Last week, we learned that Josiah was a good king who destroyed idols and led people to worship God. Yet, the Bible tells us that despite Josiah's godly leadership, God's people would still be punished for their sin (2 Kings 23:26-27). Jeremiah prophesied about this punishment, telling the people of Judah that God would send the nation of Babylon to destroy Judah and take the people captive (Jeremiah 25:8-9).

The people could not remove their sin or change their sinful hearts. Jeremiah said their sin was like words carved into stone. What did God say was wrong with the people's hearts? Look at Jeremiah 17:9. [Ask a volunteer to read Jeremiah 17:9 aloud.] God spoke through Jeremiah and said the people's hearts were deceitful. He said people cannot understand their own hearts because their hearts can't always be trusted. Our hearts lead us away from God because they are sinful.

But God gave the people hope. What did God promise His people, despite their sin? Look at Jeremiah 31:31,34. [Ask a volunteer to read Jeremiah 31:31,34 aloud.] **GOD PROMISED HIS PEOPLE A NEW COVENANT AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN FOREVER.** The old covenant required people to obey all of God's laws and follow it perfectly! But no one can be perfect because all people are sinful. However, the new covenant would be accomplished by God. By God's grace He would forgive their sin. He would give them new hearts that desire to obey Him.

Who came to earth to fulfill the new covenant? [Allow responses.] Jesus, God's sinless Son, came to earth, died on the cross for sin, and rose again. Jesus' death paid the price we deserve for our sin. Through Jesus' death on the cross, God made a new covenant. Those who trust in Jesus have their sin forgiven and have the law written on their hearts. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Like the people of Judah, we have sinful, deceitful hearts. We can never remove our sin. But by faith in Jesus, we can be forgiven of our sin. God changes believers' hearts to want to love Him and obey His commands. Those who trust in Jesus will live with God forever. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 15, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can God be in all believers' hearts at the same time?
2. How can Christians show others that Jesus has changed their heart?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Point to the country of Libya on a world map as you tell kids about a man named Youcef who lives in Libya. Share how Youcef became a Christian after a friend gave him a copy of the New Testament to read.

SAY “ While Youcef was reading the New Testament, he learned about Simon of Cyrene and how he carried Jesus' cross on the way to Golgotha. As Youcef began to learn more about Simon of Cyrene, he found out that Simon was from the city of Cyrene in Libya.

Youcef wrote a book about his research. Since many people of North Africa are oral learners, he hopes to make his book into a movie so more people in North Africa will hear the gospel message. He hopes more people will believe the truths of the Bible and trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. ”

Pray for Youcef as he continues to share the hope of the gospel with the people of North Africa. Pray for the people of North Africa and that they would trust in Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Before the session, on a dry erase board, write the words of the key passage in random order all over the board. Then add in words that are not found in the key passage. Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 145:9 together.

SAY “ Our key passage reminds us that God is good and merciful. We don't deserve the forgiveness given to us through the new covenant, but in His mercy and goodness, He did. ”

Invite a volunteer to come to the dry erase board, find, and circle the first word of the key passage. Repeat for the remaining words. Play again as time allows, adding in new words in each time.

Lead kids to sing “The Lord is Good (Psalm 145:9).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ Dear God, thank You for Your goodness and grace. Thank You for providing the only way to be saved from sin and death. Help us trust You and live for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 31. Tell kids that Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet" because he was so sad over Judah's sin and the coming judgment of God. Tell kids that the book of Jeremiah does give hope: God's love is forever and a new covenant would be made.

Remind kids that Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah. Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read Jeremiah 31:33 or ask kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ God promised that, through the new covenant, His words would be written on His people's hearts. This doesn't mean that those who trust in Jesus have God's words literally written on their hearts. Rather, it means that Christ followers love God's commands and obey them. Following God's commands doesn't save people, but it does show that believers have been transformed by God's saving grace. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Why do Christians desire to obey God's commands? ”

Share how believers have changed hearts and now recognize God's love for them through Jesus. They rightly see how God's commands are for their good and how following God's commands shows they love God. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 119:127-128.)

SAY “ Have you ever heard the saying ‘trust your heart?’ Is this good advice? What does the Bible say about trusting our heart? ”

Remind kids that our hearts are deceitful, and we can't always trust them. Our hearts sometimes lead us to think that what we want or desire is good when it really isn't. Share how God does change our hearts to want to obey Him, but we must ultimately rely upon the Word of God and the Holy Spirit for true understanding. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Mark 7:21-22.)

SAY “ Why is the new covenant good news? ”

Discuss how under the new covenant people can find forgiveness of sins. Share how under the old covenant, God required complete obedience to every one of His laws. The bad news is that we can never obey God perfectly. We are sinners who fall short of His perfect standards. However, under the new covenant, Jesus perfectly obeyed the law for us. Now, when we trust in Him, we not only find forgiveness of our sin, but we are counted as if we lived perfectly like Jesus. Through faith in Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Christians obey the law to love God and people, but not as a way to be saved. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Gal. 3:23-24.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: OLD VS. NEW

Bring in items or pictures of items that are considered outdated such as a floppy disk, a rotary phone, vintage can opener, bread box, VCR, etc. Display the items or pictures. Ask kids if they know what each item is or what it was made to do. Then discuss examples of items that have replaced them.

SAY “ Many of these items were replaced because new and better items came along. The old covenant required perfect obedience, which was impossible. We learned how God promised a new and better covenant. When Jesus came, He fulfilled the new covenant by dying on the cross for our sin. The new covenant has better promises: forgiveness of sin forever and new life in Jesus. ”

OPTION 2: WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS



Provide each kid with a lump of play dough or modeling clay. Direct kids to shape the play dough into a heart. Then using the eraser end of a pencil, invite kids to write a word on the heart from the Bible story such as new or Jeremiah or forgive. Consider providing kids with stamps for clay or various items to make different imprints. Allow kids to reshape their play dough and create various imprints.

SAY “ God knows our hearts. Even though people have sinful hearts, Jeremiah shared how God promised to make a new covenant with His people. Jeremiah said that in the new covenant, God would put His teaching on people's hearts. Before Jesus brought the new covenant, the people knew God's laws but their hearts had not been made new. But now, those who trust in Jesus are given new hearts that have the power to obey God rightly. Believers don't just know God's laws but have hearts that want to love and obey God. ”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, thanking God for how He fulfilled the new covenant through Jesus. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Better Promises” on the activity page.