

GOD'S
UNFAILING
PROMISES

A LIFEGATE WOMEN STUDY

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UNFAILING
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Ladies, we are so glad you picked up this study!

We'll spend the next six weeks diving deep into the Promises of God with three weekly devotionals, reflection questions, and challenges for you to apply what you've learned. Use these topics to facilitate conversation within your Lifegroup and don't be afraid to share testimonies of God's promises in your own life.

xoxo

Lifegate Women Leaders

Day 1: Our Firm Foundation

As we begin this study, I want to take a few moments to share how I believe spending six weeks with God's promises will change your life.

Admittedly in my past, the promises have felt like an ancient set of stories that I vaguely remembered from Sunday School. When I said "yes" to Jesus, I quickly focused on other aspects of my faith like getting into community, recognizing sin patterns, learning to pray, and realizing God's love for me through the death of Jesus. I grew a lot, stepped into my new identity, and experienced His transforming work. It was all I've ever dreamed of... Until the hard times came. And then they came again, and again, and again. I thought to myself, *Lord, I know you. Why am I still an emotional wreck when things don't go my way? Why do I burn out in fear? Why do I rush to fix it myself? **I think I trust you, but I don't feel the joy and peace of fully leaning into you, believing it's taken care of.***

At times, I feel the shallowness of my faith. Like a rickety sailboat in the middle of a raging sea. I'm aware that my sails aren't strong yet, I hardly know how to operate them, and I'm terrified I'll sink at any moment. **Although I'm already in the boat and in relationship with God, I know He is calling me deeper, to be strengthened in Him.** I have to believe that He is taking me somewhere. He has more to say, more to work through, and more to reveal in my life. And it's not that I should feel shameful that I'm in the process of growth and maturing in God – we all are! But we were created to co-labor alongside Him, accepting his invitation to know him more fully.

So when life happens, how does my boat remain upright in the raging sea? How do I be like David in Psalm 27:13-14 when He says, *I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord?*

God's unfailing promises are like strong, steady sails in our boat. When we engage with them and trust God's sovereign plan and timing, his word will hold true in the midst of life's greatest storms.

Knowing God's promises changes us

1. The promises transform our understanding of God
 - His character and kindness
 - His power and authority
 - His plan and purposes
2. The promises transform our perspective through peace, steadiness, and joy

In this six-week study, we will explore five key covenants in the Bible between God and his people. We'll learn how God, in his kindness, faithfulness, and mercy – intersected the brokenness of mankind to reveal his plans, purposes, and tireless love for us. These contractual agreements are based entirely on His goodness, not our own doing.

Day 2: The Giver

God's promises are not just stories for a time long ago; they're incredible gifts to us today. Spanning the entire Bible, they are moments where God entered history and showed himself to mankind. Holy, matchless, and divine, God intersects time to show humans what He is accomplishing on earth and invites them into the story of how He will unfold it with them and for them. How amazing is it that our God would care to clue us in!

But before we start down a path of, "*What IS God going to DO for me?*", we have to see the heart of the Giver of the promise. God's promises to us aren't a quick guarantee of an earthly life of happiness, security, comfort, clarity, and fulfilled dreams. His promises are a guarantee of **who He is** and the intimate relationship He pursues with us as his children. They're a testimony of **his** character and **his** loving heart towards his people, and they are entirely dependent on God's faithfulness alone.

As we study these covenants, we will become more familiar with who God is, how deeply He cares for us, and the reputation that He has been establishing all throughout history. We will more easily recognize the Father's voice, learn to trust his timing and greater plan, and engage with him as He pursues us, even in the midst of life's greatest challenges.

Whether you've been waiting on a promise for years, or you've never known what God says about you, let's soften our hearts together and make a promise of our own for these next five weeks. Let's invite God to move and speak into our lives again. Rather than passively waiting to see what He will do, let's choose to lean in again, bask in the love of the Giver, and trust that He is who He says He is.

Reflection Questions

1. Read Exodus 34:6. How have you seen these characteristics of God in your life?
2. What is one area you've felt the disappointment of a promise not yet fulfilled? What is one area you've seen God come through in an unexpected way?
3. Read Isaiah 30:18 (try the NLT, NIV and AMP!) What does this verse tell you about God? What does this verse tell you about waiting?

"Covenants are the backbone of the Bible. God preserved the world through Noah, initiated redemption through Abraham, formed a special people through Israel, promised a shepherd-king through David, and then fulfilled all of his covenantal promises through Jesus. With each covenant, God's promises and plans to save the world through the seed of the woman become clearer and clearer until we finally see that redemption can only come through King Jesus."

THE BIBLE PROJECT

Day 3: Living From the Promises

Trusting God and anchoring ourselves in His promises transforms not only how we see Him, but also the perspective in which we see the world around us.

In the last couple years, my working life took a turn I wasn't expecting. Things that once were life-giving started to feel like a dead end and I saw God closing the door. I had left jobs before when I sensed He was calling me to a transition. But this time it felt personal. His nudges started in my mind as I asked him about my life, then at night in vivid dreams, then prophetic words from my Lifegroup. As I resisted and gripped my career even tighter, I could feel the roots of idolatry and misplaced identify beginning to rot in my heart. I was struggling, confused, and scared, not sure how I would define myself without the job I poured myself into for years. It felt like I was losing everything that helped me define my purpose. But over months of praying, He assured me this was an invitation to trust.

When I finally left my job completely, I begged for the new plan. *What should I do now, Lord? This doesn't look like flourishing! When will it all make sense? Did I just lose everything I worked so hard for? I feel purposeless. I feel like a failure.* Ready to run from the pain, I wanted a new anchor to give me security. I wanted clarity and to see the full picture.

But in His kindness, God presented me with a choice. Will I live from my own conclusions and feelings, or will I fix my eyes on his unfailing promises to me?

I felt abandoned, but Joshua 1:5 and 9 affirms His constant presence and care for us.

While he does make a promise that *in this life, we WILL have trouble* (John 16:33), He also promises us Himself – the ultimate Comforter (2 Cor 1:3-4). We read in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that we aren't intended to have a full understanding of what he's doing and why. Sometimes He reveals himself, but often times He leaves us with the mysterious reality that He does everything for his glory and for our good (Romans 11:26, 8:28). With this in mind, we know our evaluation of our circumstances will never be complete. We need Him.

When our circumstances spiral in unexpected ways, nothing medicates our confusion and suffering like God. While the pain of loss is real and it can't be buried or overlooked, the hope we find in our unshakable God is just as tangible. **When we spend time in his word and meditate on his promises to us, we can be encouraged despite life's greatest hardships.**

Day I: A Reset Needed

Read: Genesis 8:15-9:17

I think it is easy as a human to see when something isn't working or going as planned, to have a bit of a "burn it all down" mindset. We have a hard time finding the good to keep and just want to toss it all out and start over. When we read the story of Noah, it would seem as if that is what God was doing. That God says "these humans have messed it all up and I am wiping them out and starting fresh". If God was really wiping them all out though, wouldn't He wipe them ALL out?

Enter Noah. Noah was born in a time when people quit caring about God and sin filled the land. The name Noah however, means rest. Noah was born with the promise of rest and relief coming (Gen 5:29). The book of Genesis tells us "... Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God." Gen. 6:9.

Now most of us know how the rest of the story goes: God commands Noah to build an ark, take his family and the animals inside while the rest of the world is destroyed and the wickedness wiped out. That doesn't sound much like rest or relief to me.

Looking back a bit we can see in Genesis 5 that Noah comes from the family line of Adam. When God sent Adam and Eve away from the Garden of Eden, He spoke saying "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel"(vs 3:15). If you do any digging into that scripture, we can learn that it is pointing us to the coming of Jesus or some say to the promise of Jesus.

I love the way this is communicated in my kids' bible The Jesus Storybook Bible: Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you!" (Genesis 3). God was still keeping his promise by keeping Noah, a descendant of Adam, alive because through that family would also come Jesus.

When they exit the ark, God makes a covenant with Noah that He will never destroy the world again. God reestablishes the rule of man over the animals and all living things on the earth. He invites them to be fruitful and multiply. He then gives the symbol of a rainbow and says "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations" (Gen 9:17). He gives no stipulations to this covenant because his word is his word.

God didn't wipe them all out. He wiped the wickedness all out. He brought down a harsh judgment, to say the least, but with that, He brought relief from the wickedness. He knew down the line someone was coming that would change the course of everything and the covenant with Noah is a step in that direction toward fulfillment.

Noah's life revealed the rest and relief from his birth-name. His obedience to God and willingness to listen to Him when no one else would set us all up to find rest and reset in God. *(Continued)*

"True faith is never found alone; it is always accompanied by expectation. The man who believes the promises of God expects to see them fulfilled. Where there is no expectation, there is no faith."

A.W. TOZER

Day 2: His Mercy For Us

Read: Genesis 9:12-17

I like rules. I am a rule follower often to a fault. When someone breaks a rule, I want a fair and swift judgment. But if I break a rule, well, that is different. I can give you all the reasons why I am justified and don't deserve the "fair" judgment I would wish on others. Honestly, if I was Noah and admitted to the humanity of my character, I would be really proud that I walked with God when I did.

And just like that, I can already see the ugly coming out of my heart! My need for His mercy in my life because I bet in that moment, if I was Noah, God would say to me "Change of plans! You're off the ark!". And He would be right for it. But when I really sit with this story of Noah, I can't wrap my head around the deep devastation He would feel in his heart. Can you imagine? I imagine Noah maybe felt torn between begging God to let a list of others live or asking God to just take him out in the flood also.

As I read this passage, I think about how God knew we would mess up again. I think back in my mind how it would have been easier if He'd just wiped us all out. That was never His plan though.

How could we ever show anyone what the gift of mercy looks like if He never showed it to us first? We love a comeback story. We love the story of second chances and I think sometimes it's so easy for us to forget that we get to be a part of the second chance and third chance and maybe even the fourth chance.

I love how verse 16 says "The bow will be in the clouds and I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant between God and all the living creatures on earth." In God's kindness and mercy, He never wants us to forget what He's done or what He's promised to us. He paints it right across the sky after a storm. It's almost like He is asking us if we still remember. Will we remember what He's done and what He's promised us? It's easy in the storms to lose sight of Him or feel like He has left us, but if we hold on and trust, His mercy is so evident... painted right across the sky for you to see.

Reflection Questions

1. Is your natural response often towards the rules side of life or the mercy side of life?
2. What is a situation where you have seen God's mercy in your life, a personal comeback story?
3. What is a situation where you have been given an opportunity to show mercy to someone else? Did you show mercy or, in your humanness, not?

Day 3: Let's Get To Work

Read: Genesis 8:15-9:11

What did it feel like to walk off of that ark after so long and be on land? What did the earth look like? Did they still have that rocking feeling while they slept like you get after a day on a boat? Life as they had known it was long gone and so was everything with it.

When reading “Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out all the living creatures that are with you.... be fruitful and multiply” I try to picture what that really looks like. In my mind, I picture a movie scene, the sun shining, lush green grass, and almost like a Jurassic Park scene. But was it really like that? Do we think the earth was full and lush after a devastating flood? Because on the news, floods and recovery don't look like that. It looks like hard work to clean up after devastation.

God welcomes Noah and his family off the ark with a promise. He reestablishes order with Noah. He lays out the plan as He had done with Adam (Gen 1:28) and Noah gets to work.

So what does that mean for us today?

For so many of us, these last few years sure have felt like a flood. But maybe the Lord is asking you to come out of your boat now so He can remind you of the promise He has given you. It may not look all pretty and fancy outside of the boat. It may look full of loss and devastation but the promise is still true.

The covenant God made with Noah is a promise of hope, even when the world around him maybe didn't look hopeful.

Remember we are messy people, with messy lives but God knew that and still knows that and this ancient promise still remains true. We may have some work to do on our ends to clean up the devastation but we don't have to do it alone and we don't have to do it without hope.

Reflection Questions

1. Where have you seen moments of hope in the midst of devastation in your life?
2. Do you think you have any place in your life right now that the Lord needs to reestablish his order? Maybe things have gotten a bit off track and you are ready for him to set it right again.
3. What kind of work is the Lord inviting you to partner with him during this season of life for you? Does it look like a rough road ahead? Smooth sailing? A boat full of loud, smelly animals?

*I establish My covenant with you;
and all flesh shall never again be
cut off by the water of the flood,
neither shall there again be a flood
to destroy the earth.*

GENESIS 9:11

Day I: Outside Our Comfort Zone

“You are going to share your story.”

The words felt audible, an internal declaration ringing through my body from an external source. Tears welled. My heart pounded. My “story,” i.e. the past that I would do anything to hide, flashed through my mind. I had been running away, for almost a decade, from facing the choices I had made early in life. I thought running meant freedom when really it held me captive. The familiarity of shame coupled with the debilitating idea of dealing with the past made freedom feel like a wall too high & daunting to scale. I wasn’t just ill-equipped, but I wasn’t strong enough to even try. I had made my home IN the shame, relinquishing any attempt to rise above or be restored, because honestly, it was easier.

My heart screamed, “You’ve got the wrong person!” as the overflow of emotion exited through my eyes.

God’s promise to me at that moment: “If you leave the place where you are comfortable behind, I will lead you to places you never knew possible.”

I looked to my left and right, waiting for God to illuminate the person He was really talking to, and somehow in the midst of my anxiousness, the tiniest seed of hope was simultaneously planted. A hope that was contradictory to my circumstances. A hope that required me to do hard things and open dark closets.

Hiding is easier. Blending in and looking the part is safer. God’s call and promise in this moment required me to step away from denial, from comfort, from all the disillusioned places of peace.

God’s promises have often been contrary to the comfortable. They require the kind of faith I wasn’t sure I had, and the kind of strength I knew I didn’t. But He says, trust in me.

Read: Genesis 12:1-3

We need to understand a little bit about Jewish culture so we don’t miss the enormity of God’s ask in this passage. Abram wasn’t some older guy just hanging out in his mom’s basement wasting away. Families in antiquity stayed together and supported the call of the father, the patriarch of the family. Abram had a comfortable life. He had provision, protection, and community, which was incredibly significant to these people. To up and leave your father and go out on your own wasn’t a right of passage, it was a great insult to your father and would ensure your loss of status, inheritance, and any other perks that came from being “in the family.”

But God called and Abram obeyed. He left the life of comfort and ease for the promise of the life God offered.

Often, we resign ourselves to stay in places that are familiar, forgetting that God’s promises challenge us to step into the uncertain and push past our comfort zones.

Our doubts rise to the surface. Insecurities reign as we entertain the idea of taking God at His word.

Has God given you a promise that causes a little bit of panic? Maybe He’s promised a deeper love that would require you to leave an unhealthy relationship. Maybe He’s called you higher in the workplace by asking you to step out and pitch your idea to your boss. Perhaps He’s letting you know there is freedom on the other side of your pain and regret if you’d just allow people to help. His call may be increasing your ministry if you would just walk through forgiveness for that person you still hold offense against.

God’s promise to Abram didn’t come with an outline. God didn’t depict each twist and turn, or say that Abram wouldn’t face challenges. And yet, Abram, so convinced of who God was, leaned into his faith and obeyed. He stepped out of the comfortable, the normal, the familiar, and into a life full of the unknown and unexpected. In faith, He leaned into God’s promise.

Reflection Questions

1. Read Hebrews 11:8-12— What was Abraham credited with? Why is that significant?
2. Do you find yourself falling into the trap of comfortability and familiarity even when it keeps you away from God’s promises?
3. What fear keeps you from walking in faith with God in this area?

Challenge

Spend time journaling today about times you’ve been afraid to move forward into a promise because it would take you out of your comfort zone. Be honest with your fears and insecurities, and ask Holy Spirit to reveal truths that can help you take a step toward God’s call.

Day 2: Power in the Pause

Early into my speaking/teaching call, I was asked to teach on a particular topic at a women's event. I did not grow up in the church, I had very little biblical knowledge, and much of what I did know was mostly from Veggie Tales episodes. But I was eager to step into the next "big thing" God had for me. Though I don't recall if I prayed or felt that He directed me toward this particular teaching, I knew what He had promised, so this must be the right path...

It was awful. Every word I spoke fell to the floor, lifeless. If I could have run off that platform, I would have.

God gave me the promise, but I left Him in the dust as I tried to orchestrate the way it would come to fruition.

Abram, as faith-filled as He was, did the same.

Read: Genesis 15:1-5

We see two statements made by Abram in this paragraph separated by the words, "And Abram said." In Hebraic writing, if the author has separated two statements in a paragraph with another "and He said," this means the first request has gone unanswered. Go back and note the "And Abram said," now.

God didn't answer Abram's first question, which then prompted Abram to ask again, a little more direct and a little more curt. (Note, we don't know for sure how much time passed in-between the first and second inquiry.)

Why is this important?

Perhaps God didn't want Abram to know how He would bless him because He understood the human condition of wanting to see it come to pass, instead of letting God work. Perhaps the "how" was something Abram needed to continue to trust in faith. But Abram is resolute in his asking, so God relents and reveals a little more.

Day 3: Pitching Your Tent

I couldn't have known how it all would unfold, but there, on a Sunday morning, I shared my story with our church. It was terrifying and exhilarating, and I am sure my voice quivered as I spoke. But there I was, walking out the promise. I tried not to have expectations, but I thought maybe it would resonate with someone, probably another woman who had experienced something similar.

I wasn't prepared for my father-in-law to approach me, tears in his eyes. I was at a complete loss for words when He said, "Thank you for sharing. You'll never know what that meant to me."

I knew God's promise meant I would have to get uncomfortable, do hard things, and go places I didn't ever think I could go, in order to finally become free. I didn't know that His plan was to set others free through me.

Read: Genesis 12:1-3

Go back and highlight these parts of the passage: "you will be a blessing", "and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you."

The promises God gives us are for bigger things than just ourselves. When we partner with God, He uses our obedience in others' lives and in ways we never knew possible. We just need the faith to say yes.

But saying yes and living the promise God has for us isn't a one and done. **We often think the promise is the destination, when in reality the promise is the journey of God's work through us to bless those who come in contact with us.** And just like He asked his people, He prompts us not to settle down when we think we've "arrived."

From there He went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. So He built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. -Genesis 12:8

To walk in God's promises may mean being a little more flexible, a little more movable, a little more ready to act. The sturdy structures of the journey will be the places of testimony and faithfulness as we see God time and time again move through our willingness to partner with Him in this world.

The only thing that can stop God's purposes of flowing through us is when we decide we are settling where we are at.

Day I: Your View of God is Vital

GOD & Israel. Wow. Where do we even begin?! Let's break it down a bit.

Who is God?

Our understanding of who God is will influence how we interpret everything we read; therefore it is vital to identify and discard any preconceived prejudices we may have against God.

Many of us think of God as angry and vindictive, or we see him as a demanding perfectionist peering over his glasses with a red pen and a pad of paper.

To understand who God is, let's take a moment to go all the way back to the very beginning before there was an Israel. Why did God even create Adam and Eve in the first place? Is Earth some cosmic experiment gone wrong? Sometimes it feels that way, but God created humankind to enjoy friendship. Relationships that are forced aren't authentic, so God gives humanity the freedom to choose Him or reject Him. Rejecting God has been the cause of all the messes and heartache ever since.

The entire narrative of the Bible consists of cycles of God's loving guidance followed by human disobedience, resulting in painful consequences. Then God shows compassion and in His mercy, forgives. The fact that God never completely annihilates people but continually shows mercy is the real story.

So, to answer our first question, God is not human but made humans with whom to share his Creation and friendship. He is perfection. He is powerful and spectacular. He is also incredibly patient, generous, kind, long-suffering, gracious, good, beautiful, and I could go on and on. There are not enough descriptive words to express God's amazingness. This must be why He told Moses "I Am Who I Am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you."

That's just a tiny thumbnail sketch of Who God is!

Who are the Israelites?

Around 450 years after Creation, the Israelites (descendants from Adam and Eve) are slaves in Egypt. They're suffering terribly and God has a plan to rescue them from oppression. (He's going to use someone whom the Israelites most likely resent, to accomplish this monumental feat!)

The story we read in Exodus describes spectacular events! God not only frees the Israelites from being owned and controlled and mistreated by the Egyptians, but has a surprise up His sleeve! He's going to bless them with the best property and food they've ever seen. He wants to take them to a new place, locationally and spiritually. Remember, the Israelites haven't experientially known the God of their forefathers and now is their opportunity! They're familiar with all the 'gods' of Egypt which influences their wrong concept of Him and thus negatively affects their response to Him. (*Continued*)

*"What comes into our minds when
we think about God is the most
important thing about us."*

A.W. TOZER

Day 2: Impatient Non-waiting

Another part of the God & Israelites story is this: they were not easy people to lead. Their journey in the desert included a lot of complaining! These people had seen God's power and might while He was contending for them with Pharaoh. They had been rescued but expressed their gratitude by saying that they'd be better off back in Egypt! They didn't trust God!

Maybe they didn't perceive what God was doing as a blessing. Maybe they were out of sorts, tired, confused. They were used to the captivity routine, as bad as it was. Whatever the reasons, they perceived themselves to be worse off.

So ... maybe the Israelites aren't that different from me, or you. (Ouch.)

These days we rarely go anywhere without knowing where we're going or why. We've even got maps on screens in our vehicles! And like the Israelites, we aren't very good at following other people's leadership. We all think we know best and we don't like waiting, for anything or anyone.

The Israelites got tired of waiting on God, so they made a false god, a golden calf. They turned their attention to something completely inferior while waiting on God Himself! We can make some really bad decisions when we're impatient. (Ex. 32)

"Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!" Romans 11:33

If only we lived with this mindset! Instead, we listen to needling doubts: "God doesn't even see you. He doesn't care about what you're going through...." If we don't fortify our thinking with the truth of Who God is, we are easy prey for the enemy of our souls. How do we fortify our minds? By reading the life-giving, peace-bringing word of God daily and talking to God throughout each day.

Lamentations 3:25, 26 tells us, "The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord."

The Israelites were not only comfortable in their captivity but were also quite comfortable complaining. For many people it's easier to stay in captivity because they feel justified in their complaints. Their former disappointments are their focus. Cynicism becomes a comfortable corner in which to camp. Trusting isn't comfortable because it costs us our control. *(Continued)*

*Whoever is wise, let him attend to
these things; let them consider the
steadfast love of the LORD.*

PSALM 107:43

Day 3: Whistle (Worship) While You Wait

Waiting to see God's promises fulfilled is not easy. Successful waiting is not a passive activity. It involves courage and stamina and a gaze that continually pulls itself up from the downward draw of discouragement.

Romans 8:25 tells us, "But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently." This implies trust. If we don't believe God is good we won't trust Him.

23 years ago I found out I had breast cancer. After surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation, I was left in a waiting game. I was told to have frequent checkups over the next 5 years to see if I was still cancer-free. Five years!

The following summer of 2000 while recovering, I began swimming to gain strength and health. One day as I was swimming laps, I sensed the Lord whisper to me, "I'll give you as many years as lengths of the pool you swim." I'd never experienced anything like that before! You'd better believe I counted as I swam! Stroke after stroke, I pondered how long I might want to live, certainly long enough to enjoy as much life as possible, but not too long to become a burden to those I love. I swam 92 lengths that day!

For cancer patients, 5 years is a significant milestone. If patients are still cancer-free at the 5-year mark, doctors consider them free and clear. For me, that date was November of 2004. The very next month I learned I had cancer again. This time it was a different and very aggressive cancer in the other breast. I was devastated and angry. God had given me a promise and now it looked as if He'd lied or changed His mind! How could I endure this again? What had I done to deserve this?! So many questions and doubts seared my soul.

Those were very dark, even horrific days for me, yet I can look back now and tell you that God saw me through. Look at me! I'm here! Still! It's been 23 years since my first cancer and 18 from my second and I am healthier and happier than I've ever been! God had given me a promise, yes, and it is still His promise, **but it is His to deliver in His way and in his time.**

The Israelites liked God's promises but didn't like His timing. Can you relate?! It's vitally important to look to God with trust in our hearts and not demands; with gratitude rather than a grudge.

The author of Romans wrote: "But regarding Israel, God said, 'All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.'" Romans 10:21 Sadly, today we're no different. God's heart toward us is full of love, compassion, and generosity, yet we are distrustful of Him and disobey to our own hurt.

My first cancer experience taught me the value of gratitude for big and small things, and I especially enjoy the little things. The second one taught me surrendered trust.

Reflection Questions

1. Is there a situation in your life where you feel God hasn't kept His promise? Talk to Him right now about it. Tell Him how you feel and tell Him you want to trust Him. Ask Him to help you trust Him better.
2. Now take a moment to recount the ways God has shown Himself trustworthy to you over the years.
 - Psalm 107:43 tells us we are wise if we take all He has done for us to heart and see in our history the faithful love of the Lord. Recounting the goodness of God strengthens our trust.

Challenge

Make a list of all the things God has done for you as well as things He provides regularly that you may even take for granted, like clean water, a warm apartment, a good friend, skin that can feel the warmth of sunshine or the smell of something cooking. These are all gifts from Him! Every breath is a gift! (Believe me!)

Now thank the Lord for each of those things and tell Him how good He is! Finally, ask Him to open your eyes to His loving kindness daily, then be looking to see!

Helpful Tip From Kris:

1. If you're able, take some time to read Psalm 107. I absolutely love this psalm! It is a remedy for despair! You could even write your own verse or two modeled after it. I have!
2. Read Romans 8 for a perspective on waiting.
3. Listen to any of all of these songs.
 - *While I Wait* by Gary LeVox
 - *While I Wait* by Lincoln Brewster
 - *While I'm Waiting* by John Waller

Take comfort knowing you are not alone while you wait.

Day I: Look Up, Be Still

Have you ever found yourself in a season of life where you feel lost in the middle of a sea, you can't seem to set your mind on anything besides the waves and wind around you? Well, take heart, you aren't the only person in this season of life - and you are too loved by your Father to stay there.

This week, we're going to look at David in the Old Testament and I pray that we can see that our God is a God of faithfulness and grace, abounding in love and joy over us, and He is a God who is close, sitting right there with us in our sailboats of life.

Read: 2 Samuel 7

Here we read the story of the Lord establishing His covenant with David, declaring extravagant and beautiful promises over his life. And immediately David's response is Praise. (Just a side note, don't ever underestimate the power of your praise, in the good and the hard times - sing your praise aloud and with boldness, then watch the Lord do His work.) Psalm 28:7 is a powerful verse to help posture yourself in a place of praise! It says, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him."

Now I don't know about you, but when the Lord gives me a promise, I would love for it to come with an instruction manual and I want to know the how, where, and when of every detail. But our Father knows better than to do that, because if I just got the "Big Idea" and went for it, then there is a loss of trust, dependence, and refining that happens in the waiting season. I would pursue the promise rather than the One who so graciously gave it.

God has to plow the ground, take out the weeds and thorns, water the soil and then He brings the fruit. Not us. And this is an area I believe the Lord is inviting us to grow in, to re-surrender at His feet again, laying down our schedules, timelines, our families, our goals and dreams, and looking at the faithfulness and WHO our God is. Whom He has proven Himself to be in our lives and then holding onto these things as we wait. Not waiting in vain but knowing that **He is faithful to complete what He started, and His ways and plans are always better than our own.** David lived a life of learning what it means to wait on the Lord and pursue His ways instead of our own.

As I read this story and see God's promises being spoken, I can't help but go back and remember times in my life when the Lord gave me promises. And some have come to fruit already in my life, some I am still waiting to see....

When I was 16 years old, I was at one of our Presbytery services we held that year and I received a prophetic word that I can honestly say shaped the trajectory of my life. God revealed Himself to me in such a powerful way and I knew I would never be the same. The words of speaking and teaching thousands of young people, leading generations in worship and in boldness, establishing deep roots in our House (Lifegate), hearing these things I just thought to myself, "Ok God, I'm down." But little did I know, the next 3 years were going to be some of the most challenging, refining, and testing years of my life. You see, I was gonna jump into the next years thinking that I had it all together and I could just keep staying where I was comfortable and in control, but God knew better.

Day 2: A Diamond in the Rough

Today as you read, I want to invite you to put your phone away for 10 minutes. Light a candle. Find a place that's still and peaceful (this looks different for everyone so give yourself grace if there's a dog barking or a toddler playing house by you). Maybe put on some quiet instrumental music or a worship song that helps you position yourself in a place of meeting with Jesus. Maybe the song "Refiner" by Maverick City Music or the song "Edges" by Lifegate Worship, these two are fitting for today. And take a deep breath.

God's got everything under control, you don't need to do anything alone.

I wanna take a look and see how we can relate to David as He was waiting for the promise to come all while still holding onto YHWH's faithfulness. In David's case, He had at least 15 years of waiting, fleeing for his life, anger, and grief - and yet God remained close. He stayed with David in those years, teaching him things that He needed to learn and grow in so that when He got to the time of the Promise to come - He was able to step into it with authority and clarity, knowing the very presence of the Lord is His strength, and that by himself He can do nothing worth while, but with the Lord - He can do everything that God called him to.

So this covenant that God established with David came with some pretty big promises in there, like the promises that God made to Abraham will come through David's lineage, God is going to raise up a Davidic descendant who will 'build a house for his throne and his kingdom will last forever through him', and God's ever-constant love will never depart from him. All things that will bring hope and freedom to God's people.

In Psalm 27:13-14 David writes as He is waiting on the Lord, "I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord: be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

If we are being honest, it's not always easy to 'remain confident in the Lord' without the temptation to speed up the waiting season by taking things into our own hands. But doing this defeats the whole purpose of waiting, because when we let go of our pride and control - we are refined and consumed by the fire of His love and perfect plans for us. Anything that's not of Him is removed as we allow Him to refine us to who He created us to be, so that we may do all He has called us to do.

Think of a diamond, at first it's simply a rock, but through the fire and being pressed and shaped, it then becomes a thing of beauty and high value. That's like the waiting season, the season of being refined and pressed - dying to yourself and things that may interfere with what the Lord wants to do. Things like pride, sin, fear of letting go, these can't come with us into the promises He has for us.

I pray that as we continue to follow Jesus, we can learn how to trust in the faithfulness of our God, His grace is endless, and His love is greater than our weakness.

*I remain confident of this: I will
see the goodness of the Lord in
the land of the living. Wait for
the Lord; be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.*

PSALM 27:13-14

Day 3: Daily Grace

So what does this mean for us? How does knowing that God is at work in the waiting bring hope to our lives?

Well I don't have a one size fits all answer for us, but what I can say is God has never let me down. He is the most patient and satisfying love that my heart has ever had, and He is faithful to keep the promises He has made to us.

I want us to remember that David made many mistakes in his life, and yet God used him to be a vessel for freedom to flow through to God's people. God loves to partner with us. He chose to be close to us and to have a relationship with those who love Him. Notice I didn't say, "...those who have it all together and never ever mess up or make a mistake." Nope, it's those who love Him. Those who are a beautiful mess, choosing to live in the place of God's daily grace for them as they grow in loving God and loving those around them.

Friend, take the pressure off your shoulders to do all things right all the time. God never asked you to be a perfectionist in life, He simply says for you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind. (Matthew 22:37). If God doesn't hold our failures and mistakes over our heads, then why do we? Be free!!! God actually uses our mistakes for good and the growth of His Kingdom! **You have a story that only you can tell, one of the faithfulness of God at work in your life and how He is constantly at work within us and through us for His glory!** So today I choose to rejoice in my brokenness, in my failure, in my waiting, in my storm, because I know that my God is faithful to keep His promises to me. He is with you, just look a little higher than those waves around you in the sailboat, they're only waves. Be strong and take heart, for His promises for you are beautiful and they are coming.

But until then, praise. Allow God to reveal Himself to you in new ways in the waiting. And let the Refiner's fire shape you into the gem that He has called you to be!

Reflection Questions

1. What does praising the Lord in the waiting look like for you?
2. What areas in your life do you put pressure on yourself to be perfect? Where do you think the pressure comes from? And how can you be free from it?
3. How can you share the story that God is writing in your life with those around you?

WEEK SIX

JESUS IS THE PROMISE

THIS, ladies, is the climax of the story. This is the good, no, GREAT part you have been building towards. This week we learn about the FULL-fillment of it all. This covenant came in the form of a person and was the end to end all promises. Here we learn that God makes good on His promises, to the point of giving over His perfect Son because of His deep Love and commitment to us...the ones, as you have learned, who are not the best at upholding our end of the deal. Let's learn how & why God did this and all we receive through Jesus.

Read Hebrews 7:22 & 9:15

WEEK SIX – JESUS IS THE PROMISE

Day 1: Who is Jesus?

If you are anything like me, you are reading your Bible and it's all going great till you get to long passages of genealogy. Ugh. So many names I can't pronounce. All the begats (IYKYK). Who even are these people and in the grand scheme of things, does it really matter? Plus, I can just skip over it and feel like I can accomplish way more reading in my time! Win!

Anyone else?

But then I asked the question, if someone took all the time to write these out on a scroll and smart people saw fit that it needed to be in here, then it is probably significant. And it is! Let's unpack it a bit together...but you need to start with reading it first. Yup. No cheating! Read every word, my friend.

Read: Matthew 1:1-17

Now, go back and as you read, highlight these names: Abraham, Jacob, David, Joseph & Mary

Here it is! Gold! These names and the names that follow connect our Messiah to God's whole plan. Matthew, right out the gate, is trying to prove the connection to every Old Testament prophecy and covenant. In fact, his whole book makes reference to Hebrew prophecies about sixty times, making the most direct connections than any other Gospel author.

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, Isaiah 7:14

God always had a plan. Even when His people would mess up or turn their backs, He still kept His promise. He is a covenant maker & a covenant keeper. This boring family tree passage proves that. Yes, it was a miracle Jesus was born from a virgin, but before the proof from the miracle, came the proof of a Man. The Son of Man, as Jesus referred to Himself.

I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel. Genesis 3:15

Even Daniel had a dream [Daniel 7:1-14] prophesying that "one like a son of man" was coming to rule and reign. Of course, many interpreted these prophecies as a man who would save the people of Israel socially and politically through an earthly high ruling position. But, as we see themed throughout Scripture, God uses the weak and lowly according to the world to bring forth His Kingdom earth. Jesus was just following suit.

Okay, so Matthew helps us make the connection that Jesus is the Son of Man who was promised to us through Abraham, Israel, and David. Maybe now you won't be so quick to skip genealogies anymore? *(Continued)*

But what about being fully God? This is important for many reasons, but, for our purposes, Jesus being fully God meant He knew no sin. He was completely holy. A man who was tempted and can relate to us [Hebrews 4:15] yet lived without sin. This is significant because God required a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins...Jesus was it.

And when we surrender, repent, and choose to follow Him, we get full access to all God has promised to us! We get eternity with Him, but also provision, protection, & guidance through His Holy Spirit this side of eternity. That is His Promise. And it comes through a person. Not through works, or some sort of weird earthly sacrifice or ceremony. The gift of God's promise to us is given freely through a person.

A relationship is our redemption and our reward.

The beauty of relationship is that it is built over time. We get to now spend our days getting to know Him, growing in our trust in Him, learning to love like Him. If we want to step into the fullness of this Promise, this Covenant, then we will have to make some effort on our part to build a relationship and get to know Jesus.

Understanding who God is through the person of Jesus helps us lean in and trust His promises even more. As humans, we tend to lean on the here and now, our current experiences or emotions. God is trying to teach us to lean on who He is & what He says He will do as promised in His Word fulfilled in Christ. To learn to lean that way, we have to spend time in the Bible, meditating on it. We have to spend time discussing it with others. And we have to spend time wrestling with how these Promises look & apply to our lives, even if we can't see them.

Starting this journey with the person of Jesus is always a great place to start. And now that we know He is the fulfillment of the Promise, it is time to learn what gifts we receive through our redemption and relationship with Him.

Reflection Questions

1. When you think of Jesus as fully human, does that change how you read the Gospels? What does knowing He was tempted like us make you think or feel? How does it change how you view Him and your relationship with Him?
2. When you remember Jesus is also fully God and lived a sinless life, how does that make you feel? How does that change how you relate to Him and understand Him? Can you reconcile both these truths?
3. If a relationship with Jesus is both our redemption and our reward, what does that mean and look like to you and for your daily life?

Day 2: Jesus is The Promise

It is usually kinda rude to evaluate a relationship by wondering what you will get out of it. But that is just the way God designed our relationship with Jesus. He is upfront about it and even wants us to fully step into and receive all we are entitled to because of this relationship. That alone is mind blowing.

There is a little stipulation...you have to die to yourself.

Death is the path to life. And the reason God can ask this of us is because He went first. Jesus took this path so we didn't have to. He was our Holy and pleasing sacrifice that fulfilled God's requirement and opened the door for us to receive the gifts of this Promise. Our choice of losing our lives immediately leads to life in Him this side of Heaven and then eternally with Jesus when we leave this earth. Death is the doorway to Life.

Eternal Life

I will give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me. John 10:28

Abundant Life

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10

Protected Life

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. John 10:29-30

Provided for Life

If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you—you of little faith? Matthew 6:30

Spirit-filled & led Life

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. John 14: 26

Day 3: Your Complete Access

“The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people.” -A.W. Tozer

“John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Acts 1:5

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Have you ever been given a gift from a friend who is just bursting at the seams to give it to you? They are beside themselves with excitement because they know this is the most perfect gift for you and know how it will enhance your life, maybe even change your life forever!

So you take the gift, say thank you, and put it down. You just don't open it. Maybe it isn't a priority for you at the time. Maybe you feel embarrassed or afraid. For whatever reason, you don't open it. Can you imagine what the gift giver would feel? Their excitement would deflate like a balloon.

Most of us would never do this. It is just polite to open the gift the giver has given you. But many times this is how we embrace or don't embrace the gift of the Spirit from Jesus for our lives.

After the gift of grace & salvation that is promised and fulfilled through Jesus, the promise and gift of the Holy Spirit for us and in us is the very next most important. It is how we can and will live a life that follows the ways of Jesus. In our own strength, we can sure give it our best effort, but we will always fall short. God knew this, and sent us the Holy Spirit to live in us and through us. That is where and from whom we draw our strength to follow Jesus and reveal Him to the world.

If this is new for you, I get it, it may be weird. Maybe you have had bad or strange experiences with people or churches who talk about and live by the Spirit. I don't know the background and history you are coming from, but I do know this...the Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He doesn't force Himself upon us. Yes, we when we surrender & receive Jesus, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit [Ephesians 1:13-14], but to follow Jesus, to walk in step with the Spirit of God, we have to be filled over and over again. Acts 1:8 reminds us that is it is when the Spirit comes upon us, when He fills us, is when we walk in His power and watch Him use us for the advancement of His Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity and carries the same characteristics as God & Jesus. Sure, there are times He will move in ways that we won't understand, but so did God & Jesus in the Bible & still today! The Holy Spirit will nudge and will move and will use you to the level of surrender and space you are willing to give Him. *(Continued)*

"The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people."

A.W. TOZER

So, as we close this study out, I want to give you the opportunity to invite the Holy Spirit to dwell and live in you. If you have never done this, you can start today and pray this prayer below. If you have done this many times before (remember, being filled with His Spirit is never a one and done), then receive a fresh infilling. Maybe you do this alone in your own space, or maybe you ask others in your Lifegroup to pray for you. Either way, don't hesitate. God has some great things for each of us, and we can unpack them through this gift of the Holy Spirit that was promised to us through Jesus. Would you unwrap that gift today?

Reflection Questions

1. What is your relationship status with the Holy Spirit? What has your history been like with Him? Has a bad experience clouded your understanding of who He really is?
2. Spend some time unpacking who this Promised Spirit is to you by reading through these verses and descriptors of Him in the Bible. What new insights did you learn from this time?
 - Comforter/Counselor/Helper [Isaiah 11:2, John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7]
 - Brings Conviction [John 16:7-11]
 - Intercessor [Romans 8:26]
 - Teacher [John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:13]
 - The Spirit is sent to live in us [Romans 8:9-11, Ephesians 2:21-22, 1 Corinthians 6:19]

Challenge

Take time to pray and be filled fresh with the Holy Spirit:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit to all who would ask. I believe He lives in me so that I might know you as Father and have eternal life. Now I am asking you to baptize me into the Holy Spirit and fill me to overflowing with your love, power, fruit, and gifts that others may also come to know you and trust you. You said to ask, and so, I ask for your Spirit's initial baptism. Thank you for baptizing me with the Spirit so that I know it. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

