



Community Group Discussion Guide

October 26, 2025

Jeremiah 17:5-8; 31:31-37 | God's Covenant Renewed

MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter Question: Has anyone said the words "I promise" this week? If you are comfortable sharing, what did you promise? Did you keep your promise?*

DISCUSS

Even if we don't say the words "I promise," we often commit to things easily. Sometimes we make commitments but can't follow through with what we've promised. That's not the case with God. Even in Israel's darkest time, His promise to them was of hope and faithfulness. His promises are always backed up by His power over all creation. His promises are forever.

⇒ *What is one of your favorite promises of God?*

If ever there were a preacher who lived out his message, it was Jeremiah. A man who was both priest and prophet, Jeremiah lived before and during the time of the Babylonian invasion of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. His writings clearly show the sinfulness of the people of Judah, their promised destruction, and God's unwavering commitment to them.

Jeremiah was called to speak for the Lord in the waning days of the kingdom of Judah. Most of his messages warned of the coming judgment, which he witnessed with his own eyes, but a few promised hope for a ruined people. For a time, Judah was looking to put their trust in Egypt to fight the Babylonians, but Jeremiah's warning was to put their trust in God alone. In Jeremiah 17:5-8, the prophet addressed Judah's misplaced trust. In Jeremiah 31:31-37, the prophet foretold the new covenant that God would make with His people to deal with their sin and ours once and for all.

⇒ *Who will be the source of God's new covenant?*

⇒ *How does it give you hope to know that glimpses of Jesus can be found throughout the entire Old Testament?*

1. Those who trust in humankind are cursed; those who trust in God are blessed.

Jeremiah 17:5-8: ⁵ Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ⁷ "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸ He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

The curse that Jeremiah pronounced calls to mind the blessings and curses Moses put before the people before his death, his final warnings before they entered the promised land (Deuteronomy 27-30). In Jeremiah's day, the people of Judah were experiencing the punishment associated with those curses, and Jeremiah called them to repent and to trust in the Lord.

⇒ *How does it help us understand God's words in Jeremiah when we consider His words through Moses in Deuteronomy 27-30?*

⇒ *Were God's people given ample warning about His judgment?*

Jeremiah compared two types of trees to emphasize the differences between trusting humanity and trusting God. The reference to trees in this passage communicates truth about life and death. It is not simply that those who hope in humankind will wither but that they are actively pursuing death because they are pursuing something other than the Lord of life. This is the reality of God's punishment for sin that applies to every human being: those who follow their own sinful desires are destined for death. Alternatively, those who hope in the Lord are guaranteed eternal life, which is the promise of the gospel.

⇒ *Have you personally considered that those follow their own sinful desires are destined for death but those who seek the Lord will receive everlasting life? If so, what decision did this lead you to?*

Jeremiah's used the trees as an object lesson to help the people understand God's declarations:

a. Those who put their trust in people are like a shrub in the desert: "Shrub in the desert" is called the "juniper in the Arabah" in other translations. The juniper is a prickly, bushy shrub that grows in the desert, often found in rocky fissures. It barely scrapes by in the arid landscape, producing only tiny, white flowers. Similarly, the people of Judah, leaning on their own power and foreign alliances, were parched and barely surviving.

Jeremiah had strong language for those who trust in people: they are cursed. Verse 6 illustrates what being cursed is like. The Arabah was a desert, and the juniper was a little shrub that grew in that parched land. Due to the lack of water, its growth was stunted and limited, and it possessed little value.

Jeremiah continued his illustration by saying that the person who trusts in people ends up isolating himself from others. In other words, trust in humanity backfires—it isolates people from God and from other people. The emphasis here isn't so much that God cursed the people, though that could be true as well, but that the people cursed themselves through their actions.

⇒ *Why does trusting in people rather than God stunt our spiritual growth?*

⇒ *How is self-reliance also a detriment to spiritual growth?*

b. Those who put their hope in God are like a lush, thriving tree planted near a water source: In contrast to the desert shrub, a tree planted by a vibrant spring of water can produce abundant fruit. The tree sends its roots deep into the ground and toward the flow of water. These roots of the tree likely are hidden from the human eye, but beneath the ground, a massive web of roots support, protect, and nourish the tree. Its health and fruit production do not depend on what's above ground but what's beneath. It can remain green and keep producing fruit even in lean times.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: Trust means to place "confidence" in someone. To have confidence in the Lord means that we believe He will do what He says and that He will keep His promises.*

⇒ *Do you believe God can be trusted? On what are you basing your trust?*

Verse 8 states that even when the heat comes, the tree planted by water does not fear but still

flourishes. This does not mean that those who trust in the Lord won't experience suffering, but when they do, they can be unafraid and unmoved despite their circumstances. No matter what, they can be constant and faithful because their trust is in the One who is always faithful.

Take Jeremiah, for example: Jeremiah struggled with his calling as a prophet but was faithful to the Lord, yet he is known as "the weeping prophet." He was not allowed to marry (Jeremiah 16:1-2), was beaten and put in stocks (Jeremiah 20:2), was falsely imprisoned (Jeremiah 37:15-16), dropped into a cistern (Jeremiah 38:6), and forced to travel to Egypt with disobedient people after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 42–43). Like Jeremiah, we will face trials in this life, but the one who is rooted in the Lord will be able to persevere when circumstances are difficult.

- ⇒ *Discuss the two categories of people presented in Jeremiah's message. Which category best describes you?*
- ⇒ *Can you describe a challenging circumstance in which you had to truly trust in God?*

Just like the tree planted by the water, we need deep roots grounded in the truth of God and nourished by His Spirit. We cannot manufacture fruit through the outward appearance of righteous living. If we do, in time, when the heat and the drought come, we will no longer find it worthwhile to continue the charade. It will become evident that we lack the roots that connect us to the Lord, and all our "godly living" will be shown to be a trust in ourselves only. It takes time to develop spiritually healthy roots. We need to train ourselves to pursue the Lord, to learn to love Him and depend on Him daily. As we do, when the difficult circumstances of life inevitably come, we can continue to produce fruit for the glory of God.

- ⇒ *How can you pursue the Lord now so that when trouble comes, you will be unwavering and strong amid trials?*
- ⇒ *How can God help you put down "deep roots?"*

2. The new covenant brings hope and forgiveness for God's people.

Jeremiah 31:31-32: ³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

People are presented with two options—trust in people or trust in God. But throughout history, people have chosen to trust people instead of our Creator. We've also seen in our own hearts that we never consistently trust in God, even when we know the opposite is a foolish choice with deadly consequences. We're doomed, or so it appears. That's what makes Jeremiah 31 so amazing.

In these verses, Jeremiah prophesied the glorious promise of a new covenant, which would be established not because God broke His end of the deal but because God's people could not keep up their end of the agreement. From the moment He brought them out of Egypt, God's people consistently broke faith and pursued idols instead of God. They had failed to obey, earned God's curses, and would soon be exiled from the land, but now God in His mercy was laying out new terms for their relationship. He had every right to give up on them, but He didn't.

In the face of human rebellion, God acted. He always has. This pattern goes back all the way to Genesis 3, when God moved toward Adam and Eve in their sin rather than simply giving them consequences for their rebellion and leaving the relationship forever. Throughout the Bible, God always moved toward His people—in the garden, in the wilderness, and again in the exile.

⇒ *Do you find hope and encouragement when you read of God's movement toward His people?*

God's movement toward His rebellious people took two forms in Jeremiah 31:

a. He moved toward them by declaring His Word through Jeremiah: The book of Jeremiah was written around six hundred years before the time of Jesus, so long before the fulfillment of Jeremiah's words in this passage, God wanted to assure the people that He was still working.

b. He foretold a new covenant with them: These covenant promises would not be ratified until Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, but God made a promise to do something new.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: God can perfectly show justice by judging sin and perfectly show grace by pursuing sinners.*

⇒ *How has God moved toward you?*

Jeremiah 31:33-34: ³³ *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* ³⁴ *And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

God making a covenant with His people was not new because God is a covenant-making God. God reminded the people that He had pledged His love and faithfulness to them at Sinai, and they promised to obey and follow Him. But the people kept breaking the covenant. Even though God had led the Israelites out of slavery and even though He had chosen them to be His special possession, they broke their promises to God, over and over again. Even in the time of the kings and prophets, they did not trust and worship Him alone.

The phrase "those days" in verse 33 likely referred to the coming exile, the suffering that the people would experience in real time. After this time of great trial and suffering, the Lord promised to make His new covenant. This is not some vague word about what might happen in the future. It is a formal declaration that comes from the Lord God Himself.

⇒ *What are some other declarations that God has made?*

Previously, God's laws were written on stone tablets and on stone markers in the land, but in this new covenant, God's law would be written on the hearts of those who belong to Him. This demonstrates a shift from the law being an external commitment that the people broke regularly to an internal commitment that showed a transformation of the heart.

God would do something that placed His law in the hearts of His people so that they would not merely have to obey God but they would want to. Simply put, God would change their hearts. People would not have to instruct and urge others to conform to God's standard, since the law would then be on their hearts and they would desire to honor God's law. This work was not going to happen

because one generation would come that was sinless and perfect, but God Himself would forgive their sins and change their hearts.

⇒ *How does the state of our heart impact our obedience to the Lord?*

Jeremiah also declared that one day all God's people will "know the LORD." This kind of knowing refers to intimacy and closeness. This does not mean we no longer need to read and study the Word but that each believer will experience forgiveness and salvation. This "knowing" will be for all the people, "from the least to the greatest of them," despite their age, social class, or ethnicity.

The new covenant ultimately displays God's forgiveness through Jesus. The old covenant offered forgiveness through sacrifices, but the new covenant provides forgiveness through one ultimate sacrifice—Jesus's blood (Luke 22:20). Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death for sinners is the perfect display of God's willing forgiveness for our sins. And finally, God declares that this new covenant will be permanent. It will never cease to exist, nor will God's people.

⇒ *How has your life been effected by God's new covenant in Christ?*

Jeremiah 31:35-37: ³⁵ *Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name:* ³⁶ *"If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever."* ³⁷ *Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD."*

The new covenant promises God made through Jeremiah likely seemed impossible for the people. How could something happen that would cause them to love and follow God? How could God forgive their sins that would lead to their exile?

God said He can do all of this because He is God. He's in charge of all things, including the natural world and even all of the heavenly armies of angels. He's supreme. So when He says He's going to do something, He actually has the power to do what He says.

These verses provides two if/then type statements. In both cases, the outcome described was that God would abandon His promises and not do what He had said. So if either of the "if" portions of the statements could happen, then God would be unfaithful.

- If the fixed patterns of life—the ordered path of the planets, moons, and stars—could cease, then it would prove that God could not keep His covenant
- If the people could measure all of the heavens and all of the foundations of the earth, then God would reject His people. Even today, with all the marvels of modern technology, no one has been capable of perfectly measuring the universe or having much more than a theoretical sense of the depths of the earth.

The only way that God's people can be removed from His new covenant is if God is no longer God, and that is impossible. God was clearly saying that nothing could prevent Him from being true to His covenant. The exiled people of Israel could take great confidence from the fact that God's plan and purposes cannot be thwarted. Nothing can stop God from doing what He says He will do because He has the power to always keep His promises.

⇒ *How has God proven to you that He will uphold His covenant with you?*

In times of challenge and suffering, it would be easy to assume that God has forgotten us or given up on His promises. But He's given us His Word, so we know that He will return and will fully and finally save His people. Like the people in Jeremiah's day, we should find comfort and hope in God's revealed Word that shows us that God has not forgotten us and that He will soon make all things right.

⇒ *How should we view these Old Testament passages as we live in New Testament times?*

⇒ *How can we as believers in Jesus find strength and hope in these verses?*

TRANSFORM

God's chosen people had abandoned Him and would be punished justly. But though they would be conquered and exiled, the Lord would always be faithful to His promise to be their God. Not only that, but His new covenant through Jesus would also be even better.

1. HEAD: Knowing what the law of God says is different than understanding and implementing the truth He provides. Often we can recite verses and tell Bible stories like we are telling what we had for lunch that day. Recitation and memorization are not bad practices, by any means, but faith, obedience, and relationship with God are more than merely head matters.

⇒ *Why is it important not just to memorize Scripture but meditate on the words?*

2. HEART: God declared that the only way the new covenant will ever be broken is if He breaks it Himself. We know that God keeps His promises and will never break His covenant because of His perfect goodness, holiness, and trustworthiness. He never breaks a promise.

⇒ *How should we respond to our sin in light of God's unbreakable new covenant?*

3. HANDS: All religions besides Christianity have a list of things that you must do to earn favor with a god or deity. The beauty of the gospel is that we believe Jesus accomplished everything needed for us, and so we are called to repent of sin and trust in Him. We do good works because we love Him, not because He requires us to earn His favor.

⇒ *How will you approach your good works and obedience in light of the new covenant Jesus fulfilled for you?*

The Gospel Project® for Adults

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