



PROMISE

week 2

SCRIPTURE: So the Lord God said to the serpent:
Because you have done this, you are cursed more than
any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will
move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your
life. 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 3:14-15*

QUOTE: “You cannot judge God by your calendar.
God may appear to be slow, but he never forgets his
promises. He may seem to be working very slowly or
even to be forgetting his promises, but when his
promises come true (and they will come true), they
always burst the banks of what you imagined. ... God’s
grace virtually never operates on our time frame, on a
schedule we consider reasonable.”
— *Tim Keller, Hidden Christmas*³

DAY 7

His Promises

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

ISAIAH 7:13-14

Have you ever tried to tell the future? Were you right? The Bible says only God truly knows what will happen in the days ahead.

In this passage, we witness one of the most popular prophetic Scriptures used to describe the birth of Jesus. The word prophecy is defined as “being the prediction or foretelling of future events.” In other words, prophecy means keeping a promise.

God is good at keeping His promises. Let’s look at several ways God has kept His promises over thousands of years:

- God promised that Jesus would be born in the family line of King David (2 Samuel 7:12-13, Matthew 1:6, Luke 3:21).
- God predicted that Jesus would be born to a virgin named Mary (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:27).
- An angel called Jesus “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us,” hundreds of years after Isaiah said that would be His name (Isaiah 7:13-14, Matthew 1:23).

The evidence speaks for itself. Just as God promised, Jesus was born in King David’s family, He was born of a virgin and He came to earth to be Immanuel. Since all these predictions of the long-awaited Savior came true, Isaiah 7:13-14 is known as a prophetic passage.

God proves that He keeps His promises. He always has and always will. Therefore, we can trust God and confidently put our hope in Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: What is one way you can remember Jesus is the reason we celebrate Christmas?

OLDER CHILD: Who is one person who needs to know the true meaning of Christmas? Pray together as a family about how you can approach them, and invite them to the Christmas service at your church.

TEENAGER: Think of three friends who do not have a relationship with Christ. Write their names on a piece of paper and put the paper in a place where you will see it every day (on your nightstand, in the bathroom, in your locker, etc.). Every time you see their names, ask the Lord to give you or someone else the opportunity to share the gospel with them.

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who perfectly fulfilled every promise made in the Old Testament.

DAY 8

My Beloved Son

*Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.***PSALM 2:6-9**

Maybe you've listened to a Christmas song on repeat this season. The Bible has a way of repeating itself, too. Some scholars estimate over 1,000 direct or indirect quotes from the Old Testament are found again in the New Testament.

As we read and study God's Word, it is always important to pay close attention to repeated words and phrases. In each case, the Bible is driving home an important truth.

In our devotional reading from Psalm 2, we discover one of those important repeated phrases: "You are My Son; today I have become your Father."

Luke and the author of Hebrews directly quote Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5 and Hebrews 5:5. They clearly describe the unique relationship Jesus has with the Heavenly Father. However, the Holy Spirit did not stop there, but mentions Jesus as God's Son in many more passages throughout the Gospels.

We find several places in the Gospels where the Holy Spirit inspired the authors to drive home the fact that Jesus is God's Son even more. Notice these passages:

- Before Jesus' birth, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary, "the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, emphasis added).
- At Jesus' baptism, just before He began His public ministry, God declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:17, emphasis added).
- When Peter, James and John were with Jesus on a high mountain during His transfiguration, God said from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5 ESV, emphasis added).

The Holy Spirit makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is greater than the angels, speaks with utmost authority and has an exclusive position with the Father. The One the Old Testament foretold is the One the New Testament confirms. Mary and Joseph's son was the promised Son of God.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to repair the brokenness that sin created. Jesus, the Son of God, came to live the life we could not live. Jesus, the Son of God, came to die the death we certainly deserved to die. Jesus, the Son of God, the little baby born in a manger, gives us reason to celebrate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: What is one way you can celebrate the birth of Jesus?

OLDER CHILD: Read Isaiah 9:6 together as a family. Invite your children to list out all the names of Jesus that are found inside this verse.

TEENAGER: As the Son of God, what does Jesus reveal to us about His Father?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who came to live the life we could not live.

DAY 9

Mindful of Us

*Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.***PSALM 8:1-4**

When David wrote Psalm 8, he could not get over the overwhelming majesty of the Lord. God's name, reputation and fame captivated him. The splendor of His glory in the heavens amazed him. As he continued writing, he began to compare the smallness and insignificance of man to the Almighty God. He wondered why a big, great God would be so mindful of such small beings – the human race.

The creation story helps us answer David's question. Genesis 1 describes man as being made in God's image, fashioned in His likeness. Adam and Eve, the first people on Earth, were His delight. God loved coming to the Garden of Eden and spending time with them.

Sadly, as we read on days one and two in our devotions, all that changed in Genesis 3 with the temptation and fall of man. God would no longer walk with His creation in that garden. Man's relationship with God was altered forever. However, the Lord would not leave humanity in this broken state of existence. He would send a Redeemer, a Savior, a baby – His promised Son.

All throughout the Old Testament, the prophets foretold the coming of God's Son: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2, NIV)

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." (Hosea 11:1, NIV)

God proved His incredible mindfulness of mankind with the arrival of Jesus. Through Him, the Lord made a way out of sin and back to Him. God's great love was put on display with His Son's life for the sake of our redemption.

As your family celebrates Jesus' arrival on Earth this Christmas, remember the way God has restored our relationship back to Him. As the Lord gives you opportunity, share the story of God's mindfulness of mankind with others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Ask your child to retell the Christmas story from Luke 2. If they stumble, help them with the big picture.

OLDER CHILD: As a family, look up and watch "The 3 Circles" video by No Place Left. Then, practice drawing out this simple gospel presentation, and discuss as a family how you can use this method with those who do not know Christ.

TEENAGER: Why is it so easy to listen to what the world says about us and forget about what God says about us? After discussing this with your family, take a moment and listen together to the song "Who You Say I Am" by Hillsong Worship.

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus and proving His incredible mindfulness of mankind.

DAY 10

Journey from Babylon

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

MATTHEW 2:9-11

On a long trip, you've probably asked, "Are we there yet?"

Think about the sense of pure joy you had when you reached that sought-after destination or long-standing goal.

We can imagine the Magi felt this way after completing their 900-plus mile journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. This trip takes only a few hours by plane, or two or three days by car. But for the Magi seeking the King of the Jews, it took over four months. No wonder they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."

Nowhere else in Scripture is there such an expanded and intense sense of joy recorded. Did this overwhelming joy spring from the journey's ending? Was it from finding the child? Notice it wasn't on the arrival at the house where the child was, but when they saw the star that the rejoicing began.

What if this was not a journey of distance, but a journey of time?

In 539 B.C., an 80-year-old Israelite named Daniel lived in Babylon and received one of the greatest prophecies ever delivered. As one of the most illustrious Magi that Babylon had ever seen, he was honored and exalted by the greatest kings of his day. He received the 70-week prophecy from the angel Gabriel that foretold the coming of the Messiah (Daniel 9).

How often Daniel must have shared that astounding prophecy with the Magi of his day. It was the renown of Daniel that would have intrigued the long line of Magi that followed him.

Hundreds of years later, the Magis' exploration of the prophecy and Hebrew Scriptures caused them to begin their journey to Christ. The promise of Habakkuk the prophet rang clearly in the ears of the Magi as they traveled: "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay." (Habakkuk 2:3, NASB)

The celebration of Christmas confirms the fulfillment of all God's promises. Blessed are those that rejoice exceedingly with great joy at the fulfillment of the greatest prophecy: Jesus is coming again!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Make a box of pudding together. While you are waiting for the pudding to set, talk about how hard it is to wait for something you really want, like tasty pudding. Talk about how long the Magi had to wait to see King Jesus.

OLDER CHILD: When was the last time you went on a long car ride? How did you feel once you arrived at your destination? Can you imagine how long the four-month trip of the Magi must've taken?

TEENAGER: If you knew Jesus' second coming was happening in four months, would you live your life differently? If so, what would be different and why?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who fulfilled God's long-awaited promise.

DAY 11**Wonderful Counselor**

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

ISAIAH 9:6-7

Praise God that a Child was born! Thank the Lord that He gave us His one and only Son, whose birthday we get to celebrate this season. Isaiah told us hundreds of years before Jesus' birth how He would grow up, live with us and be given the title Wonderful Counselor. What a glorious truth!

However, every Christmas we hear the words "Wonderful Counselor" and struggle to know their meaning and understand why Jesus was given this title. J.D. Greear, pastor of the Summit Church in Durham, N.C., describes "Wonderful Counselor" in a unique way. He says:

Wonderful Counselor is two words in Hebrew. When translated, "Wonderful" means beyond understanding. It's a word you used when something was too wonderful for words. Isaiah said that when He comes, this Messiah would be beyond our words to describe Him. He is wonderful, glorious, magnificent, awesome — awesomer than all the words we use to say awesome.

The word translated "Counselor" means one who advises or instructs or guides, but from a position of authority. This is someone to whom you bring your worst problems and he shows you the way out.⁴

What problems are you facing? Do you need someone you can go to who will show you the way out of the worst situations? Yes! His name is Jesus. The little baby born in Bethlehem was the promised One described by Isaiah.

As His followers, we can bring all our problems, struggles, pains, sufferings and disappointments to Him. He loves us and cares about every part of our lives because He is the Wonderful Counselor.

This Christmas, thank the Lord for giving us a Wonderful Counselor who wants us to bring all of our problems and situations to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Did you know that you can pray to Jesus anytime and anywhere?

OLDER CHILD: When was the last time you prayed? How can you remember to take your worries to Jesus in prayer?

TEENAGER: What do you think keeps people from coming to Jesus with their problems? How does understanding Jesus as the Wonderful Counselor encourage you to go to Him in prayer more often?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who is the One we can go to who will show us the way out of our worst situations.

DAY 12

Always on Time

*Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.***GALATIANS 4:4-5**

Have you ever planned something very carefully? Whether you've worked on a school project, baked a treat or invited people to a party, all of these events take some thought and effort beforehand.

This week, we've seen in our devotional readings how the Lord used the writers of the Old Testament to tell us how He was planning to bring Jesus, our Savior, into the world. God kept every promise He made in the Old Testament by slowly revealing His faithfulness throughout the pages of the New Testament.

In Galatians 4:4-5, Paul begins by saying, "When the set time had fully come..." (NKJV). In seven words, Paul packs a lot of much needed truth that helps us understand God and His Word. All the while, he is affirming God's redemption story that the writers of the Old and New Testaments described.

Paul helps us understand two important characteristics about God and His Word. First, these words show us the accuracy of God's timing. From the time that Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden until Jesus was born, humanity experienced a great deal of pain, suffering and death because of sin.

Fortunately, God knew man's limits. He knew when the time was right for Jesus to perfectly complete His plan. This shows that God is never early. He is never late. The Lord waits until everything is exactly in place before He decides to act. God is always on time.

Second, Paul uses this phrase so he can remind the believers in Galatia — and us today — that God always keeps His promises. Just as the Gospel writers used words and phrases from the Old Testament to help us understand how God would fulfill His promises, Paul uses a verse from the book of Psalms to link both testaments together and remind us of God's faithfulness throughout all of Scripture.

Consider the words of Psalm 102:13 (NKJV): “You will arise and have mercy on Zion; For the time to favor her, Yes, the set time, has come” (emphasis added).

Today, you and your family can rest in the fact that our Heavenly Father is always true to His Word, and He is always on time. Therefore, we can experience joy in our lives and in our homes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Why do we talk about Jesus at Christmas?

OLDER CHILD: Get two pieces of fruit (like bananas) for an object lesson. If possible, find one banana that is yellow and ripe, and another that is green and unripe. Have your kids take a bite of each of the bananas. Ask, “Which banana tasted the best?” (Hopefully, they will choose the one that was ripe.)

Then say, “The banana that tasted best was the one that was ripe.” Fruit is best when it has finished ripening over time — then it is ready to eat. When Jesus came as a baby, the time was ripe and God was ready to send Him to be born in a manger.

TEENAGER: Oftentimes, we only think about what happened on Christmas, but not the why. Why do you think that is? How might having a gospel mindset change the way we celebrate Christmas?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who is always on time and brings joy to our lives and homes.

Live it out: *God keeps His promises, and one of His greatest is the gift of salvation through Jesus. As a family, think of three friends or neighbors who don't yet know Christ. Write their names on a card and place it somewhere you'll see every day. Each time you notice it, pray that God would open doors for your family to share His love with them.*

