

# How to use *The Promises of God*

*The Promises of God* uses the grand story of the Bible to help people understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is not a typical “gospel tract.” This booklet is specially designed. Rather than highlight a few doctrines and principles, *The Promises of God* helps people understand how the entire Bible fits together to reveal God’s character and works in history. After all, the truth of the gospel is “according to the Scriptures” (Rom 1:1–2; 1 Cor 15:3–4).

The gospel changes the way people see the world. It tells a story, not a philosophy. As a result, we have to rethink the way we present the gospel.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide was designed with two people in mind. On the one hand, *The Promises of God* is an introduction to the gospel for **non-Christians**. For many non-believers, the gospel seems otherworldly or too philosophical. They do not see how God is relevant to their lives.

On the other hand, this gospel guide can be used as a tool to **train Christians** to communicate the gospel more clearly and confidently. Many believers don’t share the gospel because they don’t sufficiently understand the Bible. Although they can answer basic questions about Christ’s identity and his ministry, their knowledge is narrow and shallow.

what’s different

Think about how people use traditional gospel tracts. Frequently, people will distribute gospel tracts to strangers but without any added explanation. As a result, unbelievers have difficulty understanding the meaning of the tract, either feeling it too abstract or that it’s not relevant to their lives. The problem is compounded by a common feature in many gospel tracts. In order to simplify the message, tracts often focus on a few key doctrines. They rarely stress the Old Testament.

Non-Christians don’t have enough background knowledge to make sense of the presentation. As a result, the gospel can sound too abstract.



*The Promises of God* takes a different approach. It focuses on **the big picture** so that people can better see that gospel proclaims a big God! In Christ, God entered our world and revealed himself in history. Our God is not distant or abstract.

When people understand the gospel as a story (and not merely a series of propositions), they better grasp the fact that the gospel presents an entirely different view of the world. They see that this gospel is relevant to their lives.

**Don't memorize. Do internalize.**

*The Promises of God* is a gospel guide.

People don't need to memorize it. If someone were to ask us about our family or to share our family background, we would not need to memorize a set presentation. The gospel retells a story. Naturally, some aspects of the gospel never change; however, we have flexibility in the way we tell the story. As a "gospel guide", *The Promises of God* helps people to internalize the Story.

We are primarily supposed to *share* the gospel, not distribute booklets about it.

One small booklet by itself is insufficient. People need a personal explanation. We need to answer people's questions. This means that those who share the gospel also need to know the story well.

## Remember the gospel

How does this guide help people remember the Story? *The Promises of God* has a few features that make it easier for people to share the gospel story.

### **SIMPLE PICTURES**

For example, each section has a corresponding picture to help people remember key aspects of the story. Ultimately, the various smaller pictures come together to form a single picture that depicts the main points in the gospel story.

Accordingly, people could choose simply to remember a single image in their mind. That picture contains everything they need to **remind** them of the Bible's grand story. These simple pictures can be drawn in the sand or sketched on a piece of

paper. The pictures consist of simple shapes, like circles and triangles. You don't even have to be an artist.

(Below, you will find a simple explanation about the symbolism and significance of the shapes.)

### **BASIC OUTLINE**

*The Promises of God* uses a basic outline to retell the gospel story. The plot is streamlined. The number of characters is minimized. Each section naturally flows into the section that follows. The presentation tries to limit the number of turning points in order to minimize complexity yet without compromising the Bible's fundamental storyline.

### **REPEATING THEMES**

A few key themes are interwoven through the various sections. They form a common thread that conveys the meaning and unity of the Bible's grand story.

Accordingly, those who use *The Promises of God* have a great deal of **flexibility** in how they share the gospel. One part of the story naturally reminds people of other parts. In addition, people have the freedom to emphasize one another theme as needed. With one person, they may highlight the fact that God is a Father and we are his children. With other people, we might choose to stress other metaphors, like honor or purity.

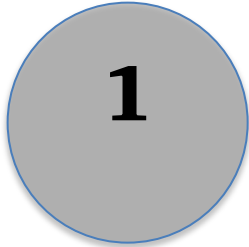
When sharing the gospel, people often are afraid that they must communicate the message in a very precise manner. If they forget one small detail or logical sequence, they will mess up the entire presentation.

*The Promises of God* allows people to tell *one story* in a way that is suitable for *all people*.

### **PICTORAL BOOKMARK**

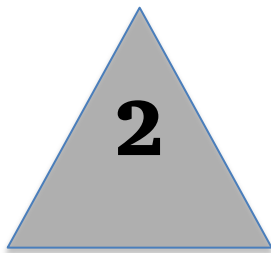
You can use the *The Promises of God* bookmark to guide other people through the story. By carrying the bookmark wherever you go, you will be reminded to share the gospel. Not only does it equip the Christian, it can spur conversation with non-believers.

## Three ways to use *The Promises of God*



### **1. Train Christians**

First of all, *The Promises of God* can be used to train Christians to share the gospel effectively. As people understand the message, they will more naturally and boldly tell others.



### **2. Gospel Introduction**

*The Promises of God* has two formats—a shorter presentation and longer, more thorough presentation. The shorter version of *The Promises of God* introduces the broad storyline and raises curiosity. If people want to hear more about this message, we can use the longer presentation.



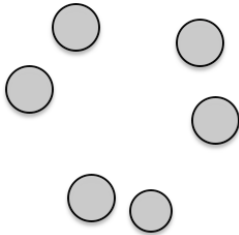
### **3. Evangelistic Study**

Finally, the full version of *The Promises of God* contains more details about the gospel story. Also, it contains a number of questions to guide further discussion. Believers can use *The Promises of God* to lead an evangelistic study. Perhaps, you could meet with unbelievers 4–6 times. Each time, your study time could focus on one major aspect of the story.

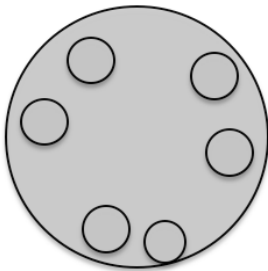
# Key Symbols

The pictures give a basic outline of the gospel story. They are merely symbols and reminders. People should not feel restricted by them. Rather, they provide people with a lot of flexibility. Your presentations may be as complex or as simple as needed.

The first set of pictures summarizes the Old Testament. Not only does it identify the problems of the world, the pictures highlight the saving promises of God.



The circles represent the various multiple groups in the world. The human family is divided in various ways, e.g. ethnicity, nationality, economics, gender, language, etc.



The larger circle foretells the Abrahamic covenant. God promises to unite the world by blessing all nations through Abraham's offspring.



The triangle represents the Mosaic covenant. Specifically, the triangle resembles a Temple, the place where God dwells with his people. Accordingly, this picture signifies the fact that God makes a distinct sort of people.



The crown represents the Davidic covenant. God will establish his kingdom forever. God's king will purify his people (i.e. His Temple).

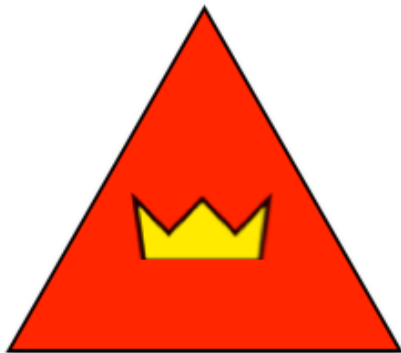
The smaller circles remain because God has not yet fulfilled his promises.

The second set of picture express how God keeps his promises in the New Testament. The Old Testament symbols are redrawn to signify God's fulfillment of each respective promise.

Notice the overall sequence is reversed. This has two purposes. First, the order depicts the way God accomplishes his covenants, beginning with Jesus and culminating in a new heaven and new earth. Second, the resurrection of Christ becomes the key tool for interpreting God's promises in the Old Testament



The crown represents the fulfillment of God's covenant with David. This part of the story recounts the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as God's king.



With Christ's resurrection, God's Spirit dwells in God's people, who are compared to a Temple. The Mosaic covenant foreshadowed the fact that God would make a holy kingdom of priests, who would represent God in the world.



Ultimately, the Father keeps his promise to Abraham. He blesses all nations through Abraham's offspring, namely Christ and his followers. In this way, He restores the human family and creates a new heaven and new earth.



# Important Suggestions

## Overall Goals (central themes and emphases)

This gospel guide has an intentional design. It uses God's covenant promises to shape the main story line. In this way, God's covenant promises manifest God's plan, character, and nature. God reveals himself in history. He enters into the lives of people. If gospel presentations do not include God's Old Testament revelation, we have no way of understanding Jesus' identity and works. Conversely, Jesus Christ becomes the key to understanding the Old Testament promises.

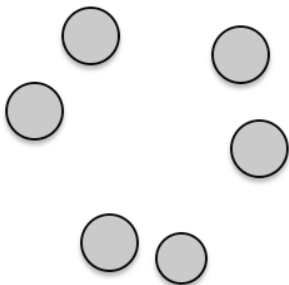
Our gospel presentations should reflect those things that the Bible itself emphasizes, otherwise, we may little by little begin to veer from the gospel's focus.

The purpose of this gospel presentation is to magnify the character and plan of God. It centers on God rather than people. The gospel inherently is God-centered.

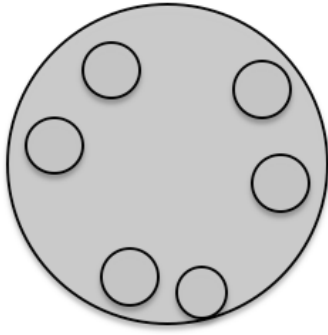
Instead of being limited to legal metaphors, this presentation intertwines a number of themes together. God as Creator is King. His plan is to use covenants to set his kingdom right, to establish a holy people. Although the human family in the beginning dishonored God, He vindicated His honor in Christ and restores us to a position of glory.

These metaphors give us a great deal of flexibility to preach the gospel. Depending on the specific circumstances, we can emphasize different themes or aspects of the gospel story.

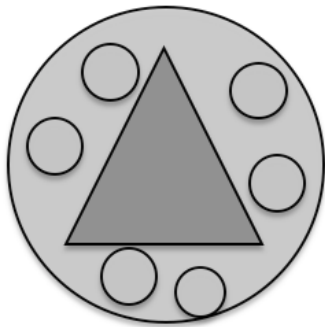
## Specific Tips For Each Section



- This part highlights the alienation that exists within human relationships, which is manifest within social groups.
- God's plan for humanity was to make them intone single family under heaven; yet, social disorder is a consequence of humanity's Fall. The Tower of Babel event (Gen 11) epitomizes this reality.
- We present human experience as a symptom that points to the break in relationship between the human family and our heavenly Father.



- We introduce God’s plan for reestablishing unity in the world. As the Creator, He is the Heavenly Father. We should love and respect Him.
- The Abrahamic Covenant is fundamental to the rest of the biblical story. In fact, Paul calls this covenant the “gospel” (Gal 3:8).
- Abraham is blessed in order to be a blessing. We like him need to consider where we find our “face” (i.e. honor). Is it from people or God?
- Here we see God himself enters into history.
- Apart from His promises, we have not way of grasping the significance of Israel and all that the Lord has done.
- In the more detailed presentation, we mention the changing of Abraham’s name (from Abram). This is because many Asian cultures take serious the meaning of names.



- Key themes within the Mosaic covenant include God’s presence, the calling of His people, and their holy living. We use the **triangle**, which represents a temple, to highlight these themes.
- We want to prepare people to consider those whom are considered God’s true people. God gave Israel herself a mission. That is, God would use Israel as the means through which to rebuild the human family, made up of all nations.
- Although their nations and ancestors had been amazingly blessed, they could not escape the world’s most basic problem.
- This section makes people consider what kind of people God wants to make.
- God’s self-revelation within Israel’s history shows that God comes near people. The Bible talks about specific historical events rather than abstract philosophy.

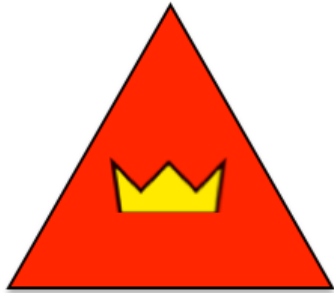




- This section more strongly highlights the fact that God is King and that his people should give allegiance to Him.
- We want our listeners to see clearly the tension within the story. Since Israel's kings were unfaithful, how would God be able to establish His kingdom and thus keep his covenant promises?
- Israel's history is a warning to us that coveting power, position, wealth, and "face" (social status) entice us towards a tragic end.
- These three covenants prepare people to understand God's plan for saving plan; through Jesus, God will establish His kingdom, a holy people and glorious world.



- Note that God first fulfills His covenant with David in order to accomplish His promises. Therefore, the pictures are drawn in order from inside (crown) to outside (circle). This is the opposite order compared to above, when the promises were originally given.
- The section emphasizes Jesus' royal identity. He defeats His enemies, including demons, disease, dominions, and even death.
- Jesus' life and resurrection overturn the world's perspective of honor & shame as well as their view of the world.
- It is only within the context of Israel's history that we are able to grasp the significance of Jesus' identity and works. Therefore, we cannot overlook the Old Testament when presenting the gospel.
- The Old Testament is the New Testament's essential framework. Jesus' resurrection is the key to interpreting the Old Testament.



- The Holy Spirit dwells within the church, making it to be a holy people. In this way, God brings about what He foreshadowed in the Mosaic covenant. The church is the true “temple.” (A note of explanation: The Bible present Jesus’ body as a temple; thus, those who are in Jesus are regarded a temple.)
- This section stresses *who* are God’s true people and the kind of people they are. They have changed hearts and are loyal to Jesus as king.
- Jesus not only cleanses people of impurity; he also give them the ability to live holy lives.
- Christians’ mission is to reflect in the world what God is like.
- Jesus redefines “insiders” and “outsiders” (namely, people’s identity and sense of belonging).



- This last section points out the fact that God will fulfill his covenant with Abraham (hence, the added circle).
- The nations will ultimately be blessed through Jesus, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, gender, place of origin, position, etc. They all are able to become one of God’s children through faith.
- Abraham’s true offspring are those who follow Jesus as king.
- The church is blessed in order to testify to God’s presence and plan to bless the nations.
- Our hope is specific and concrete because God in history will resurrect people and recreate a new heaven and new earth. Therefore, all we due for Jesus is not in vain.
- This God-centered presentation magnifies God’s faithful, righteous, and compassionate character.

# An Explanation of the Response Section

## 1. How does this presentation lead people to respond?

This presentation draws people by focusing on God's **historical** revelation of His own character and works. Perhaps unwittingly, some presentations primarily highlight personal benefits in order to attract people. These benefits include eternal life, peace, and happiness. Consequently, listeners are attracted to blessings rather than to God.

The presentation leads to a clear **invitation**. Because it primarily emphasizes God's kingship, people know the appropriate response is give allegiance (not merely intellectual assent). God wants our exclusive loyalty and uttermost trust.

"The Promises of God" shows the **group identity** and **our response to God** are inter-related. How we respond to God will change the source of our identity, sense of belong, and sense of identification with others. Believers most certainly should place great value on the church; that is, our new family. For this reason, we cannot seek our "face", identity, and value from the world.

Because we present a historical account, listeners more grasp the nature of required response. One's response should be **specific** or concrete, changing the head, heart and hands. Because we share a coherent story (not merely a few propositions), it affects a person's worldview.

Finally, this presentation **prepares** people for living the life of a disciple. How people come to faith in Christ will influence how they thereafter follow him. This process of evangelization will shape the development of their theology.

## 2. Why does it not have a "sinner's prayer?"

We must keep in mind that any sort of "sinner's prayer" inherently cannot make someone become a Christian. Ideally, this kind of prayer can do nothing more provide an external indication that someone has faith. *Only faith* saves a person. If people hear and believe this gospel story, then at that very moment, they have already become Christians.

However, if faith and a "sinner's prayer" are too closely linked together, listeners can easily confuse faith and the prayer. People need changed hearts. Those who preach the gospel cannot see a person's heart. Therefore, have a responsibility to make clear what is the gospel and its requirement (i.e. faith or allegiance).



If we are not careful, we will unwittingly make the “sinner’s prayer” become a requirement of the gospel. In fact, in the Bible, it is baptism that acts as the public confession of a person’s faith.

If you still want to use some sort of prayer, I urge people to first acknowledge the person’s faith (i.e. which, if genuine, means that he or she has become a Christ-follower), then after a few minutes, you could use a prayer to express thanksgiving to God for what he has already accomplished. Make sure this prayer of thanksgiving to God has not connection to *how* a person gains salvation.