My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession: Holy and loving God, You made a covenant with all creatures, promising life and hope. You show us how we should live, but we forget our connection with one another and think that we are the center of the universe. We wander from Your paths of truth into paths of deceit and pride. Forgive us, Merciful God, and lead us back into the arms of Your love. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Have you ever made a really serious deal with someone else—one that you both thought was so important that you would do anything to keep it? One that you would never think of keeping your fingers crossed as a way of trying to get out of later? How does it feel when the other person breaks the deal? The Bible teaches us that one of the main ways God relates to us is with that kind of an agreement. But it also teaches us that we can always count on God to *keep* His side of it. Even if we mess up, God will welcome us back into the relationship when we admit that we messed up. Jesus showed us what a perfect human relationship with God looks like, so we can learn how to do it, too. And the best part is, when we trust Him to, Jesus promises to help us get better and better at keeping our side of our relationship with God!

MONDAY 2.21.22 Genesis 17:1-14

During the first three weeks of our study of the attributes of God, we have looked at God as Creator, as Personal, and as Provider. Now, in the final week of this series, we are going to focus in on the primary way that God has chosen to interact with His human creation—through the making of "covenants." While "covenant" is not a word we use often today, we are nonetheless very familiar with the concept. From an international perspective, a covenant is quite similar to a "treaty," while from an interpersonal perspective, a covenant is very similar to a "contract." Stipulations specifying expected behaviors between two parties are set forth, as are the benefits of keeping the agreement and the penalties for breaking it. The story of the confirming of the covenant that underlies God's relationship with Israel is found in today's Scripture. God promised Abraham that He would protect him (see 15:1, "I am your Shield"), that he would have innumerable descendants (17:4-6), and possession of the land of Canaan (17:8). In return, Abraham was expected to "be blameless" (17:1), to circumcise the men as a sign (17:10-14), and to "keep the covenant" (17:9) - staying loyal to God and God alone.

- Why might God choose to relate to us through "covenants"?

TUESDAY 2.22.22 Exodus 24:1-11

Just prior to the scene in today's reading, Moses had ascended Mount Sinai, where God gave him not only the Ten Commandments, but all of the laws and stipulations set forth in Exodus 20:1 through 23:19. These words are referred to in today's reading as "the Book of the Covenant," and were the expectations of behavior that God set forth for Israel if they were to continue in their relationship with God as their sovereign protector. It is important to recognize that God had already saved Israel from their slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, *before* these laws were given. God saved Israel before Israel had any idea of God's expectations. But now that God had demonstrated His power, Israel had a choice—continue in a relationship with this all-powerful, saving God, or not. God says, "I will be your God and continue to hold you under My protection, but here is what I expect of you in return." When Moses shared the terms of the agreement with the people, they wholeheartedly agreed to accept them. The agreement was sealed in blood, acknowledging its life-and-death nature, and the participating parties shared a meal to celebrate—"they saw God, and they ate and drank." (24:11) Abraham's many descendants, not just Abraham himself, have now agreed to belong to God.

- What does it imply that the rules came after the saving?

WEDNESDAY 2.23.22 2 Samuel 7:1-17

With Abraham's descendants in agreement to belong to God, God proceeded to fulfill His promise to Abraham regarding the land of Canaan. The Israelites entered the land, conquered the ungodly nations living there, and eventually established a kingdom under the leadership of first Saul, and then David. In response to God's blessing, David wanted to build a temple for God, but through the prophet Nathan, God told David that it was David's son who would build a temple, not David himself. But God did make David a further promise—that his kingdom would endure forever. Rather than David building *God* a "house," God promises to build *David* a "house." While the language of covenant is not explicitly used here, this became known as the "Davidic covenant," to distinguish it from the "Noahic covenant," the "Abrahamic covenant," and the "Mosaic covenant" that we have studied earlier this week. In fact, 20 kings in the Davidic line ruled in Jerusalem after David … and after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, it was the promise of the Davidic covenant that led to the firm expectation of a Messiah from the same royal line through whom, once again, God would save Israel.

- Did this covenant still have stipulations? What were they?

THURSDAY 2.24.22 Jeremiah 31:31-34

By the time of Jeremiah, the outlook for David's kingdom was nearly hopeless. Only two generations after David, his kingdom had been split in two by civil war. Many years later, the northern kingdom had been destroyed, and Jeremiah's task was to tell the southern kingdom (where David's descendants had continued to reign) that they would soon fall victim to the same fate … and that God had agreed to it. In God's words, the house of Judah (David's descendants) "broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them" (31:32). As promised, God had stayed true to His ancient agreement with Israel, but David's descendants had failed to live by the agreed-upon stipulations. Through Jeremiah, God promised to one day make a new covenant with the house of Israel, a better covenant, one that would not require adherence to a written set of laws etched in stone, but to laws that God would etch deeply within the human psyche itself. God's way of relating to human beings would not change—God would still enter into covenant with them—but the nature of humanity itself would be changed, better equipped to keep the covenant terms, with God Himself empowering the obedience He asks for.

- With Israel's failure, why do you think God did not simply call it off? Why would He offer a new covenant instead?

FRIDAY 2.25.22 Luke 22:7-20; John 15:9-17

In spite of human disobedience and rejection, God continues to pursue a relationship with His human creation through the means of a covenant. When Jesus gathered His closest followers around Him just prior to His death on the cross, it is no coincidence that He referred to the cup of wine as "the new covenant in My Blood, which is poured out for you." Jesus was telling His followers that He was the one bringing about Jeremiah's promised new covenant, and that it was the shedding of His own Blood that would seal the new agreement. But just as the Israelites were expected to maintain the terms of their agreement with God, Jesus' covenantal language implies that God also has expectations for those who want to be in relationship with Him under the new covenant. Jesus Himself spelled those terms out for us—in John 15:10, He says, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love," and in John 15:17, He says, "This is my command: Love each other." The terms of the new covenant are clear: obedience to the way of life Jesus demonstrated in His earthly existence. This is what it is to call Jesus "Lord." What's more, Jesus promises to give us the means to fulfill His command, through His Spirit.

- What do you see as the benefits/penalties associated with this new covenant? Are they different from the old?

SATURDAY 2.26.22 Hebrews 8:1-9:28

The writer of Hebrews provides the best account of the relationship between God's original covenant with Israel and the new covenant in Jesus Christ. What makes this covenant essentially different is that Jesus, God incarnate, is its mediator. At the most basic level, all that is required of human beings to come under the umbrella of God's covenant promises in Jesus is to have faith in its mediator—to believe Him when He says that through the shedding of His blood, our sins are forgiven. Just as the rainbow was the sign of God's first covenant with Noah, as circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, and as the Law was the sign of God's covenant with Moses, the cross is the sign of God's new covenant in Jesus. But just as individuals in Israel could choose to live under the terms of the covenant, or not live under its terms, humans today have the same choice. Now, as then, God invites us into community with Him and with each other as people of the covenant. Through their faith in Jesus as Lord, God takes individual people and transforms them into the covenantal community He has always wanted them to be.

- Do you want to be part of God's covenant community? Surrender to the Lordship of Jesus, and pray to be empowered to live a life of obedient love, every day.

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Daily Study Guide February 20—26, 2022

Sermon Series: Christian Basics—Who Is God?

Week Four: "God the Covenant-Maker" - Rev. Gregory P. Finfrock

Scripture for Sunday, February 20: Genesis 9:8-17 (CEB)

"God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'I am now setting up My covenant with you, with your descendants, and with every living being with you—the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you. I will set up My covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. I have placed My bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember the covenant between me and you and every living being among all the creatures. Floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures. The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth's creatures.' God said to Noah, 'This is the symbol of the covenant that I have set up between me and all creatures on earth.'"

Things that really impacted me from today's sermon:

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Prayer Requests

Jerry Primm
Mitch Mitchell
Josh Luter
Charlotte Ottley
Bob Vincent
Nini Schneider
Natalie Grossenheider
Mark Grossenheider
Sophia Miller
Judy Hoffman
Thibault Family
Ellis Family
Kyle Anderson
Art Schnatterly
Michael Bolinger

The Mueller family on the passing of Klos Mueller

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org