ALWAYS TRUE

God’s Promises When Life Is Hard

JAMES MACDONALD
GROUP EXPERIENCE

On the Same Page

If you are meeting as a group for the first time, introduce one another. Share your responses to the following.

- Identify groups, organizations, and institutions that are known for not being trustworthy.
- List promotional messages you see or hear that instantly cause you to think, *That can’t be true*.
- Share examples of broken promises in today’s culture that you have observed or experienced.

Preparation

1. When you heard this study would examine God’s promises, what was the first thought that went through your mind?

2. What promises of God already hold special meaning for you?

3. Together read aloud this week’s memory verses on page 6.

DVD Session 1 Viewer Guide

God is by nature a  **promiser**  .

Promise: an assurance God gives His people so that they can  **walk**  by  **faith**  while they wait for Him to  **work**  .

God’s promises are  **great**  (see 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

1. God’s promises come from a great  **God**  .
2. God’s promises cover the great  **issues**  .
3. God’s promises bring us great  **comfort**  .
4. God’s promises lead to a great  **life**  .

God’s promises are  **exceedingly**  great (see 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

1. Greater than  **human**  wisdom
2. Greater than white-knuckled  **obedience**
3. Greater than  **wallowing**  in self-pity
God’s promises are exceedingly great and *precious* (see 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

Precious things take:
1. **Time**
2. **Proving**

Two kinds of promises in the Bible:

1. A *conditional* covenant
2. An *unconditional* covenant
   Covenant: a sworn **agreement** between two parties

God is a **promiser**.

God _keeps_ His promises.

God wants us to **test** His promises.

Don’t act _foolishly_ and expect God to _bail_ you out.
Don’t act _willfully_ and provoke God to _judge_ you.

God’s promises are activated by **faith**.

The promise is never real to you until:
1. You **see** it.
2. You **savor** it.
3. You **share** it.

God’s promises are experienced in **Jesus Christ**.

**Responding to the DVD Teaching**

1. In what ways would you say God is precious to you today?

2. Look at the definition of *promise* in your viewer guide (p. 8).
   How would you express that definition in your own words?

3. What examples can you think of in your own experiences of the
   “Today I believe; tomorrow I receive” principle?

Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Read and recite this week’s memory verses, 2 Peter 1:3-4, at least once each day this week.

This video session is available for download at www.lifeway.com/alwaystrue.
Week 2

GROUP EXPERIENCE

On the Same Page

1. Share your experiences with recent do-it-yourself home projects and describe the results.

2. Which word or phrase most accurately describes your toolbox?
   • Useless • Complete—all of the right tools • Just the essentials
   • I have to borrow what I need from my neighbor.
   How important is having the right tools for the job?

3. Share an experience from your life illustrating that God’s promises are like tools we can use to fix or solve our problems.

Preparation and Review

1. Memorizing God’s Word allows us to develop an internal toolbox of God’s promises that immediately come to mind when we face a problem. Ask a volunteer to recite last week’s memory verses.

2. Together read aloud this week’s memory verse on page 34.

3. What did you learn last week about the role God’s promises play in a walk of faith?

DVD Session 2 Viewer Guide

Promise number 1 deals with problem number 1: I will not fear.

Before we can appreciate what the promise solves, we need to know what the problem is.

Fear just happens.

One of the most common exhortations from God’s messengers is “Fear not” or “Do not fear.”

Fear is the complete state of anti-God.

Fear is always wrong.
The antidote for fear is the promise "God is with me."

Promise 1: I will not fear; God is with me.

God is not with everyone.

1. God is not with the proud (see Ps. 138:6).
2. God is not with the worldly (see Jas. 4:4).
3. God is not with the rebellious (see Isa. 1:5).
4. God is not with those who harbor sin (see Ps. 66:18).

If God already gave you His best, will He not give you something less if you ask Him (see Rom. 8:32)?

Jesus Christ is praying for us (see Rom. 8:34).

If you put your whole weight on God's promise, it holds you up (see Heb. 13:5-6).

I will not fear; God is with me always (see Deut. 31:6).

**Responding to the DVD Teaching**

1. Psalm 34:18 says,

   “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
   and saves the crushed in spirit."

   How have you seen God draw near to you during hard times?

2. What is the difference between fear knocking on the door and fear moving in for an extended stay? What’s wrong with the picture of God and fear living in the same house?

3. What have you found doesn’t work when dealing with fear?

4. How do you know you can confidently say, “God is with me”?

5. What are some specific fears in your life that we can pray about this week?

Read week 2 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Read and recite this week’s memory verse, Deuteronomy 31:6, at least once each day this week.

This video session is available for download at www.lifeway.com/alwaystrue.
On the Same Page
1. Identify ads or commercials you have seen that make claims you can’t expect to be literally true.

2. What words tip you off that you are being sold something that can’t measure up to what is being described?

3. How do exaggerated claims create doubts about other ads or products?

Preparation and Review
1. Last week we talked about not fearing because God is always with us. Share ways you have experienced that truth this week.

2. Most of us have probably had experiences with nagging doubts. What are some stubborn doubts that threaten to disrupt your walk with God?

3. Together read aloud this week’s memory verses on page 56.

DVD Session 3 Viewer Guide
Promise 2: I will not doubt; God is in control.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart” (Prov. 3:5).

Doubt is devastating to your soul.

When I doubt what God has said, it’s destructive to me.

When I believe what God has said, it’s really good for me.

Consequences of doubt:
1. Doubt is the soil that fear grows in.
2. Doubt is the cause of our emotional peaks and valleys.
3. Doubt is the direct result of taking our eyes off the Lord.
“Do not lean on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5).

“In all your ways acknowledge him” (Prov. 3:6).

Conditional promise: if you do your part, God will do His part.

“God will make straight your paths” (Prov. 3:6).

God will pave the way for you.

God promises the safest, fastest, smoothest road to the best possible destination.

God is in control means sovereignty.

God’s sovereignty:

1. God is sovereign over rebellion.

2. God is sovereign over sin.

3. God is sovereign over world events.

Responding to the DVD Teaching

1. Read Proverbs 3:5-6 on page 56. In what ways is God’s sovereignty evident in these verses? If He were not sovereign, how would this promise be affected?

2. What does it look like to lean on your own understanding?
   To acknowledge God in all your ways?

3. What are you saying about God when you doubt?

4. Identify new ways to acknowledge God’s sovereignty that you learned from the video segment.

Read week 3 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Read and recite this week’s memory verses, Proverbs 3:5-6, at least once each day this week.
Week 4

GROUP EXPERIENCE

On the Same Page

1. What is one of your favorite stories of a sports team that made a great comeback, snatching victory out of the jaws of defeat? If you were on the eventual winning team, describe the range of emotions you went through between the time when the score looked insurmountable and when victory was achieved.

2. Now think of a time when a sports team appeared to be on the verge of victory, only to experience a stunning reversal and loss. Describe the reactions of the players and fans. How did the element of surprise increase the team's despair?

Preparation and Review

1. We have now memorized three promise verses: 2 Peter 1:3-4; Deuteronomy 31:6; and Proverbs 3:5-6. Test your memories by reciting these verses together.

2. Together read aloud this week's memory verse on page 82.

3. What pictures come to mind when you hear the word despair? What are some causes of despair in our world today?

DVD Session 4 Viewer Guide

Promise 3: I will not _despair_; God is _good_.

I will not _despair_.

Despair: destitute of positive _expectation_

Despair is not _reality_, but to the person who is there, they _think_ it is reality.

Accelerants for despair:

1. _Surprise_
2. _Severity_
3. _Settledness_
“I would have despaired unless I had believed” (Ps. 27:13).

When you can’t do anything at all, you let God do it.

“Stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD. ... The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (Ex. 14:13-14).

“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see” (Ps. 27:13).

“... the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living” (Ps. 27:13).

In your lifetime you will see the goodness of the Lord.

God is always good.

God’s goodness:

1. God’s goodness is something He wants us to experience (see Ps. 34:8).
2. God’s goodness is the eventual conclusion of every generation of His followers (see Ps. 100:5).
3. God’s goodness is present in everything He does (see Ps. 145:9).
4. God’s goodness is not immediately apparent (see Lam. 3:25).
5. God’s goodness is a refuge, and He is aware of those who find Him (see Nah. 1:7).

God has a plan for your life.

“I know the plans I have for you” (Jer. 29:11).

Plans for wholeness and not for evil (see Jer. 29:11)

“... to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

God is working all things together (see Rom. 8:28):

(1) For my good and (2) for His purposes.

Responding to the DVD Teaching

1. What would you like to say about the goodness of the Lord right now?

2. Review the facts we know about God’s plans for us in Jeremiah 29:11.

Which one means the most to you today and why?

Read week 4 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Read and recite this week’s memory verse, Romans 8:28, at least once each day this week.

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Week 5

GROUP EXPERIENCE

On the Same Page
1. Relate humorous or absurd observations you have heard other parents make during children’s athletic events.

2. Share a time when positive words of encouragement prevented you from faltering during difficulty.

Preparation and Review
1. Practice reciting the previous weeks’ memory verses.

2. Together read aloud this week’s memory verse on page 108.

3. What does the word *falter* mean? What problems can result when believers falter in their faith?

DVD Session 5 Viewer Guide

Promise 4: I will not *falter*; God is *watching*.

“Fear not, for I have *redeemed* you” (Isa. 43:1).

Redemption: the Lord comes with the wealth of His riches and buys me out of the slavery of *sin* and makes me *His* own.

“I have called you by name, you are *mine*” (Isa. 43:1).

“When you pass through the waters, I will be *with* you” (Isa. 43:2).

“... and through the rivers, they shall not *overwhelm* you” (Isa. 43:2).

You’re not going to *go* *under* (see Isa. 43:2).

“When you walk through fire you shall not be *burned*” (Isa. 43:2).

“The flame shall not *consume* you” (Isa. 43:2).

I will not falter; God is *watching*. 
Wrong views of God's watching:

1. A resentful relative
2. A hawk
3. A crabby church lady
4. A suspicious parent
5. A cantankerous boss

The eyes of the Lord:

1. Are inescapable
2. Are synonymous with what is right and true
3. Are focused upon and attentive to His own
4. Are searching for people to bless
5. Are provoked to grace when He observes a righteous person

God “will not let you be tempted beyond your ability” (1 Cor. 10:13). “With the temptation or trial he will also provide the way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Ways of escape:

1. God will take you out of the trial.
2. God will send you encouragement to persevere.
3. God will give you wisdom to act.
4. God will give you strength to persevere.
5. God will send someone to help you bear the burden.
6. God will give you relief.

Responding to the DVD Teaching

1. If faltering in the Christian life means constantly taking steps backward and forward, never settling into a deliberate and sustained direction of growth, how have you exhibited this pattern in your spiritual life?

2. How does God’s watching, as described in this video session, differ from the way you have thought about it before?

3. How do you think your awareness that God is watching going to affect the way you live this week?

Read week 5 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Read and recite this week’s memory verse, 1 Corinthians 10:13, at least once each day this week.

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On the Same Page
1. In what sports is it possible to lose along the way and still win?

2. React to the following definition. Training is the calculated endurance of defeats on the way to victory. For example, in training to run a marathon, how many marathons do you run? How can even defeats teach us to succeed if we don't allow them to defeat us?

Preparation and Review
1. Share ways you have applied one of the four promises we’ve already studied to a situation in your life.

2. What do you think it means to experience victory in the Christian life?

3. Together read aloud this week’s memory verse on page 132.

DVD Session 6 Viewer Guide
At the end of the day, it’s the not knowing that crushes.

The promises are the knowing in the place of the not knowing.

We all live with a certain amount of uncertainty.

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isa. 54:17, NKJV).

Nothing ultimately used against you will triumph or prosper.

The Lord fights for you.

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isa. 54:17, NKJV).
“Their righteousness is from Me” (Isa. 54:17, NKJV).

In Christ you have a righteousness that is not your own.

“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom. 16:20).

Promise 5: I will not fail; God is always victorious.

Ultimate victory:

His purposes will be accomplished, His enemies will be defeated, the faithful will be rewarded, His Son will be on the throne established forever, and death itself will be defeated and ended for all time.

You cannot make complete sense of the events of life without the reality of eternity.

You can’t fully make sense of the events of life without a true comprehension of the reality of heaven and hell.

Responding to the DVD Teaching

1. What are some things you don’t know about the road ahead that sometimes trouble you?

2. Based on Romans 16:20, how does focusing on Christ’s eventual victory and your share in it help you in your daily living?

3. How has this study of God’s promises given you a different understanding of His involvement in your life?

Read week 6 and complete the activities to complete your study of Always True. Read and recite this week’s memory verse, Isaiah 54:17, at least once each day this week.

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