

QUIET TIME

Theme: Walking by faith

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

Day 1 Romans 10:11-21
Faith comes from hearing the message

Day 2 Romans 4:16-25
Faith is the conviction that God keeps his promise

Day 3 1 Peter 1:3-9
The perspective of faith

Day 4 James 1:5-8
Trust without wavering

Day 5 James 2:14-26
Faith without action is dead

Day 6^{BS} Hebrews 11:1-16
Examples of faith

Day 7^{BS} Hebrews 11:17 - 12:3
Let us fix our eyes on Jesus

Day 8 Romans 3:19-30
God imputes your faith as righteousness

Day 9 Romans 4:1-8
Not by works, but by faith

Day 10 Romans 10:9-10
Faith leads to salvation

- Think about Luke 11:9-13.
Instead of rebelling against your circumstances, pray with persistence and perseverance to God, who will always give you what is good and what you really need.
- This week bring your circumstances in prayer to God.
- Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: Living with God's promises

Read study 7 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: Walking by faith

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **Hebrews 11:1-16,39-40**

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

WALKING BY FAITH

Hebrews 10:36

You need to persevere
so that when you have done the will of God,
you will receive what he has promised.

Hebrews 10:36 (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

4. Memorisation of the Bible books

The last 6 minor prophetic books:
Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

7. Living with God's promises

In the Bible are many promises from God to people. What exactly is a biblical promise? May Christians today apply promises in the Bible to their own lives? And if so, how may they practically claim a promise in the Bible?

A. Promises in the Bible

1. What is a biblical promise?

'A biblical promise' is a declaration of God to do something good or to hinder something bad. These declarations of God are sovereign, gracious and true. 'Sovereign' means that this declaration comes from the highest authority that controls everything and is always valid.

A biblical promise is sometimes made to a specific person and sometimes to a more general group of people, with or without conditions.

Biblical promises give a believer in Jesus Christ the privilege to claim any promise that is applicable to him. And he has the privilege to expect that God will do what he has promised!

2. The characteristics of God's promises in the Bible

God's promises are sovereign

God has the highest right, power and authority to make promises and to fulfil them in his own time and way. He also has the highest right, power and authority not to fulfil them, when a person turns away from God (Isaiah 14:24,27).

God's promises are gracious

God gives you his promise as a gift, but you do not have the right to demand the fulfilment of God's promises (cf. Jeremiah 29:10; Jeremiah 33:14; John 1:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).

God's promises are true

(Numbers 23:19; Joshua 21:45).

God's promises have threats as its counterpart

God's threats have bad consequences, when you disobey him (Joshua 23:14-16; Jeremiah 18:5-10).

God's promises may be directed to a particular person or to a particular group of people

God's promises may be conditional or unconditional

God's promises may already be fulfilled or not yet fulfilled

3. The purpose of God's promises in the Bible

God gives promises in order to develop our relationship with him, to sanctify our character and to bless our ministry. He gives promises to increase the following in our lives:

Knowledge and experience

God's promise increases your knowledge and experience about God's unchangeable faithfulness, love and power (Psalm 145:13-14).

A growing faith

(Romans 4:20-21; 2 Peter 1:3-8). God develops your faith when you hold on to his promises. Your Christian life begins with faith in the gospel (John 5:24) and then grows throughout your life when you live by faith in his Word (his commandments, his teachings and his promises) (Romans 1:16-17).

Patience and diligence

God develops your patience as you wait for God's promises to be fulfilled. God stimulates your diligence as you make a persistent effort to act as you should (Hebrews 6:11-12).

Perseverance in difficulties

God develops your perseverance when you bear mistreatment, disgrace and persecution (Hebrews 10:35-36; Hebrews 11:24-27).

Participation in the divine nature

God's promises help you to escape the corruption in this world and to participate in God's characteristics. You will live a more pure, holy and victorious life (2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

Courage

God's promises give you courage to be a finisher: to accomplish God's will (Hebrews 11:6-10; Hebrews 11:17-19; Hebrews 11:32-34a).

B. Jesus Christ is the key to all the promises in the Bible

1. God's great covenant promise

A continuous theme throughout the whole Bible is God's covenant with his people. God revealed himself by speaking and by acting in our human history. We get to know God by hearing his words and by seeing his acts.

But God does not merely want to reveal himself to people. He desires a personal relationship with them. He wants to be the God of people and he wants them to be his people. God created people to live for him and with him. The contents of God's covenant promise is: "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Genesis 17:7, Exodus

6:2-7, Leviticus 26:12, Deuteronomy 29:13-14, Jeremiah 7:23, 2 Corinthians 6:16) (study 6).

2. God's covenant promise and all other biblical promises are only fulfilled in Jesus Christ and to believers in Jesus Christ

The key to all promises in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 1:20: "For no matter how many promises God has made (in the Old Testament and in the New Testament), they are 'yes' in Christ".

God's great covenant promise goes into fulfilment at the first coming of Jesus Christ. By his death and resurrection he cleared the way for people to come to him and to believe in him. Jesus Christ is ultimately the Inheritor of all God's promises and through him all the other promises in the Bible also go into fulfilment for those who believe in him!

The New Testament reveals that God's great covenant promise is for God's people. Since the first coming of Jesus Christ God no longer differentiates between Jew and Gentile (John 10:16; Romans 2:28-29; 3:29-30; 4:11-12; 5:17-19; 9:24-28; 10:12-13; 11:30-32; Galatians 3:28; 6:14-16; Ephesians 2:11-18; 3:5-6; 4:3-6; Colossians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:4-10). 'God's people' now consists of all believers from all nations on earth! By faith in Jesus Christ ordinary people from every nation in the world become God's people and the God of the Bible becomes their God.

All believers in the Messiah during the Old Testament period and all believers in Christ during the New Testament period are heirs of all the promises God made in the Bible (cf. Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 3:6; Hebrews 9:15)! That is why all believers in Jesus Christ in the world – also you – may claim all the promises that are applicable to them and may look forward with trust and expectation to their fulfilment.

In order to claim a promise a believer needs faith - faith in God who makes the promise and faith that God will fulfil his promise!

C. Faith opens the door to the promises in the Bible

What is faith?

1. Faith does not mean stopping to use your mind

The Christian faith is not a leap in the darkness! Faith does not begin where thinking stops. The Christian Faith is based on *facts*! The Bible is full of facts about the things God said and did in our human history.

2. Faith is God's work in your life and also God's gift

God works faith in your life

God always sets the first step in your life. God revealed himself, his Word and his will to you by sending someone else to tell you the gospel. Your faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:14-17). This does not merely mean hearing the reading or proclamation of the Word, but rather hearing with your spirit a personal Word of Jesus Christ to you! His speaking to you touches your mind and heart. He first speaks his Word to you and then only are you able to respond with faith and obedience.

God gives you faith as a gift

God always takes the initiative by drawing you to Jesus Christ (John 6:44) and by giving you to Jesus Christ (John 17:6). He convinces you in your heart and mind of your sin, of the righteous you can receive in Jesus Christ and of judgment if you choose to reject that righteousness (John 16:8-10). So faith is not something you establish by yourself; it is not you choosing Jesus Christ. Faith is rather a gracious gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27).

3. Faith is your response to God's Word, work and gifts

Hearing

You first need to hear in whom you should believe and what you should believe. Without the hearing of God's Word, faith is impossible (Romans 10:17)! With your ears you hear the gospel, God's teaching, God's command or God's promise.

Believing

With your heart you believe that what God says is true also for you personally (Romans 10:9b,10a). You believe the good news, God's teaching, God's command or God's promise.

Calling

With your mouth you call to God (Romans 10:9a,10b,13). Your faith finds expression in your prayer. You receive Jesus Christ (John 1:12) or invite Jesus Christ into your heart and life (Revelation 3:20). You confess to him that you believe what he is teaching you. You say 'yes' to his command. Or you say that you believe his promise and ask him to now turn his promise into reality in your life (Exodus 33:14-17; Acts 4:29).

Acting

With your whole body you act upon his Word. Your faith has results and bears fruit in your life. You do his teaching. You obey his command. Or you take steps of faith based on God's promise: "You attempt great things for God and expect great things from God"!

4. Faith is a deep assurance with respect to the truth in God's Word and with respect to the existence of that spiritual reality

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for", that is, faith expects what God said will surely become a reality! "Faith is certain of what we do not see", that is, faith sees what is not yet visible" (Hebrews 11:1).

The promises, which God has made, have not yet been fulfilled and still belong to the future. *However, Christians live as if these future things are already present realities. That is how certain they are that God will do what he has promised!* Their physical eyes cannot yet see these future realities; they cannot yet experience them. But their spiritual eyes can see these future realities! By faith they take God at his word and arrange their life according to his Word.

Faith is the proof that the invisible things like God himself and the future events really exist. Faith is the assurance that what God has said is true and that what God has promised will happen. Faith is an expectation that cannot be disappointed!

CLAIMING BIBLICAL PROMISES

'To claim a promise' means that you hear what God promises, believe that he speaks the truth, make a decision to hold on to that promise and expect God to do what he promised.

However, you may only claim a promise when you do it in a biblical responsible manner. We will now explain this.

D. Claim a biblical promise only after thorough study

We may only claim a biblical promise after we have made a thorough study about the correct understanding of the promise and after the Holy Spirit has clearly led us to claim that promise.

1. Study the correct explanation of the biblical passage

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6b; 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:16. Use the correct rules for the understanding and explanation of the Bible. Without the correct understanding and explanation of the Bible our response to it will be based on error.

Some Christians deliberately look for a text in the Bible which they interpret subjectively to their own advantage and then turn it into a personal promise of God to them. But Christians have not been given the freedom to interpret a Bible passage as they like. They have no authority to change the intention of God's Word.

People, who nevertheless do this, make the wrong claim and this will unavoidably lead to great disappointment. When nothing happens, they will begin to doubt God and his Word and fall into greater error and harm.

2. Study whether the biblical passage is indeed a promise or not

Ascertain to which kind of literature the biblical passage belongs: teaching, history, poetry or prophecy. Is the passage really a promise of God?

Some Christians regard a biblical text that has no connection to a promise nevertheless as a personal promise to them. But Christians do not have the freedom to change God's Word in a particular context into a promise. People, who nevertheless do this, fall in error, receive harm and are a danger for others.

For example, a historical text about the increase of Jacob's possessions (Genesis 30:25-43) is *not* a promise of God to a Christian that also his possessions would increase. It is wrong to believe that God promises material wealth to every Christian. People who think that the Christian faith (godliness) is a means to financial gain have wandered away from the truth and faith and pierce themselves with grief (1 Timothy 6:3-10)!

3. Study whether this promise has already been fulfilled in biblical history

If the biblical passage is genuinely a promise, determine whether a Christian may still claim it today or whether this promise has already been fulfilled in past history. Christians may not claim promises that are no longer valid.

For example, God's promise to Abraham that he would give the land from the Great River (the Euphrates) to the river on the border of Egypt to Abraham's descendents (Genesis 15:18) has already been completely fulfilled during the time between Joshua and king Solomon (Joshua 21:43-45; 1 Kings 4:21)! Jews and Arabs today have no biblical authority to continue to make a claim on this particular promise.

4. Study whether the promise is specific or general

If the biblical passage is genuinely a promise, determine whether this promise in its original context has been made to a specific individual, to a specific group of people or to all people in general.

For example, God's promise to king Hezekiah to lengthen his life with 15 years after his sickness was not a promise given to anyone else besides Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:1-8)! Christians may not claim a biblical promise that has not been made to them!

But the promise in Psalm 1:1-3 is a promise to all people and may be claimed by every Christian.

5. Study whether the promise is conditional or unconditional

Many promises in the Bible are conditional. Christians may not claim a biblical promise if the conditions have not been fulfilled.

For example, a Christian that walks in the counsel of the wicked, stands in the way of sinners or sits in the seat of mockers may not claim God's promise in Psalm 1:3 that he would be prosperous in whatever he does!

E. Claim biblical promises in a biblical responsible manner

We may only claim biblical promises when we do it in a biblical responsible way, i.e. by faith, obedience, patience, diligence, perseverance, dependence and submission to God.

“Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them” (Psalm 119:140).

1. Respond to God's promise with faith

Read Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:20-21.

Without faith our claim to a promise is useless. Without faith we will never see its fulfilment, because we will only be looking at what we can see. Thus we cannot see what God is doing. As Christians “we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen” (2 Corinthians 4:18). “We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

2. Respond to God's promise with obedience to the conditions connected to the promise

Read Genesis 12:1; Genesis 22:18; James 2:14-22.

Without obedience our claim to a promise is hypocritical. Disobedience will hinder the fulfilment of the promise and we will be deeply disappointed. Faith becomes visible and promises are fulfilled when we are obedient.

3. Respond to God's promise with patience, diligence and perseverance

Read Hebrews 6:10-12; 10:35-36.

Without patience and diligence our claim to a promise becomes a compromise. Impatience may cause us to try and arrange matters in our own way and try to answer our own prayers. Without perseverance we may never receive what has been promised. God who gives the promise is also the One fulfilling the promise. However, he fulfils the promise in his own time and in his own way!

4. Respond to God's promise in dependence and submission to God

Read Romans 8:28; Hebrews 11:13-16,39-40.

Without dependence and submission our claim to a promise is arrogant and rebellious. When a promise remains unfulfilled we need to submit to God's will and guidance. God remains sovereign and stands above all promises. Sometimes a promise remains unfulfilled precisely because God is above his promise and seeks the very best for us. The fulfilment of a specific promise might not be the very best for us. That is why realistic Christians always say at the end of their prayers, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). A better answer than God's perfect will is unthinkable!

F. Claim God's promises in your prayers

Include God's promises in your prayers. Claim certain promises, like: ‘Meditate on God's Word day and night – and you will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither’ (Psalm 1:2-3). “Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain” 1 Corinthians 15:58). Pass God's Word on to other people, because God promised that his Word will not return empty, but will accomplish what he desires and will achieve the purpose for which he sent it (Isaiah 55:10)!

Walking by faith means living with God's promises