

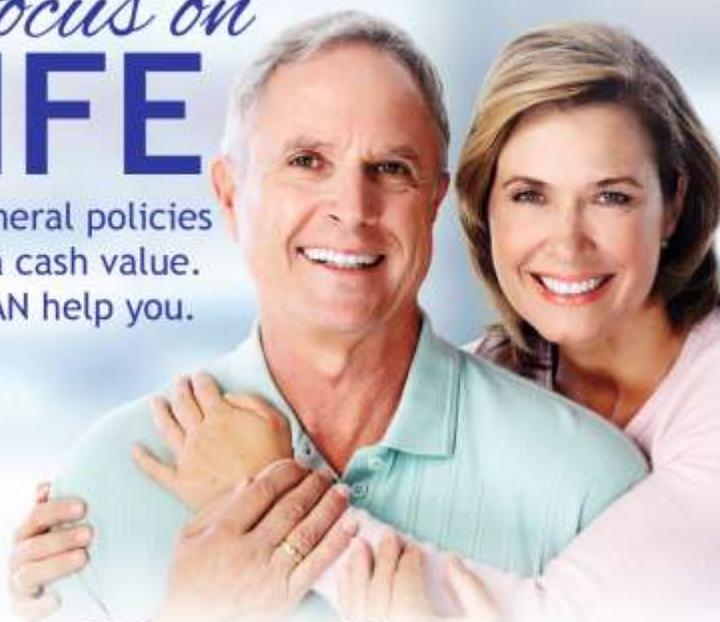
Daily Devotional

Booklet



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Dare To...

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BE DIFFERENT	Page 08	20 January 2020
STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD	Page 15	27 January 2020

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DARE TO DREAM: DAY ONE

Read Genesis 15:1.

In v1, two images of God are given to Abram. He is invited to dare to dream that God is his shield and his great reward. We will deal with God as shield today, and as our great reward later in the week. With regard to God as shield, note that Abram is not told that he will be given a shield, but that God will be his shield.

Too often we want for ourselves what God offers without wanting God Himself. We want a shield for protect ourselves from harm, but do not want God to be our shield. We are essentially self-absorbed – consumed by accumulating things around us that give us an impressive reputation. We want others to note our impressive shield. And so we are not that caught up by relying on God to be our shield – is there not something that you can give me that I can show to others? We feel more in control were a shield offered that is our own, a shield that we are free to use when and how we like. But no such shield is offered by God. The only shield He offers is Himself.

Should we choose God to be our shield, we would discover the wisdom of such a choice. If God is our shield than we have a shield that is omnipotent, universal and eternal. We have a shield that offers complete protection from every attack of doubt and danger. We have a shield that *cannot be defeated; a shield as strong as God himself. We could not be in a better position.*

Who can defeat us when God himself is our shield? We are shielded from doubt and danger only by God, not separate from Him. Dare to believe that God is your shield!

Prayer: Dear Father, be my Shield against all doubt and harm.

DARE TO DREAM: DAY TWO

Read Genesis 15:6.

Abram's efforts to bear a son through Sarai were fruitless. In the midst of such despondency, Abram was dared to dream of replacing faith in human works by faith in something far bigger than human effort - the one and only God. This was no easy task as it required Abram to let go of human effort and await upon God for His good work to be accomplished at His appointed time. This turned out to be a work that spanned about 25 years. But against all hope, Abram believes that God's dream for him will be realised. In so doing Abram was credited by God as righteous. That faith was regarded as the basis of Abram's approval by God and caused him to ultimately become known as a man of tremendous faith.

Our approval by God is on the very same basis; we are declared righteous not by what we do, not by faith plus works, but by faith that works. Waiting for God's dream to be realised is the true test of faith in God. No matter how long the delay, we must wait for God. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23). The delay is often caused by the amount of work required for God's dream to be realised. The distance needed to move one from fear to faith is far longer than we assume. It is a journey that includes moving:

- away from a focus on our problems towards a focus on God.
- away from trusting our timing and relying on God's timing.
- towards a trust in God despite circumstances.
- one step at a time for a long time.

Dare to believe in the all-sufficient God, in time of fear or anxiety.

Prayer: Father lead me into faith as I move from fear into your dream for me.

DARE TO DREAM: DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 3:16-17.

This maturing of faith that Abram experiences; this waiting upon God to act as He wants and when He wants to bring about His dream is described in various ways in Scripture. A particularly insightful description is offered in today's reading – of Jesus' Spirit becoming alive and active in the depths of one's being to root and establish one in love.

As I have grown up and exposed myself to the world and interacted with it, I have, time and time again, come to a place in my life where I am confronted with the reality that what I offer is simply not enough to realise my dream of life for myself and for those I share my world with. I have become more and more desperate, as well as more and more grateful for Jesus' loving aliveness and activity. His aliveness and activity gives possibility to life realities that are not achievable without Him.

I suppose that you can identify in some way with that feeling that you are not big enough to triumph over the challenges that face you. I trust that you also know something of the desperateness for something or someone from outside of your strength and resource to come to your aid and get you through the difficulty. But I pray mostly that you know the gratefulness of the loving aliveness and activity of Jesus that gives possibilities to us that will simply not be realised without His loving aliveness and activity.

Prayer: Lord, may I continue to be open to an alive and active Jesus.

DARE TO DREAM: DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 3:18-19.

This maturing of faith that Abram experiences; this waiting upon God to act as He wants and when He wants to bring about His dream, further leads to the dream being realised. The passage above speaks of the dream of God being realised through God, giving us the power or ability to know of a love that fills us to the measure of all fullness in God – a love that is infinitely vast and surpassing knowledge. This statement captures something of the greatness and the mystery of love. In Kahlil Gibran's book *The Prophet*, he speaks about the bigness and the mystery of love. He writes, *"And think not that you can direct the course of love, for love if it finds you worthy, directs your course."*

In the well-known passage that Paul writes to the church of Corinth, he speaks about the greatness of love. He writes that love takes primacy even over all other spiritual gifts. In life it is crucial to have faith. In life it is crucial to have hope. But even greater than faith and hope, is love.

And so as our faith matures we take many steps that deepen it. As we journey in faith, we hope for many things. But greater than our faith and hope, is a love available to us.

Think not that you can direct the course of Love. Love directs your course because knowing God as Father, and having Christ alive and active in you, gives you the power or ability to know of a love that fills you to the measure of all fullness in God.

Prayer: Spirit, fill me with a love – to the measure of all fullness in God.

DARE TO DREAM: DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 15:1, 4-5.

The second image of God given to Abram in Genesis 15:1 is God as our great reward. What reward do you dream of? For some it is fame, for others its fortune, for others it is to look back over one's life and say, "I did it my way – there is nothing I wanted to do that I haven't done and nothing I have done that I didn't want to do."

There is a wise saying - "Your life is only as big as your faith, and your faith is only as big as your god." As humans we are challenged to dream bigger than ourselves. However big a human dream may be, it is not bigger than God's dream. God's I AM is bigger than our "I am". God's I AM always trumps a person's "I am not." God's dream captures a greater reward.

God's remedy for Abram's fear was to remind him who He was: "I am your exceedingly great reward". Sometimes in life, we are swayed by the rewards we see in doing this or moving our lives in a particular direction. But if we lose our eternal focus and seek a more immediate reward, we short change the experience, cheapen life and are left disappointed.

It takes faith to keep eternal perspectives and to hold out for God our exceedingly great reward. But if we don't, we miss out on the exceedingly great!

Prayer: Father, keep me waiting for Your exceedingly great reward.

DARE TO DREAM: DAY SIX

Read Genesis 15:4-5.

God's promise to Abram was one to stagger the imagination. Yet it was not impossible. God says to Abram that more descendants than can be counted would come from his seed.

The gravity of this statement requires much thought and time to make sense of it. It must firstly be seen in the context of the call to Abram follow God to be a blessing to the nations. Further, the word descendants translates the Hebrew word *zera* for *seed* which is the 2nd person masculine singular. While the most literal and immediate reference is to the birth of Isaac, whose descendants would then be the Jewish nation, there are also messianic references that are picked up in later Scripture – Numbers 24:7, Isaiah 6:13. Further, Paul gives explicit messianic reference in Galatians 3:15-22. The understanding that the seed of Abram would result in innumerable descendants referred to Jesus is further found in Romans 4:18 and Hebrews 11:12.

If this interpretation is accepted, then the extent of the promise to Abram is truly staggering. God can truly do more for you than we can dream of (Ephesians 3:20). As we follow Love, yield to Love, and believe in Love, we will continue to be led into something far greater than ourselves; greater than our current ideas, dreams and capacities to love. Let love lead us into its greatness and its mystery and in so doing, God will make of us something more special than that which we have already dreamed and imagined.

Prayer: Father, give me a glimpse of Your dream for me.

DARE TO...

Reflection on DARE TO DREAM:

Welcome: Share a dream you have held onto – even in the midst of hardship and challenge.

Worship: Offer prayers of thanksgiving for the dream that God includes you in – a dream for life in all its fullness.

Word: Read *Genesis 15:1-5*.

1. Do you find the distinction between being given a shield versus God being our shield something worth making a fuss about? Why
2. What reward have you received from God and what reward are you still waiting to receive from God?
3. Share a story of waiting for God to act. What has helped you as you wait?
4. What sense do you make of God giving the power or ability to know of a love that fills us to the measure of all fullness in God – a love that is infinitely vast and surpassing knowledge?

Work: Pray for an openness for God to be active in your ongoing dreams.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: DAY ONE

WILLINGNESS TO CHOOSE

Read 1 Kings 18:20-22. "So Ahab summoned all the people of Israel and the prophets to Mount Carmel. Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent. Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only prophet of the LORD who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. "

This story is set in the time of King Ahab's reign. Baal worship was practiced, and many Israelites participated in this worship. The Israelites discovered that it was easier to worship a visible idol than God whom they could not see.

Elijah objected to this worship of Baal in any form as a violation of Israel's covenant with God. He challenged everything they believed about Baal. Most Israelites did not speculate about the existence of gods other than Yahweh. Real life questions were of much greater concern: who really controlled the rain, cycles of nature, life, and death? Which god could really affect human existence? If it were Baal, then they could live the materialistic, self-centered life that comes from serving gods of our own making. If it were Yahweh, then they would have to live by the high ethical and moral standards of the Law of Moses. Which god really mattered?

Which God are you choosing in 2020? Yahweh or a God of your own making? Are you daring to dream and choosing differently? Are you choosing to be open to the work of God in your life? Do you reflect a life that is different?

Prayer: Holy Spirit of God, I am opening my heart and life to live differently in this world. Fall afresh on me. Amen.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: DAY TWO

WILLINGNESS TO CHOOSE

Read 1 Kings 18:23-24. "Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it. Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!" And all the people agreed".

Which God did you choose, as you reflected on yesterday's devotion?

The answer to the question of which god really mattered was not a question Elijah was going to answer. He would let God himself answer that question.

Friends, in our reading, did you notice that Elijah did not try to convert the people to believe in Israel's God? What he did, was to bring them to a point where they were ready to decide. For the people to make no choice meant they would go on serving Baal.

Not choosing *for* God is to choose *against* Him. The people said nothing when Elijah challenged their divided loyalties. Yet, they came to a point where they were at least willing to decide!

The willingness to choose is a move towards faith, because it shows that we are willing to follow God. If we are willing to base our decision for God on God alone, then God's grace will be sufficient for us as we *dare to be different*.

Prayer: Gracious God, I choose you, and your Grace is enough for me to live a new life that is different. Amen.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: DAY THREE

A CONFIDENT FAITH

Read 1 Kings 18:25-29. "Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls, and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood." So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning until noontime, shouting, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no reply of any kind. Then they danced, hobbling around the altar they had made. About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," he scoffed, "for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!" So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out. They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no reply, no response".

Elijah called for this contest between Yahweh and Baal. The frantic efforts of the Baal prophets, the length of time they prayed, the comments of Elijah about their god, all serve to ridicule Baal. He is not much of a god if the people cannot count on him in a crisis. No god is real if he does not matter in people's lives. Sadly, for many of us today, we have boxed God to suit our own needs. The idols of today are not wood and stone, in some instances we have made ourselves gods! Like the Israelites, there have been times we have never chosen *for* God, and have chosen *for* us. Elijah challenges us today that worshipping the idols in our lives does not mean that God is not real, it simply means that we need to *dare to be different in our choices....* and always choose God!

Prayer: Jesus Christ, forgive me for the idols I have held on to in my life. I will always choose you. Amen.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: DAY FOUR

A CONFIDENT FAITH

Read 1 Kings 18:25-29. "Then Elijah called to the people, "Come over here!" They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down. He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, and he used the stones to rebuild the altar in the name of the LORD. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood. Then he said, "Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood." After they had done this, he said, "Do the same thing again!" And when they were finished, he said, "Now do it a third time!" So they did as he said, and the water ran around the altar and even filled the trench".

Not only do the people need to see Baal for the idol he is, they need to see Yahweh for the God that He is. The story has a number of symbols that reminded people who Yahweh, the God of the fathers, really was. The rebuilding of the ruined altar, the twelve jars of water and the twelve stones all had special meaning to the Israelites. They would have recalled the entire exodus event in which God had transformed the Israelite people from a ragged group of slaves. The Israelites would have recalled that they had built a pile of twelve stones on the banks of the Jordan after they entered the land. This served to remind them what God had done for them, that He would be their God and they would be His people. Elijah set the contest with absolute confidence in God. He had no doubt that Yahweh was really God and was willing to place everything on that confidence.

Prayer: Father God, I am reminded of all that you have done for me, and that you will always be my God and I your beloved.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: DAY FIVE

A GOD YOU CAN TRUST

Read 1 Kings 18:36-39. "At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. O LORD, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself." Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench! And when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, "The LORD—he is God! Yes, the LORD is God!"

There is a saying: "What if they gave a war and nobody came?" After all the antics of the prophets of Baal, he never showed up. The god they called the *rider of the clouds* and portrayed with the fire of lightning flashing from his hands, was a no-show on that day on Carmel. That is the problem with gods that are not really gods; you can't depend on them. Elijah's prayer stands in sharp contrast to the all-day binge of groaning by Baal's followers. It is as if Elijah thought that God already knew what He needed to do and simply confessed God as God, and asked for Him to reveal himself to the people.

Perhaps we need to have a look at the prayers we pray to see if they resemble the prayers of the Baal prophets more than Elijah's prayer. Prayer is not to convince *God*; it is to confess before God *our* faith in Him. God answered the prayer of Elijah, evoking a confession of faith from the people: "Yahweh, He is God!"

Prayer: Today I proclaim "Yahweh, He is God!" Amen.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: DAY SIX

A GOD YOU CAN TRUST

Read Romans 12:1-2. "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect".

Sometimes I hear people call to "just believe in God". Faith must always build on something. For Moses it was a burning bush. For the Hebrews it was the mighty Egyptian army lying on the shore of the Red Sea. For the later Israelites it was the fallen walls of Jericho. For Hezekiah it was a deserted Assyrian camp. For John the Baptist it was the blind receiving their sight. For Mary Magdalene it was an empty tomb. This story is not about Elijah, or miracles. It is about God. And it's about us daring to be different!

God will always do whatever is necessary to reveal himself to us. He will always make the first move toward humanity. We must choose in response. It may be a whisper from God or an affirmation from a friend, our Father will always act to show himself as God. If we are honest with ourselves, if we have come to the place where we are *daring* and are willing to *choose differently*, who else could we choose but God?

Prayer: Father God, you chose me before I chose you, but from this point on, I will choose you over and over again. Amen.

DARE TO...

Reflection on DARE TO BE DIFFERENT:

Welcome: Share some modern examples of gods or idols that we have created in our own image.

Worship: ELLE LIMBEAR - Call On Your Name
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe-gegYuTac>

Prayer: *Pray to God to affirm your faith in Him, offer your heart and your life to Him and choose Him above any other Idol in your life.*

Word: Read **1 Kings 18:36-39**.

1. Does prayer convince God to act when he would not act otherwise? What is the purpose of prayer? Does God always answer prayer?
2. Can God *always* be counted on to intervene in our world in a crisis? If so, *how* does he intervene? If not, how can He be considered trustworthy?
3. Can faith *ever* be blind? Why or why not?

Work: Spend this week reflecting on the idols in your own life. How can you dare to be different and intentionally choose to serve only *Yahweh*?

(YouVersion, CRI/Voice, Biblegateway, Tyndale NLT, Barclays Resource)

DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD: DAY ONE

GOD'S PROMISES

Read Acts 7:1-50. "I am the living God, the God of your ancestors. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (v32, TPT).

In our series 'Dare to...', we have looked at 'Dare To Dream', and 'Dare To Be Different'. This week we will reflect on 'Dare To Stand On The Promises Of God'. When we do an internet search for 'God's promises', we find many verses that we love to hold on to, about how God is with us, how God protects and strengthens us, how God has a plan for us, how we should not be afraid. Most Christians, including me, have found great comfort from these verses on our faith journey. And we should! They are indeed scriptural promises from God to us. When God makes a promise to his people, it will come to pass. A promise is a covenant or declaration that one will do exactly what they say or something will happen just as pledged. And God's promises are even more powerful than the promises we make as humans, no matter how good our intentions are. But what exactly does God promise us?

In today's reading, we see how Stephen, in his sermon, traces a line from the ancient promise God made to Abraham, through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon. The people who heard Stephen speak would have known the story – it is the Jewish genealogy, the history of their nation, the story of their faith. Every generation of Jews told the next this story of their spiritual giants, their ancestors who walked with God, the people who dared to stand on God's ancient and constant promises.

Knowing that God has remained faithful to his word since ancient times, do you dare to stand on the promises of God?

Prayer: Thank you Father, that you show me your faithfulness.

DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD: DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 4:2-6. “Then God will bring back the ancient pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and mark Mount Zion and everyone in it with his glorious presence, his immense, protective presence, shade from the burning sun and shelter from the driving rain” (MSG).

Do you notice that the ‘ancient pillar’ of God’s provision does not cool the burning sun? That it does not still the driving rain? God does not remove the harsh weather conditions. He does not provide a comfortable, air-conditioned journey. But he does promise his *‘glorious presence, his immense, protective presence’!* I absolutely believe that God loves each one of us. I believe that he formed us in our mother’s womb; marvellously and beautifully. I believe that God cares for us, even in the ordinary of our everyday lives. But what if it is not all about us? What if his plans are not necessarily to prosper us, personally? What if his plans are not to protect us, individually? Although God should be the centre of our universe, maybe we are not the centre of his. Maybe his promises for us are not to find us the most convenient parking spot, or a wonderful job, or an expensive car, or to save us from the consequences of our actions. Some Bible verses do seem to promise that, when we read them out of context. But is that really what God has in mind for us? Maybe God’s plans for us are to further *his* kingdom, to be *his* hands and feet in the world, to be *his* light in the darkness. The pillar of light and cloud, as in Ex 13:21-22, is God’s promise that he will show us the way that he intended for us. And when we follow that pillar, we will find shade and shelter.

Knowing that there is burning sun and driving rain, do you dare to stand on the promises of God?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, that you give me shelter in the storms.

DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD: DAY THREE

Read Acts 7:51-60.

We return to Stephen, whose testimony was a detailed history of Israel and their relationship with God, illustrating how God has remained faithful to his promises since the beginning of time. Stephen reminded them of their patriarch, Abraham, and how God had led him into the land of Israel where He made a covenant with him. He told of the journey of God's people through Joseph's time in Egypt. He reminded them how Moses had met God in a burning bush, and God had empowered him to lead his people from slavery to freedom in the Promised Land. Stephen repeatedly reminded his audience of their continued rebellion and idolatry, in spite of the unfailing faithfulness of God. The Holy Spirit inspired him to speak boldly, challenging Israel in their failure to recognize their promised Messiah – and rejecting and murdering Jesus. These accusations were not well received by the Jews – it made them murderously angry. The law of Moses states that the sin of blasphemy deserves a death sentence, usually by stoning (Numbers 15:30-36). We see in the story of Stephen that following God is not always a life of blessing, prosperity and joy. That is not what God promises us. Sometimes serving God brings hardship and challenges and difficulty, and even physical danger and death. Stephen dared to stand on the ancient promises of God, even as he was being stoned to death for his faith. In the midst of his extreme pain, Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. While he was dying, he saw the heavens opening. While Stephen was suffering, God's promise of his glorious presence was fulfilled.

Knowing that serving God can bring you danger, suffering, and even death, do you dare to stand on the promises of God?

Prayer: Thank you Father, that you are present in my challenges.

DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD: DAY FOUR

Read Luke 4:14-30. “When everyone present heard those words, they erupted with furious rage. They mobbed Jesus and threw him out of the city, dragging him to the edge of the cliff on the hill on which the city had been built, ready to hurl him off. But he walked right through the crowd, leaving them all stunned” (v28-29, TPT).

Jesus was preaching in his home town. Initially the people were impressed, but to them he was merely Joseph’s son. Blinded by familiarity, they did not recognize that he was the Son of God. He preached that he had come to bring good news to those who are poor, brokenhearted, the most ordinary. Isaiah’s prophecy of release was fulfilled in Jesus. This sounded like good news to those in Nazareth, if all that healing and release was meant for them. But when Jesus reminded them that God’s love extended beyond their borders, and that Elijah and Elisha had helped foreigners, then his message became bad news. To accept his teaching, the Jews of Nazareth would have to change their attitudes toward outsiders. They would have to include people they preferred to exclude. They would have to believe that God’s salvation is really for *all*, and not just for them. In their angry desire to make God’s salvation serve their own purposes, they tried to kill Jesus. Even Jesus was persecuted for his belief. Even Jesus was not safe from danger and suffering. Ultimately, Jesus died because he was serving God. But he served God anyway. God does not promise a pain-free existence. But God does not cause suffering. And God does promise his presence in the midst of pain.

Knowing that God does not promise your personal health, wealth and happiness, do you dare to stand on the promises of God?

Prayer: Thank you Father, that your promises are for me, too.

DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD: DAY FIVE

In Methodist churches it is tradition that the congregation recites the liturgy of the Covenant Prayer at one of the services early in the year. John Wesley, the father of Methodism, adapted this prayer for use in services for the renewal of the believer's covenant with God. This covenant is scary and difficult. Do you dare to stand on the promises of God, and say this bold prayer?

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition (Contemporary)

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,

Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.

And now, O wonderful and holy God,

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth,

Let it also be made in heaven. Amen.

I do not believe that God creates our suffering. I do not believe that God 'tests' us by causing us pain or struggle. God does not promise us a perfect, challenge-free world. He doesn't create a perfect, sheltered, padded life. He doesn't remove the storms and the scorching sun and the death. But I do believe that when the world, or our choices, or our brokenness, or others, put us in a place of challenge, then God's faithful promise is that his glorious presence is there with us. Right there. In the midst of our pain. In the centre of our grief. And that is the promise we can stand on.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, that you honour your covenant.

DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD: DAY SIX

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6-10. “For God, who said, “Let brilliant light shine out of darkness,” is the one who has cascaded his light into us—the brilliant dawning light of the glorious knowledge of God as we gaze into the face of Jesus Christ” (v6, TPT).

We are clay jars with treasure within. And that priceless treasure is the glorious light that God promises us when we gaze into the face of Jesus. We will endure pressure, but we are not crushed. We will be unsure, but we will persist. We will be persecuted, but we are not forsaken. We will be knocked down, but we won't be knocked out. We will share in the death of Jesus, but his resurrection life will be revealed in us. We are common jars, made of dust and clay, but we carry the brilliant light of God's glory within us.

Anyone who promises us a life of only joy and prosperity when we follow Jesus, is selling us a false god. Standing on the promises of God sounds so easy. So pious. So virtuous. And if we only read the verses in the Bible that promise us blessings and prosperity, it may make sense. But when we read deeper, when we dig into the stories of the people who served God in the face of challenge, we see that real faith, real trust, real serving is a revolutionary act. If we are doing it right, it is downright scary! Jesus was almost thrown off a cliff for it, and he was later crucified for it. Stephen was stoned for it. There are many stories of many people who dared to stand on the promises of God, who suffered and died for their faith. God never promises us a life of safety and prosperity, a life of health, wealth and happiness. But he promises us the treasure of light and resurrection. He gives us shelter in the storm. He scrubs our filth and our blood stains. He promises that he is with us in our suffering. And that is a promise worth standing on!

Prayer: Thank you Father, that I can stand on your promises.

DARE TO...

Reflection on DARE TO STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

Welcome: Recall a story of a promise you broke. Think about why it happened. Reflect on the pain it may have caused.

Worship: Sing the beautiful hymn 'Great is thy Faithfulness':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErwiBz1QA4o> Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for his faithfulness in your life.

Word: Read *Isaiah 4:2-6*, *Acts 7*, especially *v54-60*, *Luke 4:14-30*. End with *2 Corinthians 4:6-10*.

- Find information on the so-called 'prosperity gospel'. What is your take on it? Do you think God provides us with health, wealth and happiness when we serve him?
- Reflect on the concept of 'suffering'. Do Christ-followers suffer? Is that a sign of weak faith?
- Reflect on a time where you have faced deep and painful challenges. What happened to your faith in that time? What are you learning?
- Knowing that serving God is not easy, do you dare to stand on the promises of God?

Work: Read the covenant prayer, and meditate on what it says. Only pray it when you are ready.

Let's do coffee

Trading Hours:
Tuesday to Friday
09h00 - 16h00
Saturday & Sunday
08h30 - 12h00



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HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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-  Service Times

Chapel: 7am & 5:30pm

Sanctuary: 8am, 10am & 6pm

Wesley Hall: 6pm (Youth)

Children's Church: 8am, 10am & 6pm



A group of people gathers regularly to take turns answering a single question. In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?" or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say, "How's your spiritual life?"

Take the message from the Sunday sermon into deeper learning by joining or forming a small group. If you do not belong to a group yet, you are welcome to sign up by contacting Nick (082 808 1452) or Ria (063 020 4639).