

Promise (Covenant Sunday)



1 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 9:1-15

As part of Covenant Sunday, the young people will have the opportunity to explore their covenant promise in more detail. Diving into Scripture, they'll review the four main covenants God made with his people in the Old Testament and explore how Jesus invites every believer to be part of a new covenant. They'll think about what it means to be in a covenant relationship with God and consider the part they play training themselves in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

You will need:

- 'Imaginary Bands' handout
- Covenant 2025 handout
- Felt tips / gel pens



Beat



Leader's notes:

Divide the group into small teams and give each of them an 'Imaginary Bands' picture. These pictures are taken from a copyright-free site and the band may already have a name, but the aim is for the team to create their own band name. They then need to name the members of the band and create a back story for them.

How did they get together?

What different personalities are in the band?

What kind of music do they play?

What are their fans like?

Encourage the young people to be creative as they put together a profile for their imaginary band. Give them time to create their band, and then give each team time to share their ideas with the rest of the group.

Now announce to the group that their band has decided to split up. Give them a moment to discuss why they think their band has decided to call it quits and then share it with the group.

Ask:

- What are the main reasons that bands break up?

Say:

When a band first gets together, they have common aspirations and dreams. They generally want the same thing and are willing to do whatever they can to achieve it. As the people involved start to break promises they made and focus on their own interests, the cracks begin to show.

 **Bridge****Ask:**

- Have you ever had to deal with the break-up of your favourite band?
- Who was it and what were the circumstances?
- Why do you think people care so much when their favourite band calls it a day?

 **Amplify****Say:**

In our Beat section today, we explored what it looks like when commitments and promises start to fade or trust is broken. This Covenant Sunday we are considering the commitments made by God and his people throughout Scripture.

Ask:

- What are some of the covenants God made in the Bible?
- Who were they made with?

Leader's notes:

To discover more about the covenants found in the Bible, watch the clip with your group and discuss the questions together.

Watch:

The Covenants – Bible Project (5:14)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HjIGul8lJM>

Ask:

- What does having a personal relationship with God mean to you?
- How would you describe working in partnership with God?



- How did God originally intend for us to work in partnership with him? What happened instead?
- What constitutes a covenant between God and man? What is involved?
- What are the four examples of a covenant relationship in the Old Testament?
- What eventually happened to all four covenant relationships?
- How does Jesus restore the broken covenant relationships?
- Does God take the covenant promises he makes to us, and we make to him, seriously? Explain your answer.

Say:

In Hebrews 9 we discover how the old and new covenants differ.

Read:

¹ The first covenant had rules for worship and an earthly place for worship as well. ² A Tent was put up, the outer one, which was called the Holy Place. In it were the lampstand and the table with the bread offered to God. ³ Behind the second curtain was the Tent called the Most Holy Place. ⁴ In it were the gold altar for the burning of incense and the Covenant Box all covered with gold and containing the gold jar with the manna in it, Aaron's stick that had sprouted leaves, and the two stone tablets with the commandments written on them. ⁵ Above the Box were the winged creatures representing God's presence, with their wings spread over the place where sins were forgiven. But now is not the time to explain everything in detail.

⁶ This is how those things have been arranged. The priests go into the outer Tent every day to perform their duties, ⁷ but only the high priest goes into the inner Tent, and he does so only once a year. He takes with him blood which he offers to God on behalf of himself and for the sins which the people have committed without knowing they were sinning. ⁸ The Holy Spirit clearly teaches from all these arrangements that the way into the Most Holy Place has not yet been opened as long as the outer Tent still stands. ⁹ This is an illustration which points to the present time. It means that the offerings and animal sacrifices presented to God cannot make the worshipper's heart perfect, ¹⁰ since they have to do only with food, drink, and various purification ceremonies. These are all outward rules, which apply only until the time when God will establish the new order.

¹¹ But Christ has already come as the High Priest of the good things that are already here. The tent in which he serves is greater and more perfect; it is not a tent made by human hands, that is, it is not a part of this created world. ¹² When Christ went through the tent and entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place, he did not take the blood of goats and bulls to offer as a sacrifice; rather, he took his own blood and obtained eternal salvation for us. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a burnt calf are sprinkled on the people who are ritually unclean, and this purifies them by taking away their ritual impurity. ¹⁴ Since this is true, how much more is accomplished by the blood of Christ! Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself as a perfect sacrifice to God. His blood will purify our consciences from useless rituals, so that we may serve the living God.

¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the one who arranges a new covenant, so that those who have been called by God may receive the eternal blessings that God has promised. This can be done because there has been a death which sets people free from the wrongs they did while the first covenant was in force.

(Hebrews 9:1-15 *GNT*)

Ask:

- What role did Jesus play in establishing the new covenant?
- What is your response to God's calling for you to become part of his new covenant family?

 **Bridge****Leader's notes:**

To help the young people better understand the meaning of the word covenant, read and discuss Henri JM Nouwen's thoughts around the subject.

'When God makes a covenant with us, God says, "I will love you with an everlasting love. I will be faithful to you, even when you run away from me, reject me, or betray me." In our society we don't speak much about covenants; we speak about contracts. When we make a contract with a person, we say: "I will fulfil my part as long as you fulfil yours. When you don't live up to your promises, I no longer have to live up to mine." Contracts are often broken because the partners are unwilling or unable to be faithful to their terms.

But God didn't make a contract with us; God made a covenant with us, and God wants our relationship with one another to reflect that covenant. That's why marriage, friendship, life in community are all ways to give visibility to God's faithfulness in our lives together.'

- Henri JM Nouwen

Ask:

What is the key difference between a covenant and a contract?

 **Sound Check****Leader's notes:**

For the Sound Check section today, the young people are going to take time to carefully think through the Covenant Sunday 2025 promise. Give each person a Covenant Sunday handout.

Provide felt-tips or gel pens for the annotation. Read through the Covenant prayer together, stopping to discuss the meaning of the words and how they impact our everyday living.

Questions and additional discussion prompts are provided, but are based on the all-age accessible card which has more simple language and more space. However, young people may choose to use the adult card, so you may wish to unpack that prayer instead. Choose a selection that is appropriate for your group. Encourage the group to annotate their handout with points from the discussion or illustrations.

- In the context of God's love, what does 'unconditional' mean? The dictionary defines unconditional as 'not subject to any conditions'. John 3:16 highlights the unconditional nature of God's love.
- How do you feel that God's love never ends, no matter what we do?
- In the context of God's love, does it feel too much to understand sometimes?
- What does it look like when our thoughts, words and actions courageously reflect God at all times and in every place? What would it look like in your life? What would be different?
- What do you think the phrase 'always have you in my heart' means? What do you think God wants you to be?
- How can you bring God's love to the people in your world?

Ask

- What is meant by the phrase 'Covenant of Love'?
- Why is it important to keep the covenants we make with God? These covenants are not throwaway promises. Although we are covered in God's grace when we fail to keep our covenant promises with God, we need to take these promises seriously and commit to living them out in our daily lives. These promises matter to God and should matter to us as well.

 **Bridge**

Ask:

- Why do you think The Salvation Army sets aside time every year for us all to consider the covenant promises we have made to God?

 **Selah**

Say:

Our Selah section today helps us to take a moment to pause and consider the part we play in our covenant with God. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 reminds us of our role in becoming more like Christ.

Read:

‘Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.’

(1 Timothy 4:7-8 *ESV*)

Ask:

- What do you think is meant by the phrase ‘train yourself in godliness’?

Leader’s notes: Read through the covenant prayer together. Before the group is given time to sign their covenant, ask them to respond to the two questions on their handout.

Encourage them to be specific about what they can do to train themselves in godliness and, more importantly, identify where they need the Holy Spirit’s power to live like Christ.

- In this next year how will you step up and stand out?
- I want to see you, know you, and show you by ...

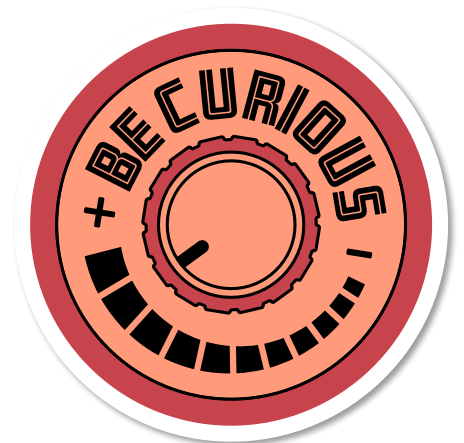
When the young people have had an opportunity to discuss and complete these sections of the handout, then use the following song as a backdrop for them to sign their covenant promise.

Watch:

‘Promises’ – Lyric Video (Maverick City Music) (5:01)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhFwh_59H2c

Share in prayer together to bring the session to a close.



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

What one thought, Scripture or reflection from today’s session will become part of the bassline of your faith?

