

A PROMISE INHERITED

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. God is trustworthy, demonstrating His greatness (Ps. 118:8-9; Heb. 6:13-16).
2. God is trustworthy, manifesting His character (Heb. 6:17-18a).
3. God is trustworthy, anchoring His salvation (Heb. 6:18b-20).

Background Passages: Psalm 118; Hebrews 6

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Everything that God has said can be trusted because it is impossible for Him to lie.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Because God cannot lie, all of what He has said can be trusted. Jesus, the Word of God, said that He is the way, the truth, and the life. All who trust in Jesus have been saved and have unwavering hope that Christ will return to make all things new.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because God is truthful and we are to follow in His ways, we are not to bear false witness and instead tell the truth at all times.

GROUP TIME

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING: God had promised to bring His people back into the land of promise, restoring His dwelling place and giving His people hope and a future. But upon their return, the new temple was not as great as Solomon's, the sacrifices offered did not result in the glory of the Lord descending like it had at the dedication of the first temple, and the promises of God seemed to be left unfinished. Yet God had promised that there would be a day when He would bless the world through Abraham and His glory would be revealed to the world. God is trustworthy, and His promises can be relied upon.

DISCUSS: **Describe a time when you made a promise but you weren't able to keep it. What circumstances prevented you from keeping that promise?** (be prepared to share an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation) [Leader: People may have had a change in health, finances, employment, or many other factors. Be sympathetic to the reasons why people have been unable to keep their promises.]

TRANSITION: While humans will find themselves in circumstances where they cannot keep a promise, God is committed to keeping His word. He cannot lie. Because God keeps His word, His character is trustworthy, grounding everything that He says and does. His trustworthiness demonstrates that while circumstances may change, God is greater than the circumstances. This means that we have something secure outside of ourselves upon which we can root our salvation.

OPTIONAL QUESTION: **In an age when people struggle to know what is true, how does God's truthfulness encourage you?** (we don't have to be uncertain about God's promises; He won't shift or change on us; He won't present us with information that is misleading or false; He will guide us into all truth by His Spirit and His Word)

POINT 1

NOTES

GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY, DEMONSTRATING HIS GREATNESS (PS. 118:8-9; HEB. 6:13-16).

Psalm 118:8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. **9** It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

.....
Hebrews 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, **14** saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” **15** And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. **16** For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

READ: Ask two volunteers to read aloud **Psalm 118:8-9** and **Hebrews 6:13-16** from their Bibles.

EXPLAIN: Use the **PSALM 118:8-9** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the *DDG*):

The psalmist reminds us to take **refuge** in the Lord because only He is fully **trustworthy**.

DISCUSS: What are some ways God has been trustworthy with His promises?
(He saved a remnant of Israel as He promised; He brought His people back to the promised land after exile; He provided our Savior in Jesus as He promised; He is always with His people like He promised)

EXPLAIN: Use the **HEBREWS 6:13-16** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the *DDG*):

God promised Abraham that He would **bless** him, give him a land, and **multiply** his people, and God fulfills that today through making a people out of those who **follow** Christ.

TRANSITION: God is trustworthy, and He shows that there is nothing greater than Himself because all of His promises are rooted in His perfect character.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“[T]o trust in man tends to make us mean, crouching, dependent; but confidence in God elevates, produces a sacred quiet of spirit, and sanctifies the soul.”¹

—Charles Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

COMMENTARY

PSALM 118:8-9 / Psalm 118 is the last of a group of psalms called the “hallelujah psalms” (Pss. 111–118). It would have been recited at the end of the Passover meal by an individual while drinking the final cup of celebration. Most likely this psalm was used early in Jewish life during the procession into the temple.²

The confession of the psalmist in verses 8-9 is that it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in other people. In the complementary thought, the psalmist says that it is better to take refuge in the Lord rather than in princes. Those who are of a lowly position (humanity) or those with much power (nobles) do not compare in reliability to the Lord. While the average person may not be trustworthy, humans can be tempted to trust in those who have power and authority. Yet having power is no guarantee that someone is trustworthy. When Cyrus gave his decree for the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, there was no guarantee that they would receive all the help that they needed for the work. Opposition came (Ezra 3:3), and the people had to appeal to the Persian king Darius to finish the temple (Ezra 5–6). That human beings often are untrustworthy should have been understood from the past. Throughout Israel’s history, alliances with foreign leaders failed them (cf. Isa. 30:1-5).

Instead of trusting in nobles, Israel was reminded in this Passover song to “**take refuge in the LORD.**” The reason we should have confidence in the Lord is that He must be viewed as perfect in power and wisdom. While it is easy to acknowledge these truths about the Lord, it is another thing to believe that God alone can give the kind of help we need. Humans can be fickle, but God is steady and sure. Humans live for the moment, but God is working for His glory for eternity.

For these reasons, it is better to take refuge in the Lord. The Lord is like a strong tower that the righteous can run into and be safe (Prov. 18:10). He is the One who shelters

His people under His wing like a mother hen (Ps. 91:4). He is greater than nations, princes, and the powerful because He always keeps His word.

HEBREWS 6:13-16 / In Hebrews 6:12, the writer encouraged his readers to be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” The example given in the following verses is that of Abraham.

God had promised to bless and multiply Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:5-7. The certainty of this promise was rooted in God’s swearing by Himself. Abraham was tested in his faith when he was asked to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, the son of promise that had come after years of infertility. As a result of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise, God swore by Himself that Abraham would see his family multiply (see Gen. 22:16-17).

Abraham waited patiently for this promise to come to pass. For years, he had waited for a descendant. Because Abraham and Sarah had reached an old age, Hebrews 11:12 says that he was considered as good as dead because he was past the age of being able to have children. Yet God was able to give him a child through Sarah who would fulfill the promise by leading to Jesus.

Humans often confirm their commitment to follow through on a promise by swearing to something greater. In a court of law, people are asked to swear to tell the truth by placing their hand upon a Bible. This act declares that if any falsehood is uttered, then the offender will be under the curse of the one by whom he or she swore. Everyone who makes an oath is committed to what they have said under oath and promises that their word is completely true.

While humans swear on something greater to confirm their word, God has nothing greater than Himself to swear by. Being holy and perfect, God is always truthful and He always does what He says He will.

POINT 2

GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY, MANIFESTING HIS CHARACTER (HEB. 6:17-18A).

NOTES

17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, **18a** so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Hebrews 6:17-18** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 17** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

God's oath was not only to Abraham but to his **offspring**, which includes us, as we follow Christ, because He is **steadfast** and **unchangeable** in wanting to call us to Himself.

DISCUSS: Since God has committed Himself to His promises, what effect should this have on our lives? (we should have confidence that God's promises will come to pass; we should expect that the gospel will transform us; we should want to speak the truth to those around us and not lie; we should be unafraid of pursuing the truth regardless of where it leads us)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSE 18A** commentary to emphasize the doctrine that God is truthful and cannot lie (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #18: God Is Truthful: The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be **trusted** because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our **Creator**. Telling the **truth** is one way we bear the **image** of God, whose Son is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

DISCUSS: How does God's unchanging character to keep His word give you assurance in Him? (God will always keep His promises, regardless of how much our trust in Him may fluctuate; we can depend upon God never to falter in His plans; we can trust that He is a good God)

TRANSITION: Because God has revealed to us His unchanging character, we can trust His promises about salvation to be an anchor for our souls through the storms of life.

COMMENTARY

VERSE 17 / God's promise to Abraham was not only to the patriarch himself but to Abraham's offspring (Gen. 22:16-18)—“**the heirs of the promise.**” This promise followed Isaac and his descendants, but Scripture says that Christ is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2), and all those who have faith are sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7). The promises were spoken to Abraham and his descendants who are in Christ (Gal. 3:16). Therefore, all who are in Christ Jesus by faith are heirs of the promise to receive the promised blessing. The multiplication that God promised Abraham has come about through the proclamation of the gospel's new covenant message, confirmed by Jesus's blood so that those who become disciples from all nations might receive the promises of God as well (Matt. 28:18).

In making this promise, God wanted to show that the “**unchangeable character of his purpose**” would stand. If humans swearing an oath in a court of law attests to their truthfulness, then how much more reliable is the truth of God's word when He “**guaranteed it with an oath!**” The promise God made to Abraham is unchanging and gracious, and this purpose was His saving plan to rescue for Himself a people who would bear His name. This unchanging purpose has been confirmed with an oath, guaranteed like a legal guarantor would confirm a legal matter. By affixing His name and His reputation to this promise of salvation, God is guaranteeing that His plan of salvation will not be thwarted.

God's oath was fulfilled through an intermediary to actualize the promise. The One who came as this mediator of a new and better covenant is Jesus Christ Himself (see Heb. 8:6; 9:15). This new covenant is the one that God had promised through Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34): that He would put His law upon His people's hearts, He would forgive their iniquities and sins, and they would be His people and He would be their God. This is a covenant guaranteed by the blood of God's own Son, the mediator of this new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15).

VERSE 18A / God's oath and God's promise are both confirmed here in the first half of verse 18 by rooting us in His unchanging character: “**It is impossible for God to lie.**” Since God is greater than human beings, as we saw in Psalm 118:8-9, His word is more certain than that of a common person or a powerful noble. Scripture says that God is not a human being that He should lie or change His mind (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Titus 1:2). As the sovereign God, He can and will accomplish His purposes and will not be thwarted by any created being (Isa. 46:10-11).

The reason it is impossible for God to lie is because His character is that of perfect truth. Whatever God says is true, for His word is truth (John 17:17). It is impossible for God to do something that contradicts His nature and character. If God were to contradict Himself or lie, He would cease to be God. God is wholly true.

The second reason it is impossible for God to lie is due to His unchanging character. His promise and His oath are confirmed by the reality that the God who gave His promise in the past is the same God today. He has not shifted like shadows (Jas. 1:17), and His Son, Jesus, who is the exact representation of God's nature, is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 1:3; 13:8).

The very character of God is the anchor for the Christian's assurance that God will keep His promises and will fulfill His purpose of saving people until the very end. Christian assurance finds a solid ground underneath our feet when God is our refuge. God's promises are wrapped up in His character and nature. Beyond that, God has further bound Himself to His promises by swearing an oath. Therefore, by His own character and commitment, He will not let the promise of salvation falter or fail.

POINT 3

NOTES

GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY, ANCHORING HIS SALVATION (HEB. 6:18B-20).

18b we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. **19** We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, **20** where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Hebrews 6:18-20** from his or her Bible.

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 18B-19A** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

God's promise encourages us, as we flee for refuge in the Lord from sin and death, to **hope** for His **salvation** found in Christ Jesus.

DISCUSS: Recall the Scripture verse on **PACK ITEM 11: TAKE REFUGE**, and then ask: **In what ways is God our refuge?** (we can turn to Him in prayer in times of trouble; we can ask Him to be our strength and help when we face times of temptation; we can consider His Word so that we might have ideas about how to do good to others and spur them on to faithful actions)

EXPLAIN: Use the **VERSES 19B-20** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Similar to Melchizedek, Jesus is our **priest** and **king** who atones for our sin and presents us before the Father as **blameless**.

DISCUSS: **What confidence does Christ's work give you about your future?** (when we are in Christ, there is no condemnation; our future has been secured with Him because our sins have been forgiven; we can pray with confidence that God welcomes us and hears our prayers)



MELCHIZEDEK

Priest and king of Salem during the time of Abraham (Gen. 14:18-20). In Psalm 110:1-4, the text refers to a leader and messiah who would be in the order, or pattern, of Melchizedek, meaning he will be both a priest and a king. This is in contrast to the rules for these roles under the Mosaic law, which separates these roles by tribe, Levi and Judah, respectively. Jesus as king comes from the tribe of Judah, but being Lord of all as well as the ultimate intercessor, having died for us, taking on our sin that we may be in constant relationship with the Father, He also fulfills the role of priest in the pattern of Melchizedek's ministry.

COMMENTARY

VERSES 18B-19A / The author of Hebrews continues in his thought that because God can't lie, we can have encouragement and hope.

He characterizes us believers as those "**who have fled for refuge.**" Throughout the Psalms, God is described as the One people can hide in to find refuge (see Ps. 46:1; 91:2). In the Old Testament, the Lord also provided cities of refuge for those fleeing from avengers (Deut. 4:42; 19:5). And like those who fled bondage and slavery in Egypt, as well as captivity in Babylon, so the writer compares the salvation experience with those who flee to Christ from the bondage of sin and death. God is the One who provides refuge for sinners through His Son.

God's promise and oath, then, give "**strong encouragement**" to help us grab onto "**the hope set before us.**" Hope is the certain guarantee of something that awaits us in the future (Heb. 11:1). What awaits believers in Christ in the future is the promise of God's salvation being fully realized one day—the kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28). With this hope, we are strengthened as believers to persevere under trial, fight against sin, and stir up one another with love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

This hope of the coming salvation that is realized now, though not fully, is described in verse 19a as an "**anchor of the soul.**" In a world where the storms of life toss us around and threaten to undo us, the writer of Hebrews describes God's promise as that which will keep us in place, as firmly as a boat would be anchored to keep it from drifting. God's unchanging nature and His inability to lie provide the reasons Christians have a "**sure and steadfast**" anchor for the soul. Salvation has been promised and guaranteed by God, and His character confirms that He will not be shaken in His resolve to save His people completely (Heb. 7:25).

VERSES 19B-20 / The hope that is an anchor for the soul, firm and secure, is the hope that "**enters into the inner place behind the curtain.**" Here, this hope is described with such boldness and confidence that the writer of Hebrews will later assure his readers that they can come without fear or dread into the most holy place of God's presence (Heb. 10:19-22). Believers are told that they can enter the most holy place that had been curtained off from the sanctuary in the tabernacle and the temple. This was a place only the high priest could enter on the Day of Atonement to offer up an offering for sin so that the people's iniquities would be atoned for (Lev. 16:2). This most holy place was the location where God dwelled between the cherubim who were on the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:4; 1 Chron. 13:6; Isa. 37:16).

But because of Christ, we now can enter the inner sanctuary behind the curtain and approach God the Father ourselves. Jesus Himself has entered there "**on our behalf.**" When He died for our sins, the veil closing off the most holy place was torn from top to bottom in the temple (Matt. 27:50-51), symbolizing that we no longer need a high priest, that we can come before God with confidence and boldness, and that Christ has restored our relationship with the Father, paying the price for our sin and unholiness. Because Jesus has entered into the presence of God to make atonement for us first as our forerunner, He has opened up a new and living way to come to God (Heb. 10:20).

The reason Jesus is able to go into the presence of God is due to His status as the great high priest "**after the order of Melchizedek,**" who was a priest and king of Salem (Gen. 14:18-20). In a similar way, Jesus is our priest and king, Savior and Lord. As a result, we have confidence and an anchor that the salvation that God has told us has been accomplished in Christ is true and reliable for us, purchased already and one day will be fully realized when we see Him face to face.

MY RESPONSE

Because God is truthful and we are to follow in His ways, we are not to bear false witness and instead tell the truth at all times.

NOTES

HEAD:

God has spoken by His Word. He has never changed nor will He ever change. Because He is wholly true and unchanging, He will not and cannot lie. Therefore, we can rely upon His Word. His Word enables us to trust His promises, that He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness and that He will be our God and we will be His people.

How can you be more careful about representing the truth of God in this world?

HEART:

The God of all truth has written His Word upon our lives. We have the hope of Christ written upon our hearts, and this hope enables us to stand firm in our faith, believing that Jesus is the only way of salvation. Whoever places their trust in Christ has this Word written upon their hearts, which gives them the certain hope that Christ will come again to make right all that is wrong and to bring truth where there has been falsehood. Therefore, we should delight in the truth of God wherever it is spoken or displayed.

What are some ways that you can delight in the truth of God's promises?

HANDS:

Because God has placed His Spirit within us, we bear His name and represent Him to the world. Therefore, we are to imitate Him and show what He is like to those around us. Just as God never lies, we are not to speak or act in ways that are deceitful; instead, we are to speak the truth in love at all times and in all situations. This includes our proclamation of the gospel in the world.

What areas of your life do you need to speak truthfully about so as to represent Christ faithfully to those around you?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"His oath, His covenant,
His blood Support me
in the whelming flood;
When all around my
soul gives way, He then
is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid
Rock, I stand; All other
ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is
sinking sand."³

-Edward Mote
(c. 1797-1874)

EXTRA

POINT 1: GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY, DEMONSTRATING HIS GREATNESS (PS. 118:8-9; HEB. 6:13-16).

+ **COMMENTARY**

"It should be remembered that Jesus was critical of men whose word was so unreliable that oaths were used to bolster their statements. He urged his followers to 'let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"' (Mt. 5:37). There is therefore a difference between the Christian approach and the contemporary convention."⁴

+ **COMMENTARY**

"The Jewish believers seem to have been wavering in their faith in God. The writer gives them two reasons for trusting God. First, he reminds them that God's promises are unchangeable. He cites the example of God's promise to give Abraham a son and many descendants (Gen. 14:4; 15:5-6). At times, it must have seemed to Abraham that the promise would never be fulfilled, but he maintained his faith in God and waited patiently until he received the promised son (6:13-15; see also Rom 4:17-22). Like him, these Jewish believers should continue to wait for God to deliver them in his own time. The second reason they can trust God is because he not only made a promise but underscored that promise with an unchangeable oath (6:16-17)."⁵

POINT 3: GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY, ANCHORING HIS SALVATION (HEB. 6:18B-20).

+ **COMMENTARY**

"Taking hold of hope is not something that we do halfheartedly. On the contrary, we must attain the hope offered to us with the strong encouragement that we receive from God's Word. In short, God holds out to us hope and at the same time strenuously urges us to accept and appropriate it."⁶

References

1. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 5 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 324.
2. Nancy deClas  e-Walford, "Book Five of the Psalter: Psalms 107-150," in *The Book of Psalms*, eds. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 864.
3. Edward Mote, "The Solid Rock," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Worship, 2008), 511.
4. Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*, vol. 15, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983), 153-54.
5. Tesfaye Kassa, "Hebrews," in *African Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1524.
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