



WHAT DOES GOD REALLY PROMISE?

101 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT GOD'S
PROMISES, THE CHURCH, AND THE FUTURE



WRITTEN BY: *Carolyn Larsen*

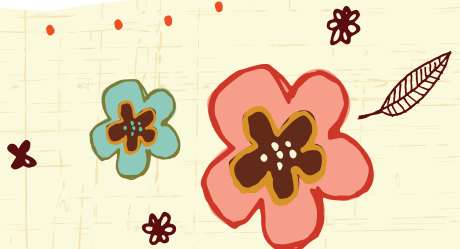
ILLUSTRATED BY: *Amylee Weeks*



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What Does God Really Promise?: 101 Questions and Answers about God's Promises, the Church, and the Future

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INTRODUCTION

Faith is belief or confidence in something, even when the object of faith cannot be fully grasped in the physical realm. A relationship with God is based on faith in him. It's a growth process of learning to accept and appreciate his grace, mercy, and love. The “instruction manual” God has given us—the Bible—helps us understand who God is and shows us how to live for him, obey him, trust him, and love him. But even with this source of amazing help and the commitment to engage in life with God through faith, we sometimes have questions.

Questions aren't wrong. In fact, they're helpful because they express a desire to learn and understand. However, it's important to search for answers to your questions from a reliable source that is true to Scripture. *What Does God Really Promise?* answers 101 frequently asked questions that are common to those who are investigating faith in Jesus Christ.

Part one explores the loving promises God has made to his children. Part two relates to the church Jesus established—what he intended it to be, its differing forms of expression, and why it sometimes fails but more often succeeds in fulfilling his purposes. And part three delves into what the future holds for those who love God and what will happen to those who reject him. It is our hope that this book will help answer some of your questions and pave the way for a strong faith in God.

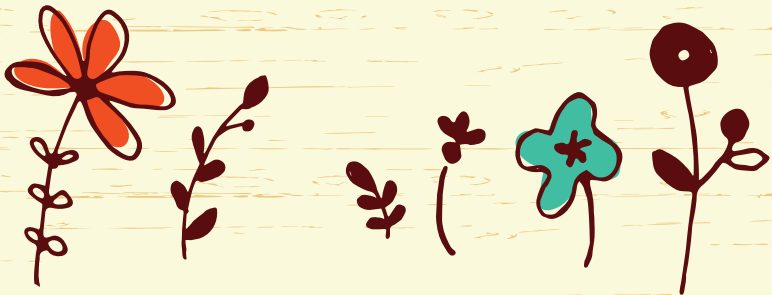


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Writing a book like this one carries with it the responsibility to be true to Scripture, to not mislead readers, and to honor and revere God. It is not something that can be accomplished alone. So I wish to thank the wonderful people at Tyndale House Publishers for their wisdom, input, and support. I appreciate Tyndale's standard of excellence and desire to honor God in every book they publish. Thank you, Anisa Baker and Becky Brandvik, for your vision for this book. Thank you to Anne Christian Buchanan for your attention to detail and "big picture" plan. It's been a privilege to work with all of you.

Carolyn Larsen





✧ *Part 1* ✧

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
ABOUT GOD'S
PROMISES



Q. WHAT DOES GOD REALLY PROMISE?

How can I know what his promises are? Does he give a list of them in the Bible?

A. The Bible is filled with hundreds of God's promises for his people. These promises are not listed all together in one place but are found throughout God's Word. Though given at different times and for different situations, many still apply today and are for everyone who trusts in him—including you!

You can discover the richness of these promises by reading through the Bible—which is a great idea anyway. Another way is to look for study books that feature compiled lists of God's promises. These lists will most likely give the specific Bible reference for each promise. Be sure to read the entire surrounding passage so you can understand its context and determine if the promise is applicable to you, as many are! Most of all, as you read the promises, let your heart be saturated with God's love, which shines through all of his promises.

Because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. 2 PETER 1:4



Q. WHAT DOES GOD PROMISE FOR ME PERSONALLY?

Is one promise more important than all the others?

A. When considering this, it's good to keep in mind that all of God's promises are important because they all reflect God's amazing love for you.

Certainly one of the most important promises, if not *the* most important, is God's promise to forgive your sins—and not just for the moment, but to forget them entirely by wiping them out of his memory (Isaiah 43:25). God promises that when you come to him and confess your sins, you'll get a clean start on a new life. That's major!

As part of that new life, there are other wonderful promises that follow. For example, God will supply all your needs. Everything you need is on God's radar, and he will take care of it. Yet another is that God will give you victory over death. When you breathe your last on this earth, your life will not be over because you will live eternally in heaven with him.

Those are just three of the wonderful biblical promises that can apply to you personally. Whichever of these promises speaks most dearly to your heart, know that each one reflects God's deep, deep love for you.

This same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:19



Q. CAN I TRUST GOD TO KEEP HIS PROMISES?

God's promises sound wonderful, but how do I know he will keep those promises and not let me down?

A. The key to trusting God's promises is to look at his character. He is loving and unchanging, the God of all truth. He is also all-powerful, which means he has the ability to keep all the promises he makes.

You need to realize, however, that God operates according to his own timetable—not yours or mine. He does exactly what he says he will do, but not necessarily when we think he should. God sees the big picture and knows when the time is right to fulfill what he has spoken.

Scripture is filled with stories of how God kept his promises of protection and provision for his people, sometimes in miraculous ways. If you're feeling uneasy about trusting God's promises, a good place to start is the book of Exodus, which recounts how God delivered his people out of slavery in Egypt. Speaking with other Christians helps as well. Hearing their accounts of God's faithfulness can boost your own faith. Look at your past, too, and ask God to help you see the ways he has kept his promises. God loves you more deeply than you can imagine. You can trust him to keep his word to you.

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm,
for God can be trusted to keep his promise. HEBREWS 10:23



Q. ARE GOD'S PROMISES UNCONDITIONAL?

Will God keep them no matter what I do?

A. Some of God's promises are unconditional, meaning they do not depend on human choices or behavior. Instead, they are based purely on God's plan and his character. For instance, after the great Flood, God promised he would never again destroy the earth with a deluge. He also promised there will be a day when Jesus returns and Satan pays for his rebellion. Nothing we do or don't do will change the outcome of these promises.

But most promises in the Bible *do* have a condition attached—"If you do this, then I will do that." If you obey God, he will bless you, though sometimes not in the way you were hoping or expecting. If you seek his will, he will guide you. If you trust him, he will protect your heart. God desires that we do things his way in order to benefit from his blessings. That's why he puts conditions on many of his promises—to motivate us to live in a way that brings us closer to him.

.....

I command you this day to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands. . . . If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you. DEUTERONOMY 30:16



Q. WHAT IS A COVENANT PROMISE?

Is a covenant the same as a promise?

A. A covenant is a special kind of promise. It's a legal term referring to a formal and binding agreement between two parties. The Bible contains several examples of covenants made between God and his people.

There is a pattern to how covenant promises are made in the Bible. First God establishes who he is and the authority he has, and he states what he plans to do. Then he usually gives a list of what people must do in order for the promise to be kept (obey God, honor him, respect him). He explains the rewards for obeying him and the consequences for disobeying. In other words, most of the covenants in the Bible are *conditional*. They require a response from those with whom God makes his covenant.

Another word for covenant is *testament*. The two parts of the Christian Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, refer to the two most important covenants in the Bible—the covenant between God and the Israelites and the fulfillment and renewal of that covenant through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah.

Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. EXODUS 19:5



Q. DOES GOD PROMISE ONLY GOOD THINGS?

Or does he promise bad things too?

A. The flip side of a conditional promise is a warning or curse. And while God does promise many wonderful things to those who love and obey him, he also prescribes consequences for those who don't.

God is not being cruel or vindictive in warning people of the consequences of breaking his laws. He has great love for the people he created and doesn't want anything bad to happen to them. But God has also given us free will, which means we can always choose to disobey him and live outside his laws. And that choice has built-in negative consequences: If we insist on choosing sin and evil instead of living a life that is pleasing to him, then we will face a painful outcome.

Look, today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse! You will be blessed if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today. But you will be cursed if you reject the commands of the LORD your God and turn away from him. DEUTERONOMY 11:26-28



Q. WHAT IS THE FIRST PROMISE GIVEN IN THE BIBLE?

Is it something wonderful?

A. The first promise in the Bible is a conditional one, given in the form of a warning. God placed the first man and woman in a beautiful garden where they had everything they needed. He gave them permission to freely eat the fruit from every tree in the Garden except one—the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” If they ate fruit from that tree, God promised they would die!

You probably know the rest of that story. Satan, the rebellious fallen angel, took the form of a serpent to tempt Adam and Eve. He convinced Eve to eat the fruit, and she convinced Adam to also try it. God had no choice but to keep his promise and evict them from the perfect Garden—a death sentence for Adam and Eve and all humankind. Fortunately, God didn't give up on his disobedient children. One of his next promises was that Eve's offspring would strike the serpent's head. And that's exactly what happened. Thousands of years later, Jesus died on the cross to provide a way for people to escape Satan's temptations and live in harmony with God. He made many more promises . . . and kept them!

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

ROMANS 5:12



Q. WHAT ARE SOME BIBLICAL PROMISES GOD MADE—AND KEPT?

And why do they matter for my life?

A. The history of God's promises is important to know because it tells us so much about God's character and his patient, persistent love. Here are just three of the promises God made and kept as recorded in the Old Testament:

- After the Flood wiped out the entire world except for Noah's family and the animals on the ark, God promised never to destroy the world by water again. He has kept that promise to this day.
- God told Abraham he would be the father of a great nation, with descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. But Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had no children! Finally, in their old age, they bore a son named Isaac, the ancestor of the Israelites.
- When the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, God commissioned Moses to lead them to freedom and promised them a beautiful land of their own. After many years wandering through the desert, God's people finally settled in the beautiful land that today is called Israel.

Look, I am giving all this land to you! Go in and occupy it, for it is the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all their descendants. DEUTERONOMY 1:8