“The New Covenant”

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less than thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the “Getting Started” section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the “Strength through Prayer” section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell states that he believes stoplights (or roundabouts in England) are a good idea because they avert moral chaos. Joe then adds, “But I do not have a heart for stoplights!”

- How would you rate your amount of patience when waiting at a stoplight: average, below average, or above average?
- How would you rate your attitude toward the “laws of the land” in general?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to Jeremiah 31 and have a volunteer read verses 31–34 out loud.

1. Can you identify with the thought that the old covenant law was a mistake?

2. What does Joe mean when he states that the old covenant law, as compared to the new covenant, had one tragic flaw: it was external rather than internal?

3. Joe notes that the old covenant was patriarchal in the sense that God wasn’t as approachable as He is now. (For instance, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies—and just once a year at that.) Are you taking advantage of the intimacy available through the new covenant?

“It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers.”

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4. How does Jeremiah 31:33–34 convey that the new covenant is instinctive? To what extent is that principle a reality in your life?

5. How has the process of receiving forgiveness changed from the old covenant to the new covenant? What is the appropriate response to this change?

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you’ve listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1. What does the apostle Paul mean when he writes in Romans 7:12 that the law is holy, righteous, and good?

2. How did the old covenant law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” actually demonstrate God’s grace through limiting the escalation of violence?

3. How well do you feel you understand the old covenant and its significance in relation to the new covenant? What steps could you take to grow in this area?

Strength through Sharing:

1. What kind of images and impressions do you get when you hear the word “obedience”? How does this compare to the description of obedience in the “Call to Action” below?

2. Has your spiritual life lately seemed more like a relationship or a religion? More like a delight or a habit? More like a devotion or a duty?
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Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Give the Lord praise for the wonderful gift of the new covenant, and commit yourself to express your thanks through obedience.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

“Dear God, thank You that the new covenant is internal, intimate, and instinctive. Thank You that, as a believer, I have been declared innocent and all of my sins are covered under Christ’s matchless blood. I want to respond to this covenant with joyful, worshipful obedience.”

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

If we are part of an “I will” covenant, then we need to be “I will” followers of Jesus Christ.

If we live by an “I won’t” or a “Why do I have to?” attitude, then we need to wake up to the wonder of what God has done for us. Understanding the phenomenal realities of the new covenant brings us to a place where we respond to Him—our new covenant God—in happy, joyful, worshipful obedience.