

COVENANT

- Series Overview -

- Premise -

A covenant is a contract, an agreement, between two people. If one party holds up their end of the bargain, the second party is trusted to do their part in return. We have covenants everywhere in our lives, both official and unofficial. We receive a loan from the bank, and we're expected to make payments to fulfill our end of the contract. That's a covenant. We enter into relationships committing to do our part and expecting the other person to do theirs. That's a covenant. Our life is built on covenants. And yet, one of the most important covenants in our lives is one we often neglect: our covenant with God. God has committed to providing for us, loving us, pursuing us. But are we holding up our end of the bargain?

- Purpose -

This series will spend 6 weeks exploring our side of our covenant with God. We'll address the problems we encounter, and then what God promises on God's end. And hopefully, at the end, we'll arrive at a place of surrender, trusting God in all areas of our life, living into the fullness of our Holy Covenant. To help us with this concept, we will be breaking down the lines of an historic prayer, written by the founder of the Methodist movement in the 1700s, John Wesley. This prayer came from a service he intended for Christians, and churches as a whole, to renew their side of their Covenant with God. This prayer is an excerpt from that service and is commonly called, "The Wesley Covenant Prayer." This prayer will be foundation of the series and a unifying element throughout the six weeks. Participants will be encouraged to pray this prayer at the beginning or end of every day throughout the six weeks of this series as a reminder of their covenant relationship with and surrender to God.

- Preparation -

The included lessons are best utilized in the context of smaller discussion groups. If your faith community does not have small groups, using a series like this to begin new short-term small groups, (that might then continue as longer-term spiritual formation groups), can be highly effective. Feel free to use the included graphics to promote the series through print and social media, and market the series as a church-wide study that all groups can participate in, (small groups, Bible studies, Sunday School

classes, even your youth!) It can be catalyzing for everyone in your church to be working on the same thing at the same time! This series is designed to be used for Lent, the six weeks leading up to Easter. If you choose to use this resource at a different time of year, some “tailoring” may be needed. Included is a bookmark with the Wesley Covenant Prayer printed on it. Print and distribute these the first week as a reminder for participants to prayer this prayer every day. There are also graphics intended to be posted to social media each during week 5, “Gratitude Week,” as a reminder for each person to consider the things for which they are grateful.

- Pastors -

Sermon starters are included in this series package as a way to get your imagination going as you prepare for this series. Because the topic is “surrender,” and Lent is a period of self-reflection and sacrifice, these sermons are a natural fit. Feel free to use as much of the sermon starter material as you wish, but make it your own. Pairing the sermons each week with the discussion guide for your groups reinforces the message and builds momentum for your entire faith community. There’s power in the entire church doing the same thing at the same time. Use it!

- Prayer -

God of Provision and Protection, may every heart that uses this resource be open to you, surrendering fully to you, placing the outcomes of the things they are facing in your hands. Hold each person as they reflect upon their spiritual lives and seek to deepen their relationship with you, as they pray...

**I am no longer my own but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt,
rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee,
or laid aside for thee.
Let me be exalted for thee,
or brought low for thee.
Let me have all things,
let me have nothing.
Let me be full,
let me be empty.
I freely and humbly yield all things
to thy pleasure and thy disposal.
And now, sweet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
I am thine and thou are mine.
And may this covenant made on Earth,
be ratified in heaven.
So be it.**