

“A New Heart, A New Start”

Session 6 – Hebrews 8:1-13 & Jeremiah 31:31-34

Bible Study Method:

Cross Referencing and Covenant Overview



Leaders Notes: This session is the "hinge" of the book of Hebrews. We are moving from the Priest (who Jesus is) to the Covenant (what Jesus has done). By cross-referencing Jeremiah and Hebrews, the group will see that the "New Covenant" wasn't a Plan B. It was the promised destination all along. We also attached a **“Covenant Comparison Chart”** for use during Section 1 (highlight limitations of old covenant) and in Section 4 (highlight the superior “I Will” promises of the new covenant).

Timing Tips and Notes for Skipping:

- **The Hinge Momentum:** This session marks the transition from Jesus’ identity (who He is) to His work (what He has done). If you find the group spending too much time on the technical aspects of the Old Covenant in Section 1, move them quickly to Section 2 to ensure you reach the "I Will" promises in Section 4.
- **The "I Will" Tally:** In Section 4, the verbal list activity is key. Have the group shout out the "I will" statements as they find them. This keeps the energy high for the final 18 minutes.
- **What to Skip:**
 - **Section 3** is always optional. Removing it saves 7 minutes without losing the theological core.
 - **Section 2, Question 1:** If you are running behind, summarize the "Sitting vs. Standing" point yourself instead of facilitating a 5-minute discussion.
 - **Section 4, Question 3:** This is the best individual question to skip if you need to finish on time.

INTRO – 3min

Say It: (Lead your group by reading this section aloud to them.)

Last week, we saw that Jesus is our 'Indestructible Priest' who serves as a better 'guarantor' of our relationship with God. Today, we look at the actual contract he

signed on our behalf: The New Covenant. To understand where we are going in Hebrews 8, we have to look back at the anchor promise made 600 years earlier in Jeremiah 31. Today we aren't going just learn new rules; we are going to see how God fulfills His oldest promises.

As we read this passage, remember that Jeremiah wrote to the Jewish people while they were in exile because they had chosen sin and broken their covenant relationship with God.

SECTION 1 – Old Testament Anchor: The Promise

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - (2 Questions - 15min)

- **Read it:** Jeremiah 31:31-34 ([Ask someone to read this passage aloud.](#))

Discuss It: The “Discuss It” sections of this guide should be where you spend most of your time. The goal is 100% participation in discussion. We want everyone to feel like they are a part of the group.

- 1. God tells Jeremiah this new covenant will “*not be like*” the one their ancestors broke. If the Old Covenant was written on stone tablets, what does it mean for God to write His law on our “hearts” instead?**

The old covenant was external (“on stone” is a reference to the 10 Commandments) and could be broken from the outside. The new covenant is about a relationship that God Himself secures. The old covenant and laws were an **external pressure** (motivated by fear, punishment, and rules), while the new covenant would be an **internal desire** (motivated by love for God). The Law on stone can tell you what to do, but it can’t make you want to do it. **The Old Covenant was written on stone and broken by people; the New Covenant is written on hearts and kept by God.**

- 2. In Jeremiah 31:34, God promises that everyone will “know” Him, from the least to the greatest. Why is this “direct access” a massive worldview shift for people used to needing a priest to speak to God for them?**

It levels the ground. These persecuted believers who were weary and tempted to go back to their Jewish roots, needed to be reminded that even in the Old Testament, God was telling them that this day with Jesus was coming. No one, Jew or Gentile, would need a human “middleman” (priest) to tell them who God is. Because of Jesus, every believer “knows” the Father.

SECTION 2 – New Testament Fulfillment

Hebrews 8:1-6 - (2 Questions - 15min)

- **Read It:** Hebrews 8:1-6 (Ask someone to read aloud.)

Discuss It: (Spend most of your time in discussion.)

1. Hebrews 8:1 says the "main point" is that our High Priest is seated at the right hand of the throne. How does the act of "sitting down" prove that Jesus' work is superior to the old system?

Unless you have studied ancient Jewish culture, you may miss this one. Earthly priests in the tabernacle never sat down. Their work was never finished. Sacrifices were made "day after day." Jesus is able to sit because the victory is won. His sacrifice is "once for all." (Jude 1:3) **An earthly priest stands because the work is never done; our High Priest sits because the victory is won.**

2. Verse 5 describes the old religious system as a "shadow." While a shadow proves something real exists, you can't have a relationship with a shadow. Why is it often more "comfortable" to focus on religious rules (the shadow) than on a personal relationship with Jesus?"

Rules are predictable and give us a sense of control. We can "perform" a ritual to fulfill a rule, but we have to "trust" a person. Clinging to the shadow allows us to keep God at a distance; embracing Jesus himself requires us to give Him our hearts. It requires vulnerability and more emotional investment. **Stop settling for the shadow of God when you have the presence of Jesus.**

SECTION 3 – Reflection (Optional 7min)

Reflect on It: (Optional Activity) Give your group a few minutes to quietly reflect on what God might be trying to say to them and specifically how He might want them to respond to His Word this week.

Say It: (Lead your group by reading this aloud to them.)

The author of Hebrews is trying to move his readers from a 'religion of shadows' to a 'relationship of substance'. He wants them to stop looking at stone tablets and start looking at their own hearts."

You've got 2 minutes to pray and reflect on the question:
Where in your life do you still feel like you are following a "shadow" (doing things out of duty or routine) rather than following the "Substance" (Jesus)?

(Give them 2 minutes, and then say. . .)

Now say: Take two minutes to "draw near" to God. Ask Him to show you one area where you are trusting your "performance" more than His "promise."

SECTION 4 – The “I Will” Covenant

Hebrews 8:7-13 (3 Questions 18min)

Read It: Hebrews 8:7-13 (Ask someone to read this passage aloud.)

Discuss It: (Spend most of your time in discussion.)

1. Consider Hebrews 8:10-13. If we were marking this text with the inductive Bible Study method like we did in our last session, how many marks would there be for the phrase “I will”? Verbally, create a list as a group. (at least 6 times)

- I will establish a new covenant (vs 10)
- I will put my laws in their minds (vs 10)
- I will write them on their hearts (vs 10)
- I will be their God (vs 10)
- I will forgive their wickedness (vs 12)
- I will remember their sins no more (vs 12)
- You could also make an argument for:
 - I will take them as my people. (vs 10)
 - I will make them know me. (vs 11)

Say It: (Lead your group by reading this aloud to them.)

It's important to realize that Jeremiah originally spoke these 'I will' promises to a people who had lost everything . . . their homes, their temple, and their dignity. They were in exile because they failed. By quoting this here, the author of Hebrews is reminding these weary Christians that God didn't wait for His people to get it right to make this promise; His grace isn't dependent on us “getting it right.” The author wanted the Hebrews to recognize that God saw them in their struggle too. **God's "I will" is most powerful when our "I can't" is most obvious.**

2. In the Old Covenant, the focus was on "You shall." How does the density of God's "I will" statements change the way you view your spiritual security?

It proves the New Covenant is a one-sided promise from God. He is the one putting, writing, being, and forgiving. Our security isn't based on our "action verbs" but on His action on our behalf. As we learned in our last session. It's based on His effort and His signature as our Guarantor. **The Old Covenant depended on "Your Will"; the New Covenant depends on "His Will."**

3. Hebrews 8:12 is the ultimate "better promise": "I will remember their sins no more." If God has divine amnesia regarding your past, why is it so dangerous for you to keep bringing those sins back up?

Bringing up what God has forgotten is an insult to the "finished work" of the Priest. If the Guarantor says the debt is paid and the record is clear, we must agree with Him.

DO IT: 5min

Ask your group members to choose one or two options to practice this week. Talk about your plan and encourage them to share their goals with one another. Plan to discuss their choices again next week. Create a little accountability within your group.

The "I Will" Memo: Choose one of the "I will" statements from verses 10–12. Write it on a post-it or set it as a phone reminder to combat any feelings of "not being enough" this week.

Shadow Audit: Identify one religious ritual you do. This week, try to do it while consciously focusing on the Person of Jesus rather than just the task.

PRAY IT: 2min

Prayer: (Lead your group by praying this prayer this aloud with them.)

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the substance and not just a shadow. Thank You that our relationship with You is based on Your "I will" and not our "I must." Help us to live this week with the freedom of knowing our sins are remembered no more. Amen.

TOTAL TIME: 65min

Covenant Comparison Chart

	The Old Covenant (Shadow)	The New Covenant (Substance)
Location	Written on stone tablets (The 10 Commandments)	Written on minds and hearts
Focus	"You Shall" Dependent on human performance	"I Will" Dependent on God's promise and initiative
Motivation	External Pressure: Fear, punishment, and rules	Internal Desire: Love for God and a new nature
Access to God	Indirect; required human priests as middlemen	Direct; all believers can "know" the Father personally
Reliability	Broken by people who were unfaithful	Kept by God , who is the "Guarantor"