Called To Inherit a Blessing

This session covers:

- God’s desire to bless you
- The connection between covenant and blessings
- The basics of a biblical covenant
- How covenant draws two together as one

This session corresponds to:

- The Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 of Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ book
- Session 1 of the Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ CDs

The Promise of Blessing

1. The Scriptures promise wonderful and much needed blessings to believers through their relationship with Jesus Christ.

   - In both the good times when we are experiencing God’s favor and in the tough times when it seems like God is nowhere to be found, it is great to know that God promises to bless us.
   - In a brief but powerful phrase, Peter wrote that “you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9).
   - This same theme is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the Book of Deuteronomy, most notably Chapter 28, highlights the fact that those who diligently obey the Lord will experience blessings in every facet of their life.
   - Psalm 103 identifies at least nine different blessings, such as forgiveness of sin, healing, renewal of strength, redemption from difficult times, grace, and compassion to those who follow God.
• Psalm 1 tells us that followers of God will be like a tree planted by streams of water and will prosper in whatever they do.
• Proverbs 8:34-35 reinforces the Old Testament idea that followers of God are promised blessings as they walk in obedience to the Lord.
• The New Testament introduces the same theme—that believers are promised blessings in their relationship with Christ. Paul wrote that “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles” (Gal. 3:14).
• In Ephesians 1:3, Paul stated that “Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul wrote that “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”
• The Apostle John prayed that believers would prosper and be in good health just as their soul prospered (3 John 2).
• From beginning to end, an encouraging thread runs through the Scriptures—our heavenly Father desires to bless us!

2. The end-time Church must know that God wants to bless us.

• We live in a generation that is already experiencing the beginning of end-time events—events that will ultimately culminate in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Almost daily we hear about the fulfillment of ancient prophecies that have remained dormant for thousands of years. We are not living in this time period by accident, but like Esther, we were born for such a time as this!
• Living under the shadow of end-time events is both exciting and fearful. It is exciting because God is moving powerfully in our day; and He will pour out His Spirit in even greater measure in the days to come. These are days of harvest as multitudes of people come to know Jesus as Savior, Lord, and Bridegroom.
• But it is also a fearful time. We only have to skim through the Book of Revelation to understand that life in the end-times will be more difficult. As we approach the end of the age there will be an increase in natural disasters, persecution, economic turmoil, diseases, and plagues that our medical communities cannot remedy. These events and problems will put tremendous pressure on even the most committed Christians. The tension of end-time events will require us to depend upon God for provision, healing, protection, and strength.
• You may be thinking that these days don’t sound too exciting. But they are! They are exciting because in the midst of difficulties, God will pour out His glory. God desires for us to flourish in these days—to prosper, to live in health, to be shielded from terror, and to experience His wonderful presence in unprecedented ways. We live in a generation when God is preparing His glorious Bride to arise without spot or wrinkle and to rule the earth with Jesus.
• As these last days emerge in their fullness, God is assembling an army of overcomers who will stand against evil and darkness. They will live by the power of God’s Word rather than succumb to the circumstances of life. However, to come into this level of glory, the Body of Christ
must make many transitions. One of these transitions is learning to live by the covenant promises of God.

3. Many believers do not know they are called to inherit a blessing.

- Throughout the Scriptures, God promises to bless His people. However, many believers do not know the great blessings they are promised.
- Hosea 4:6 tells us that many perish due to a lack of knowledge. This verse is especially true when it comes to knowing the specific blessings that God promises His people because of His covenants. As a result, many believers do not experience the full blessings of what they are promised in their relationship with Christ.

The purpose of this class is to help believers understand the great blessings they are called to inherit in Christ. This class also identifies more than twenty different blessings that are promised to followers of Jesus and how to experience these blessings in their fullness.

The Connection between Blessings and Covenant

1. Every blessing from God is based on His covenant promises.

- God interacts with man through covenant. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Because of this, every blessing offered by God is only made available through His covenant promises.
- To live in the reality of God’s blessings, it is imperative that we understand the depth and breadth of God’s covenants.
- Covenant is the foundation from which every promise in the Bible depends and is the reason why God’s blessings flow into our lives.
- Text Box: Because God’s covenants and His blessings are so closely connected, we will look at God’s covenants in an in-depth way for the remainder of this session and in the next two sessions.

2. God’s promises are secured by covenant.

- As already mentioned, God’s blessings are based upon His covenants with man. In fact, covenant is how we know that God will bless us and possibly even more importantly, covenant is the means by which we get a hold upon God.
- To see why covenant is so important to knowing that God will bless us, let’s look at the promises of blessing that God made to Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-3, God told Abraham,

   Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from
your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

- Abraham obeyed and began to experience the initial blessings of walking with God. However, several years passed and Abraham had not yet received the full extent of God’s promised blessings. Abraham began to wonder if God really was going to fulfill His promises to him. It wasn’t that Abraham doubted God. He just needed to know for sure that God was going to be true to His word. He needed something to hold on to until the blessings came.
- In this context, Abraham asked a very important question. He said, “O, Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?” (Gen. 15:8). In other words, Abraham asked, “How can I know that You are going to bless me like You said?”
- God answered Abraham’s question immediately by establishing a covenant with him. In essence God was saying to Abraham, “You can know I will be true to My word to you because I will secure it by a covenant.”
- Then, after Abraham sacrificed an animal and cut it in half, God walked between the pieces as He entered into a solemn covenant with Abraham.
- If Abraham had not known for sure that God was going to fulfill His word, he would have never possessed his full inheritance. Abraham had too many obstacles to overcome. He had to walk in blind faith and he did not have the luxury of the full counsel of God’s written Word. Abraham had to know that God would fulfill His promises to Him.
- In the culture in which Abraham lived, a covenant was the most binding commitment that two people could make. When God entered into a covenant with Abraham, the Lord was making the most powerful statement possible of His intentions to bless him.
- This covenant helped Abraham know that God was serious about fulfilling His promises. Through this covenant, God demonstrated His eternal commitment to fulfill His promises and to bless Abraham. Not only that, God was revealing an essential attribute about Himself, which is this: God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.
- For us to experience the fullness of our destiny, we must know without any doubt or uncertainty that God will bless us—just as Abraham knew that God was going to bless him.
- We know that God wants to bless us in the same way Abraham knew that God wanted to bless him—because of covenant. God’s blessings are secured through covenant. Because we have entered into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we now know that He desires to bless us.
- The following quote by Andrew Murray in his book, The Two Covenants, summarizes this idea:

And so the covenant was, above all, to give man a hold upon
God, as the covenant keeping God, to link him to God Himself in expectation and hope, to bring him to make God Himself alone the portion and strength of his soul.¹

The Basics of a Biblical Covenant

1. The definition of covenant helps us to understand this vital concept.

- The word "covenant" is used approximately three hundred times in the Bible. It is a concept that permeates both the Old and New Testaments and is a central theme throughout Scripture. In fact, what we normally call the Old Testament and New Testament should be translated as the Old Covenant and New Covenant. The covenant is so important that it separates two dispensations in the Bible!
- The dictionary defines covenant as a formal, solemn, and binding agreement; a compact; a written agreement or promise usually sealed between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action.
- The definition of the Hebrew word for covenant, beriyth (ber-eeth'), adds the sense of cutting because it defines covenant as being established by passing between pieces of the flesh of a sacrifice to form a compact, confederacy, or league. It also carries the meaning of binding or to fetter.
- The definition of the Greek word for covenant, diatheke (dee-ath-ay'-kay), suggests the meaning of a "disposition, a contract, arrangement of any sort, which one wishes to be valid, the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will, or a compact.
- Putting these definitions together, we come up with the following definition:

A covenant is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement that suggests the binding or fettering of two entities together as one. A covenant is often secured by a blood sacrifice and binds two parties together based upon a common purpose for life, often extending to future generations. A covenant provides a clear statement of God’s purposes and intentions expressed in terms that bind God by solemn oath to perform what He has promised.

2. Every interaction between God and man is based on covenant.

- Covenant is central to all that God does. Every promise of God comes from His covenants with man.
- Our salvation originates from God’s covenant promises. The assurance that we will spend eternity with Jesus comes from God’s covenant.
- Our new position of forgiveness, righteousness, blamelessness, and acceptance are covenant blessings.
- Healing, provision, and life purpose are all covenant promises to us.
• Every promise of God comes from His covenants with man.

3. **God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.**

- Even though covenants are rare in our modern society, covenants were a common, universal practice in the ancient cultures in which the Bible was set. The practice of making covenants is not an exclusively biblical concept. Many different nations and people groups outside of the Bible regularly entered into covenants.
- Covenants were initiated during ancient times for a wide range of social and interpersonal relationships. Between nations, covenants were made to establish treaties. Between individuals, covenants expressed a pledge of friendship or consummated a business contract. Between a ruler and his subjects, covenants were used to form a national constitution.
- God chose the concept of covenant, which was commonly practiced by the majority of the people of both Old and New Testament days, to express His commitment to a deep and lasting relationship with His people.
- The following quote from Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin in their book entitled *The Covenants* illustrates this point.

  > The word “covenant” is a word that has lost its meaning and significance in present society. In Bible times the word “covenant” involved promise, commitment, faithfulness and loyalty even unto death. A covenant was sacred and was not lightly entered into by the parties involved. In Bible times a person was only as good as their covenant word. In a society where national agreements, business contracts and marriage covenants are under stress and attack, where people are “covenant-breakers” (Romans 1:31), it brings great joy and comfort to know that God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.²

4. **A covenant is far more binding than anything we think of in our culture.**

- In our culture, we think in terms of contracts that have terms, lengths, and remedies. A covenant is far different.
- God chose the concept of covenant to express His desire to have a deep and lasting relationship with His people.
- A covenant binds until death. In many cases, it binds descendants for three to four generations after the one entering the covenant agreement has died, and it can even last eternally. To the ancients, a covenant communicated a very solemn agreement of loyalty, faithfulness, and commitment that could not be broken.

Now that we understand a few basics about covenant, let’s examine the foundational reason for a covenant—to draw two together as one for a common purpose.
Two Becoming One

1. A covenant joins two parties together as one for a common purpose.
   - The purpose of a covenant, whether it is a covenant from the pagan culture of ancient times or a covenant initiated by God, is to join two parties together for life in order to accomplish a common purpose.
   - A covenant ends independent living by binding two together so that they begin to live for one another, give to one another, help one another, and work with one another to accomplish common goals.
   - Marriage is one of the most common examples of a true covenant agreement. The Prophet Malachi writes that marriage is a form of covenant (Mal. 2:14). In marriage, a man and a woman, once living independent lives, come together to live as one. The degree of oneness in marriage surpasses any other relationship between two people. Husbands and wives become one in body, soul, and spirit. Husbands and wives begin to think alike, act alike, and develop common goals for their family. Married couples live as one, taking on a common purpose to raise children and face life's issues together. Thus, in marriage, two become one. Marriage consists of an exchange that occurs when the husband and wife each draw from all that their partner has and each gives their all to the other.
   - All true covenant agreements are like this. A covenant gives each covenant party a hold upon their covenant partner. Thus, the purpose of a covenant is for two to live as one.

2. Jonathan’s covenant with David illustrates two becoming one through a covenant (1 Sam. 18:1-4).
   - Jonathan’s covenant with David offers a clear Old Testament example of two becoming one:
     
     Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father’s house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt (1 Samuel 18:1-4).
     
   - Notice the italicized words. Through covenant, Jonathan knit himself to the soul of David because he loved him as himself. The Hebrew word translated knit in verse one means to bind or tie. We know that a covenant binds one person to another.
   - Through the giving of the robes, belts, and weapons, we see the degree to which a covenant binds two parties together. When Jonathan gave David his robe, belt, and weapons, he was expressing his love for David, his eagerness for a deep, abiding friendship, and his desire to live as one for a common purpose.
Digging a little deeper into the giving of the robe, belt, and weapons, we see what Jonathan and David were expressing. When Jonathan gave David his robe, he was in essence giving him all that he was. The robe symbolized Jonathan’s character, position, and authority. Jonathan was offering David his position and authority in the kingdom of Israel.

Recall that Jonathan was the eldest son of King Saul and was the natural heir to his father’s throne. Possibly he knew that the Prophet Samuel had anointed David as the next king of Israel. Perhaps he believed that once David became king, he would need David’s protection and provision since he was in the lineage of Saul. For whatever reason, as Jonathan gave David his robe, he surrendered to David his individual rights to position and authority.

Jonathan also gave David his armor, including his sword. As he did so, he was vowing to take on David’s enemies, symbolically saying to David that he would use his sword to assist David, his new covenant partner. As we read through the biblical accounts of Jonathan and David, we see that Jonathan did exactly that. He was there to protect David, placing his relationship with David even above his relationship with his father. Note the following verse:

If it please my father to do you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father (1 Sam. 20:13).

Jonathan also gave him his belt. The belt or the girdle was part of the armor. It is what held the weapons in place and is symbolic of a man’s strength. As Jonathan gave David his belt, he was saying that he would strengthen David and help him in his weaknesses. We see examples of Jonathan helping David repeatedly when David fled from King Saul. Jonathan hid, helped, and assisted him in escaping Saul’s grasp, encouraging him along the way.

This covenant did not just consist of Jonathan giving and David receiving. Once David became king, he maintained a covenant commitment to Jonathan’s family. Second Samuel 9 tells of David’s encounter with Mephibosheth. In this passage, we learn that King David sought out any of Jonathan’s family who might still be living so that he could bless them. Then he found that Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son, was still alive. Because of the covenant between Jonathan and David, David restored to Mephibosheth all of his rightful inheritance and brought him to eat at the king’s table (See 1 Sam. 18, 20, 21; 2 Sam. 9). So we see from this example that a covenant joins two together so that they become one.

The covenant between Jonathan and David explains a lot about the purpose of a covenant. We clearly see from these passages of Scripture that covenant living changes everything. It changed Jonathan and David’s priorities, allegiances, and united the purposes of their lives together. Living in a covenant relationship with God will change our lives as well. The Biblical account of Jonathan and David illustrates six
ways that covenant brings two together as one.

Six Ways That a Covenant Brings Two Together as One

1. A covenant establishes a common purpose.
   - From 1 Samuel 16, we know that God had anointed David as king of Israel. As the Spirit of the Lord worked through David, King Saul grew increasingly jealous of David's success and the adoration he received from the people. Saul was determined to take David's life; he wanted to thwart God's purposes for David.
   - In the midst of Saul's attempts to kill David, Jonathan—David's covenant partner—defended, strengthened, and protected him (1 Sam. 18-20). Why? So that God's purposes for David could be achieved.
   - Jonathan, who was the natural heir to the throne, no longer lived for himself, but for his covenant partner. Jonathan was dedicated to God's common purpose for the two of them that was established by covenant.
   - In a similar way, as we enter into covenant with God, we commit to a new way of living. Through covenant, we choose to live for God, surrendering our goals and priorities for God's goals and priorities. No longer do we live for ourselves, we live for Jesus.
   - More than anything else, covenant living calls for a life of common purpose.

2. A covenant establishes a close friendship.
   - When David and Jonathan entered into covenant, they became friends for life. Note that "Jonathan loved him [David] as himself" (1 Sam. 18:1-3).
   - There was much more than a commitment to a common purpose that drew the two of them together. Jonathan and David were extremely close friends who really cared for one another. They were friends who hurt when the other hurt and rejoiced when the other rejoiced.
   - A covenant knit their souls together, causing them to love one another as themselves. A covenant relationship is much more than a contract or an agreement that allows both parties to accomplish a common goal. It establishes a new and different type of relationship—a close, open, transparent friendship.
   - When God made a covenant with Abraham, it was far more than just a means to create the nation of Israel. It also established a new friendship. When Abraham entered into covenant with God, he became a friend of God (James 2:23).
   - As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, He called His closest disciples His friends (John 15:13-14).
   - A covenant establishes a close friendship between covenant partners.
3. A covenant establishes a new loyalty.

- Covenants were always a solemn undertaking. In almost every case, covenants were accompanied by the shedding of blood—either an animal sacrifice, the co-mingling of the covenant partners’ blood, or both. The very fact that blood was shed shows how serious the agreement was.
- Such a solemn pact requires a deep loyalty. We see this loyalty clearly from our example of Jonathan’s covenant with David (1 Sam. 19:1-3). Although Jonathan loved his father, his loyalty was with David due to the covenant that knit them together.
- Covenants were serious, binding agreements that lasted for life or beyond. You don’t find people entering into covenant for brief periods of time or for minor reasons. Covenants produced lifetime commitments that affected all involved.
- No matter what prior commitments or relationships each partner had, a covenant required a loyalty to one another that superseded all else. In fact, a covenant established a loyalty between two parties that was stronger, more enduring, and took a higher precedent than all other commitments.

4. A covenant requires a lifetime commitment.

- Covenants lasted for life and in many cases, bound descendents for several generations. In fact, many biblical covenants are perpetual agreements and are still in effect today.
- Note how Jonathan expressed the expected duration of his covenant with David when he told him, “You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth” (1 Sam. 20:15).
- Another powerful example of the serious, lifetime commitment involved in covenant making is found in Joshua 9. In this passage, the Gibeonites deceived Joshua into making a covenant of protection with them. Even though the Gibeonites lied to Joshua about who they were and where they lived, Joshua was bound by covenant to honor his word and not harm them. Much later, during the reign of King David, a three-year famine came upon Israel because King Saul in his zeal harmed the Gibeonites, thus violating the covenant that had been cut with Joshua. God required David to make atonement with the Gibeonites for what Saul had done (2 Sam. 21).

5. A covenant requires each partner to give all that they have.

- Included in the covenant between Jonathan and David was the giving to one another all that each possessed.
- Jonathan gave David his robe, weapons, and belt, each of which symbolized his position, authority, possessions, strength, and protection. Jonathan did not withhold anything from David. We see this throughout the biblical account of their friendship.
• Jonathan told David, “Whatever you say, I will do for you” (1 Sam. 20:4). This brief phrase illustrates Jonathan’s commitment to give all to David. Likewise, David gave to Jonathan all that he had, even extending provision and blessing to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1-7).
• Covenants involve the giving of all that each covenant partner has to the other so that each one is blessed.
• Covenants are not halfhearted agreements; instead, covenants require the total surrender of each party to the covenant pact and their covenant partner.

6. A covenant gives each partner the right to draw from the other.

• In 1 Samuel 20:4-8, Jonathan and David are planning David’s escape from King Saul. In this context, note David’s plea to Jonathan: “Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you” (1 Sam. 20:8).
• Not only does Jonathan give David all that he has, but David asks Jonathan to be merciful and kind toward him. Thus, David draws from the covenant agreement.
• This is an extremely important aspect of covenant to comprehend. We are not only promised blessings because of covenant, we are also given the right to draw from our covenant partner. This right is more than just a privilege of covenant; it is legal permission to ask our partner to come to our aid.
• Andrew Murray wrote, “And so the covenant was, above all, to give man a hold upon God, as the covenant keeping God.”
• A covenant gives each covenant partner a hold upon the other, permitting each partner to draw freely from the strengths and abilities of their partner.

As we see the benefits of covenant living, we know that the covenant itself is a mighty promise to us, a promise to which we can hold fast. And we know that as we learn to hold onto the covenant, we will live increasingly in the fullness of the blessings of our inheritance in Christ.

Notes

Review Questions

True or False

_____ 1. Because the Lord’s return is so close, it is not as important to know God’s blessings as it was in past generations.

_____ 2. The Scriptures promise wonderful and much needed blessings to believers through their relationship with Jesus Christ.

_____ 3. Hosea 4:6 tells us that many prosper because of their knowledge.

_____ 4. Every blessing offered by God is only made available through His covenant promises.

_____ 5. The concept of covenant is used extensively in the New Testament and, even though referred to, is not discussed explicitly in the Old Testament.

_____ 6. A covenant is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement that suggests the binding or fettering of two entities together as one.

_____ 7. A covenant agreement was much like what a marriage contract is today. Just as marriage agreements can easily be broken, covenants were often dissolved in ancient times.

_____ 8. A covenant is far more binding than any agreement we think of in our culture.

_____ 9. A covenant joins two parties together as one for a common purpose.

_____ 10. Based on 1 Samuel 18, Jonathan’s covenant with Samuel illustrates two becoming one through covenant.

Fill in the Blank

11. Covenant is how we know that God will _______ us, and possibly even more important, covenant is the means by which we get a __________ upon God.

12. ______________ offers a good example of how covenant helped a man know that God would bless him and fulfill his promise to him.

13. The word “covenant” is used approximately ______ times in the Bible. It is a concept that permeates both the _______ and _______ Testaments and is a central theme throughout Scripture.

14. To the ancients, a covenant communicated a very ____________
of loyalty, faithfulness, and commitment that could not be broken.

15. God is a covenant-_________________, covenant-____________________ God.

From the list on the right, identify five ways covenant brings two together as one.

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<td>b. Covenant is the primary way we know that God will bless us.</td>
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<td>c. Covenant is used to draw two together throughout the Old and New Testament.</td>
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