



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

We are Family: Where you are free to be yourself November 3, 2019

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

1. What was your favorite story to read or hear when you were growing up?
David and Goliath had to be the best one in my Baby Bible
Otherwise Peter Rabbit
2. What is a goal you had that no matter how hard you tried, you were never able to accomplish?
When I got to high school, I started trying really hard to get a 4.0. Semester after semester, I would always wind up with an A-. My Dad was not serious when he would joke about it, but he would look at that A- and say, "If that's the best you can

do." (It was not emotionally traumatic for me, but I remember it being frustrating at the time.)

3. What are things about which you are tempted to think, "If I accomplish this, then God will be happy with me"? While will that always leave you feeling "not good enough"?

If I stay on track with my daily Bible ready and not fall behind, then God will be happy. If I stop doing this sin...running a foul mouth, drinking too much, whatever it may be. If I show up to church this week, God will be happy with me. Everything we do is tainted with sin, so there is nothing that we do that is truly good enough before God unless he makes it holy through Jesus Christ. Luther used to confess his sin relentlessly, always feeling that he hadn't done it well enough, that he wasn't sorry enough, or that he had forgot sins.

4. Page through the book of Jeremiah, looking for themes and things that occur over and over. If you were in God's shoes, how would you have reacted?
They had chance after chance. The book is filled with oracles describing how often the people had wandered to worship other gods. At best, I might have given them a three-strikes-you're-out approach. More likely, I would have forsaken them the first or second time they ran away. It's a good thing I'm not God.
5. As you consider what God's children had done throughout the book of Jeremiah, how would you characterize the Father's dealing with them?
Over and over they had sinned. Over and over the Father called them back to himself. Yet they would not repent or come back. So the Father had to send the Assyrian and Babylonian armies to capture them, to wake them up and make them realize what they were doing. The Father had no choice but to punish them because the alternative was losing them forever. Then the Father still shows his everlasting love as he takes them back, as he sends the Savior to make them righteous, and as he makes a

new covenant with them that will only be removed if someone is able to measure the ends of the universe.

6. On what was the Old covenant based on? See Jeremiah 11:1-5
On what is the New covenant based? See Jeremiah 31:31-34
How does Jesus pick up the theme of the New Covenant? See Luke 22:20

The old covenant was a two sided covenant. The people had terms to follow and God had terms to follow. God always kept his terms. The people never did.

The new covenant was a one sided covenant. Everything was done by God in his love and mercy. The new covenant was actually older than the old covenant, because this was the covenant first given to Abraham, that all nations would be blessed through his seed.

Moses and the OT priests were the mediators of the old covenant, dealing with the blood of animals.

Christ was the mediator of the new covenant, dealing with his own body and blood as the sacrifice for sins. That is why in the Lord's Supper, Jesus says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you."

7. Consider this thought: an all-knowing God assures you that he does not remember your sins. What does that make you free to do?

We are free come before our gracious Father in heaven and confess our sins to him. As sinners we never want to admit that we have real sins. We pretend to be imaginary sinners who only have imaginary sins. The truth is: we are big sinners and we have a big Savior.

8. "You are free to be yourself." How does that phrase usually get used in the world? How can we understand that phrase correctly in God's family?

Usually when people say, "Here you are free to be yourself," they mean, "Here, no one will tell you that you are doing

something wrong. No one will judge you." Basically, it is an encouragement to live however you want to, whatever lifestyle, whatever sins, that's okay! "You're free to be yourself."

That is not how we understand this phrase correctly in God's family. In God's family, you don't have to pretend you're not a sinner, because you are. In God's family, you don't need spend your life trying to earn God's love, because you already have it, even in spite of your sin. In God's family, Christ lives in you. He has followed God's commands for you, in place of you, and now you also have the freedom, only by God's grace and power, to do what God's asks of you. You are truly free to be yourself, that is, Christ living in you.