

August 10, 2025

Group Study: The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

1. Why do you think the promise of a new covenant was such a radical hope for an exiled people?
2. What is different about this new covenant compared to the one given at Sinai?
3. How does the idea of God writing the law on our hearts challenge or inspire you?
4. What does this passage teach about access to God and spiritual gatekeeping?
5. The lesson draws a line from Jeremiah's new covenant to Jesus enacting a new covenant in his blood at the Last Supper. How does seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy impact your understanding of communion and the cross?
6. Jeremiah spoke words of comfort and hope to people in despair, not to those who were comfortable. How can the church embody this prophetic voice for those experiencing exile, isolation or hopelessness today?
7. In what ways is God's covenantal presence available to all people? How does this level the playing field and subvert hierarchies of status in our relationship with God and each other?
8. What does it look like to live into the new covenant today?
9. When have you experienced God's presence in an unexpected place or season?



Good Faith Bible Study

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August 10, 2025

"The New Covenant"

Jeremiah 31:31-34

<https://goodfaithmedia.org/bible-studies>

In this podcast, we'll explore how the New Covenant promise of God writing the law on our hearts connects spiritual formation with our longing for justice, healing and redemption in a broken world.

Sometimes I think: I think too small when I consider God's promise to write the law on our hearts. I've thought that this means that God gives us an inner compass by which we can tell right from wrong—something that's given by God—the indwelling Spirit, perhaps, that will guide us to right relationship with God. And while there is some truth to that assumption, Jeremiah's vision of a transformed heart is more than that. God's law written on our hearts leads to personal spiritual formation and outward transformation in the world, all rooted in God's hopeful future. When God writes on our hearts, God shapes and changes our hearts.

When Jeremiah delivers these prophecies, he is speaking to a people in exile—people who are displaced. They're ashamed, they're uncertain. Under the Mosaic Covenant, the one given at Mt. Sinai all those centuries ago, the law was external. It was written on stone tablets. Later it was mediated through priests and kings. And the reason that the Kingdom of Judah had been defeated by the Babylonians, the reason that the people were now living in exile, is that they had broken that covenant.

Remember the first time Moses came down the mountain with the Law tablets? After 40 days, the Hebrews had become impatient waiting for Moses' return. They had turned to Aaron, Moses' brother, and Aaron had gathered all the gold from the people and had formed it into a golden calf. It had been less than two months, and God's people, freshly rescued out of Egypt, began to worship the golden calf, instead of God. When Moses saw them worshiping, he was furious—he threw down the Law tablets, breaking the newly formed sign of the covenant, just as he saw the Hebrews breaking faith with God.

In some ways, this event foreshadowed the Exile. The people of Judah had become impatient with the ways of God. They turned to false prophets and priests, who led them to worship other gods. Moses was long dead by this point, of course, and the physical tablets of the law were not broken—but God's people had once again broken faith. Right before Jeremiah announces the New Covenant, God gives that context by referring to the "covenant they broke, even though I was their husband." In fact, the people's repeated, willful disobedience to covenant reached the point that God removed

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the Temple from them, and removed them from the land that God had promised Abraham. The law had been painfully broken—as surely as the day that Moses dashed the tablets against the side of Mt. Sinai.

But now God says: “I will write the law on their hearts” (v. 33).

This inner renewal is God’s work of spiritual formation. It’s a slow, sacred shaping of the heart and life by God. Through this new promise of covenant, God’s own faithfulness shines through—God has allowed the consequences of Judah’s actions to unfold, but God has not given up on God’s people.

The promise of the New Covenant, though, is not just about shaping our behavior. It’s about shaping the desires and values and priorities that run underneath our behavior. It’s not just about information, but about God’s ongoing work of transformation—a work that we might call “spiritual formation.”

Christian spiritual formation is the lifelong process of being shaped into the image of Christ for the sake of others. It’s not just about learning more about the Bible or attending church regularly, although those things are really important. At its heart, spiritual formation is about deepening our relationship with God and allowing that relationship to change how we live and love and serve in the world. For Christians, this formation happens in community and through the work of the Holy Spirit. As we practice prayer, study scripture, worship, serve others and seek justice, God works within us to help us grow in faith, compassion and wisdom. In a world that places a great deal of value on speed, success and self-interest, spiritual formation calls us to slow down. It calls us to listen, and to become more like Jesus in how we treat ourselves, our neighbors and all of creation. It’s not a one-size-fits-all journey—each one of us brings our own story, our own questions and struggles. But together, we are invited into a way of life that’s rooted in love. And it’s shaped by grace, and aimed at healing and restoration.

So, spiritual formation is the process of being shaped by the Spirit into Christlikeness—from the inside out. And while it can be deeply personal, spiritual formation is not a private project. It’s relational. It’s communal.

And if this is true (going back to the New Covenant), then it means that God’s transformation of my heart—writing God’s Law on my heart—was never meant to stop with me.

The promise of the New Covenant continues in verse 34: “They shall all know me...” This promise is deeply personal and it is widely shared. When God writes on hearts, it’s to create a community of compassion and humility and justice.

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Why does this matter now? Well, because in some ways, we're still in exile. We're still longing for wholeness.

Today, we see systems of injustice, ecological destruction, personal trauma, cultural divisions. And these realities stir a longing within us: This is not how things are supposed to be.

Jeremiah speaks directly to that longing in verse 31: "The days are surely coming...", Jeremiah says.

This isn't vague optimism. It's prophetic hope—it's God's future breaking into our present.

The New Covenant means that change is possible, because it begins with transformed people. Hearts shaped by mercy lead to lives that are shaped by justice.

So, what does it look like when hearts written by God seek the healing of the world?

Have you seen examples of this sort of divinely inspired healing, maybe even in your own communities? As you prepare for Bible study this week, look around you—maybe even at the news headlines—with new eyes. We really don't have to look far, do we, to see messages of fear and despair? But can you also see glimmers of hope? Where do you see someone speaking truth with compassion? What about a person or a group, a church, a nonprofit, that is advocating for those who are marginalized? Do you hear words, see people, who are motivated by a radical hospitality and forgiveness?

Hope is not passive—it moves us forward. The Spirit-formed life always overflows into others.

So as we draw to a close, let me ask the question: What has God been writing on your heart lately? Where is that inner transformation calling you to act or speak or love differently?

Remember:

God is not finished with you. The days are surely coming. The Spirit is still forming, still healing, still making all things new. And as the Spirit forms us to be more like Christ, we live more fully as God's ambassadors of healing and reconciliation in the world.