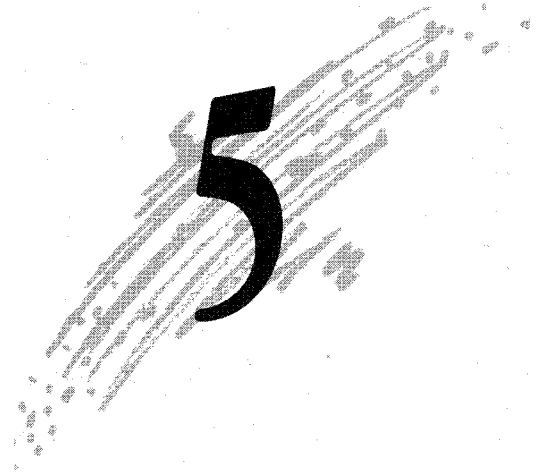


# Promises to Keep



## LESSON AIM

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To help kids understand that ★ God keeps his promises, and we should, too.

## YOU'LL NEED

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## OBJECTIVES

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Kids will

- decide whether to believe certain promises,
- discover how God was faithful to Noah,
- learn how to make promises they can keep, and
- discover special promises from the Bible.

- a 3x5 card
- scissors
- a bag of unshelled peanuts
- a stapler or tape
- markers
- photocopies of the “Promise Dove” handout (p. 52)
- 6-inch strips of ribbon in rainbow colors
- cellophane tape
- glue sticks
- a hole punch (optional)

## BIBLE BASIS

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### Genesis 6:9-9:17

If you were to ask the kids in your church to name their favorite Bible story, chances are good that the story of Noah and the ark would be among the top vote-getters. Why? There’s an exciting, colorful plot, a huge “natural disaster,” survivors watched over by a caring God, and a rainbow to top it all off! Even Hollywood’s brightest imaginations and most fantastic special effects can’t top this one.

What makes it even better is that “this ain’t no story”! It’s history, or “his-story”—God’s story. It’s a reliable record of what God actually did on this planet.

Despite the destruction caused by the flood, this isn’t an account of vengeance—it’s a story of love and promises kept. After the water recedes, God promises never again to destroy all life on earth with a flood. The rainbow seals the covenant and serves as an everlasting reminder of that promise.

But there's another significant series of promises given, acted on, and kept as the story opens. God predicts the flood, then instructs Noah to build the boat for his family and the animals. God promises that Noah and his family will enter the ark. At this point, Noah doesn't understand the full implications of this promise. But he trusts the promise maker and obeys.

Use this lesson to teach children that God keeps his promises faithfully, and we should, too.

### **Isaiah 40:8**

In a world of confusing messages and rapid change, it's important for kids to know that they can count on God's Word. God keeps his promises today, just as he did in Noah's time.

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS**

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What child wouldn't want to spend a few months in a floating zoo? Kids have a wonderful, God-given fascination with the diversity of God's animal creation. And that's great. But it's important not to let the natural kid-appeal of this Bible story overshadow its all-important theme: God keeps his promises.

God asked Noah to do a pretty outrageous thing. We assume that Noah's ark-building binge brought more than a few snickers from his neighbors. But God had made a covenant with Noah. A covenant is a two-way street, and Noah was determined to keep his end of the bargain.

Sometimes Christian kids who live in a secular society feel that God asks them to do some pretty hard things, too. Like returning good for evil. Walking away when test or homework answers are illicitly offered. Loving their enemies. And being faithful to their promises.

Trust, obedience, faithfulness—challenge your kids to be the Noahs of their day!

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## **The Lesson**

### **ATTENTION GRABBER**

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#### **Would Ya Believe Me?**

Before class, practice cutting a 3×5 card as shown on page 47. Cutting it in this manner will allow the card to stretch

over a person's head. You'll also need to hide a bag of unshelled peanuts. Staple or tape the bag shut.

As kids arrive, ask:

● **Would you believe me if I promised to give you a treat that's never been touched by human hands? How many would believe a promise like that?**

Invite the kids who believed you to search the room until they find the bag. Have the person who finds the bag bring it to you. Before you open it, ask:

● **Now how many people believe my promise that this bag contains a treat that has never been touched by human hands?** Have a child who believes you open the bag. Then toss handfuls of peanuts around the class. Ask a younger student to bring his or her peanuts to the front of the class. Help the student open the peanut. Ask:

● **Who put that peanut in there?** (God did; the plant did.)

● **Has any person touched these little peanuts before?** (No.) **Are you sure?** (Yes.)

● **Then did I keep my promise?** (Yes.)

Say: **Good! You ought to be able to trust the promises made by your teacher at church.**

Give children a few moments to shell and eat their peanuts and throw away the shells. Then choose a volunteer to come to the front of the room. Show that child your 3x5 card and ask:

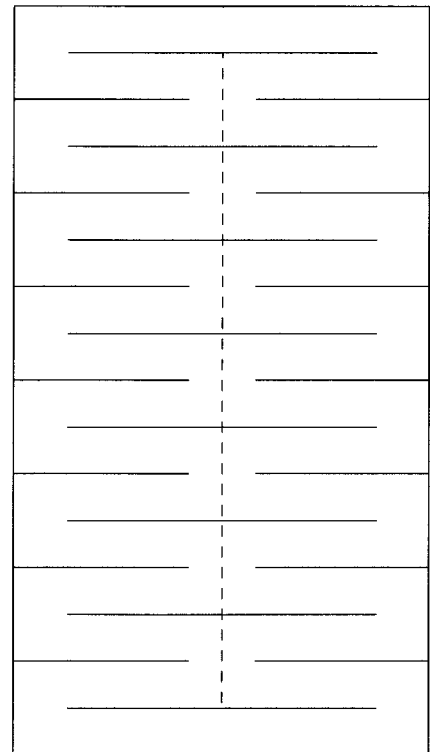
● **Would you believe me if I promised to make this card go over your head and around your neck?** (Yes, I trust you; no, that's impossible.)

If the child doesn't respond positively, keep asking until you find someone who believes your promise. Then bring out the scissors and cut the card as shown in the margin. Slip the cut-and-stretched card over the head of the child who believed your promise. Thank your volunteer and have him or her sit down. Then ask:

● **When I first made these promises, how many of you believed me 100 percent? Why?** (Because we know you; because we thought there was a trick to it.)

● **Those of you who didn't believe me, why didn't you believe in my promise?** (Because it sounded too strange; I didn't really think you could do that.)

● **When you saw that I kept my first promise, did that make it easier for you to believe my second promise? Why or why not?** (Yes, because you already did one thing that sounded hard, so I believed you could do another; no, because it still seemed impossible to make a small card go around somebody's head.)



1. Fold the card in half lengthwise.
2. Cut as shown, making the first cut from the folded side, the next cut from the outside, and so on.
3. When you've made all the cuts, cut through the middle fold of all but the end strips.
4. Stretch the card open into a circle.

● So when people make promises, how do you decide whether or not to believe them? (I believe them if they've kept their promises before; it depends on their reputations.)

Say: Today we're going to talk about the fact that ★ God keeps his promises, and we should, too.

## BIBLE STUDY

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### Off the Deep End (Genesis 6:9-9:17)

Say: Our Bible story today is a pretty familiar one, so we're going to approach it differently than you've probably done before. It's about one of the most famous promises in the Bible. Does anyone care to guess what it might be?

If no one guesses, say it has something to do with colors. If you need to give another hint, say it has something to do with colors in the sky. Then challenge kids to tell you what promise the rainbow reminds them of. If no one responds, encourage kids to listen carefully to the story to find out.

Say: OK, let's get started with the story of Noah. Here's what you need to do.

Practice these cues and responses with the kids:

- Whenever I say "God," fold your hands and bow.
- Whenever I say "neighbors," cover your mouth and laugh.
- Whenever I say "animals," make your favorite animal sound.

Say: One last thing. When I pull my finger across my throat, that means to cut off all noise immediately. Ready?

Read aloud "Off the Deep End" (p. 49). Pause after each underlined word to let children respond to the cues.

Have kids give themselves a round of applause for their participation in the story. Then ask:

● Why do you think Noah obeyed God and built the ark? (Because he trusted what God said; because he wanted to make God happy.)

● Why do you think Noah kept building even when his neighbors made fun of him? (Because he trusted God more than he trusted his neighbors; because it's more important to please God than to please anyone else.)

● What promises did God keep in this story? (The promise that the flood would come; the promise to keep

### TEACHER TIP

In the middle of the story, you'll find directions to have kids form three groups and do a series of sound effects that create quite a realistic storm. The larger the group, the more effective the progressive effect as groups move from one sound to the next. If your class is small, you may want to use only two groups. Let one group do a sound effect for about five seconds before the next group joins in.

## Off the Deep End

One day God looked sadly upon the beautiful earth he'd made. Then God spoke to Noah. "Noah, people have ruined my beautiful earth. It's full of violence and bad things. I've decided to destroy the earth and everything in it. But I want you to build an ark for yourself and your family and two of every kind of animal. I will send a flood, and everything on the earth will die. But I promise that you and your family and the animals will be safe in the ark."

So Noah did just as God said. He began to build a boat—a huge boat—a monstrously massive and marvelous boat. The neighbors couldn't quite believe their eyes.

"Check out old Noah," the neighbors snickered. "He's really gone off the deep end now. What's he waiting for—a flood?" Then they laughed so hard they fell over. But Noah went right on building.

The next day the neighbors asked, "Whatcha gonna put in that incredible crate you're building?" "Animals," Noah replied.

"What kinds of animals?" the neighbors asked.

"Every kind," Noah replied.

Once again the neighbors laughed until they fell over.

A few weeks later Noah and his family had nearly finished the ark. They started loading hay and grain and fruit inside.

"Hey!" the neighbors called out. "Whatcha puttin' in there now?"

"Food," Noah replied.

"For who?" the neighbors asked.

"For my family and the animals," Noah responded.

"What if the animals decide to eat your family?" the neighbors asked. They thought their question was so funny that they fell over laughing again.

When the ark was finished, God sent the animals to Noah, who began loading them in, two by two. The neighbors had never seen anything quite like this. They laughed a little bit, then scratched their heads.

When little raindrops started to fall, Noah's family went into the ark, and God shut the door. The neighbors looked at the ark all loaded and closed up. And they looked at the dark clouds rolling across the sky. Then the rain came harder and faster, so they ran for shelter. They weren't laughing anymore.

Let's make our own rainstorm to see what it was like when the water rose and covered the whole earth. We'll start by forming three groups. (Indicate where groups one, two, and three will be divided.) When I look at your group, start doing what I'm doing. Keep doing the same thing until I look at your group and change the action.

(Look at group one and rub your hands together. Then proceed to group two, and finally to group three.

Come back to group one and snap your fingers quickly. After a few seconds give the same cue to group two, then to group three.

Continue in this manner. The third cue is patting your legs lightly, and the fourth is stomping your feet.

Have the storm decrease by working backward through the cues. Have groups return to patting their legs, then snapping their fingers, then rubbing their hands together. Finally, cut the groups off one by one by pulling a finger across your throat.)

Finally the rain stopped. All the people and animals in the ark were safe and well. Then one day the ark bumped into the top of a mountain. The water was starting to go down.

Noah sent a raven and then a dove out of the ark. But the dove came back because there was no place to land. A week later Noah sent the dove out again. This time it came back with a leaf in its mouth. Seven days later Noah sent the dove out again. This time it didn't come back, for it had found a place to nest.

Then God told Noah to come out of the ark. So out came Noah and his family and all the animals. Noah built an altar to thank God for keeping his promise. Then God blessed Noah and his family and all the animals. And God hung a shining rainbow in the sky as a promise never to destroy the world with a flood again.

everyone in the ark safe; the promise never to flood the earth again.)

● **How do you feel about people who keep their promises?** (I trust them; I respect them.)

● **Why is it important for Christians to keep their promises?** (So people will trust us; so people will respect our God.)

Say: **As Christians, we want to show people what God is like. When people learn that they can trust us, then someday they may learn to trust God. ★ God keeps his promises, and we should, too.**

## LIFE APPLICATION

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### Pop-Up Promises

Ask:

● **Who can tell about a promise you kept?**

● **Who is willing to tell about a promise you made but didn't keep?**

Allow two or three children to respond to each question, then say: **Sometimes people who don't keep their promises fail because they make promises they can't keep. I'm going to read some promises. If you think the promise I read is a good one, pop up out of your chair. If it seems like a bad promise, stay seated and point your thumbs down. Here we go.**

Pause after each promise for kids' responses.

● **I promise to give everyone in class a million dollars.**

● **I promise to try hard to be a good teacher.**

● **I promise that you're all going to get straight A's in school next year.**

● **I promise to pray for you every day this week.**

Help kids form trios. Say: **In your trios, figure out what makes a good promise and what makes a bad promise. I'll give you a minute to talk about it. Then I'll ask one person from each group to tell what you decided.**

After a minute, call time and have kids share their answers.

Then say: **Great ideas! It's important to think before you make a promise. First you think, "Is this a promise I can really keep, or do I just wish I could keep it?" Sometimes you need to ask, "Would God be happy with this promise, or am I just making this promise to get something I want?" We need to be care-**

ful about the promises we make, because ★ God keeps his promises, and we should, too.

## COMMITMENT

### Promise Doves

Say: **Let's make reminders of the promise God made to Noah.** Have kids form pairs, matching older students with younger, nonreading students. Distribute scissors, markers, and photocopies of the "Promise Dove" handout (p. 52). Ask a volunteer to read aloud Isaiah 40:8 from the handout. Ask:

● **What does this promise from the Bible mean to you?** (That God keeps his promises; that God's Word is true.)

Say: **That verse is God's promise to you. On the blank side of your dove, write a promise you'd like to make to God. When you've finished writing, cut out the dove.**

If children have trouble thinking of promises they'd like to make to God, suggest ideas such as "I promise to pray every day," "I promise to give God first place in my life," or "I promise to do my best to be like Jesus."

As kids are working, distribute several 6-inch strips of ribbon in rainbow colors to each child. Demonstrate how to position the strips of ribbon inside the dove, then tape the ribbons in place. Have kids rub glue sticks along the other edge of the doves then press the two halves of the doves together.

### TEACHER TIP

If you have extra time, you may punch a hole in the top of each dove and tie a strip of ribbon through the hole as a hanger.

## CLOSING

### Promise Prayers

Have kids stand in a circle holding their promise doves. Go around the circle and invite kids to share the promises they wrote to God.

Then close with a prayer similar to this one: **Thank you, Lord, for keeping your promises. Help us trust you the way Noah did. And help us make wise promises and keep them. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Encourage kids to hang their promise doves in a special place as a reminder that ★ God keeps his promises, and we should, too.



# PROMISE DOVE

