Carl Laferton

Promises Kept

Bible Overview



9-Session Bible Study

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A Good Book Guide Bible Overview
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One of the Bible writers described God's word as "a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we've discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They're perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let's take a look at what is included in each session.

Talkabout: Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

Investigate: These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

Apply: These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

Explore More: These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

Getting Personal: These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

Pray: Here, you're invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you've seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven't got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you'll find a **Leader's Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God's light-giving word.

Why Study God's Promises?

One Saturday, less than a decade after the end of Jesus of Nazareth's life, a man named Paul stood up in a Jewish synagogue with a mind-blowing message.

"We tell you the good news," he said. "What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus" (Acts 13:32-33).

In many ways, in these two sentences Paul was summing up the story of the whole of the Bible.

The God Paul was talking about is a *promise-making* God. Throughout history, he has made huge, extravagant, wonderful promises to humanity. We find many of those promises in what he said to the ancestors of the members of that synagogue—what he said to men such as Adam, Abraham and David. And as we see what God did, we see the shape of how he will fulfil what he has said

Because, crucially, God is also a *promise-keeping* God. What he says, he does. And at a particular point in history, he fulfilled all of his promises in the life, death, resurrection and rule of one human—Jesus, a carpenter from a small Jewish town.

The Bible tells the story of what God promised. And it tells the story of how God has fulfilled those promises.

And so it's the story of the *good news*—the gospel. It's the story of how God has been at work for people, through people, and often despite people—and supremely it's the story of how he worked through one Person, Jesus.

This Good Book Guide will take you on a rapid tour of the whole story of the Bible. There won't be time to stop at every sight—only to point out some of the highlights. Over nine sessions, you'll travel from the beginning of the past, through our present, to the future.

Each session, you'll see what God promised and something of how his promise was fulfilled. And each session, you'll be given a snapshot, an image which sums up that period of time. Put them all together and you'll have an album detailing the whole of history—the whole story of God's promises, and how he has fulfilled them in Jesus.

It's a whirlwind tour. It's a breathtaking tour. And it's a tour we're part of...

Promises Kept: Special Features

This Good Book Guide has a few elements that don't appear in the rest of the range.

Chapter Titles

You may notice that the first chapter title begins with A, the second with B, etc. This is to help you remember the different parts of God's story of promises kept!

Promises Fulfilled

Studies 1 – 6 are each in two parts:

Promise: You'll look at an Old Testament passage, seeing what happened in that period of history, and a promise God made

Fulfilment: The study moves to a section of a Gospel, to see an aspect of how Jesus is the one who keeps that particular promise of God.

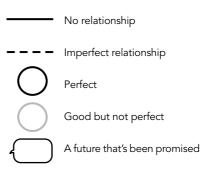
Timelines

Most Good Book Guides start with a timeline, but this one has one at the beginning of each session. You can use them to recap on what you've already seen in previous sessions and to see the point in history the study will focus on.

Each timeline page also tells you which Bible books cover all or part of the period you're looking at, and who the "famous" biblical characters in that period are. Where necessary, the page includes a map showing you where the action is taking place.

Snapshot

Each session includes a "snapshot", which sums up what has happened in the period of history you're looking at. The Leader's Guide will explain what they show, but the key below will also help:



You'll also find all the snapshots together in one place on page 78.

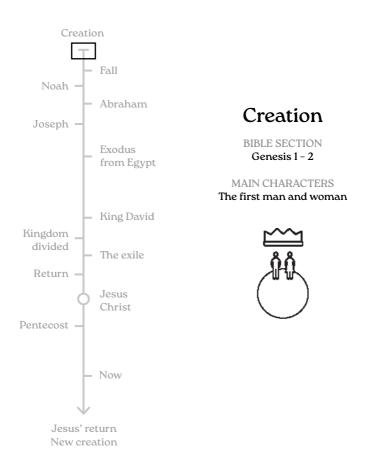
Explore More

These come at the end of each session. Unless otherwise indicated in the Leader's Guide, they pick up on a part of the Bible that lies between the session and the next one. Each session is pretty full anyway, so don't feel under any pressure to use Explore More!

1

A Very Good World

Genesis 1 - 2; John 1



Talkabout

1. What is the most naturally beautiful or spectacular part of the world you've seen? How did visiting it make you feel?

Part 1: Promise

Investigate

Read Genesis 1:1-25

We are looking right back to "the beginning" (v 1): the very start of the world's history.

- 2. What did God do (v 1)?
 - How did he do it (v 3)? What does this show us about what he is like?
- 3. Split into pairs or small groups. Pick two or three of these sections each to have a look at: Genesis 1:6-8, 9-13, 14-19, 20-23.
 - What is happening in each of the sections you've looked at?

• What similarities do you see between them?

4. What have we learned about God?
Read Genesis 1:26 – 2:3
5. What was the last thing that God made?
 What is different about how this part of his creation is described? What does this mean, do you think?
• What job does God give them (1:28)?
6. What is God's verdict on his creation (v 31)?
Annly

Apply

- 7. How does humanity's place in creation...make us humble?

make us valuable?

• give us purpose in life?

8. There are many issues in society today where knowing we are creatures, made in God's image, to rule his world should shape our view. Pick a few now, and discuss what Genesis 1:26-31 has to say about them.

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

Are there any areas in your life where you need to be reminded that you're not God—not in overall charge?

Where do you get your sense of value from? The shifting opinions of others or the changing foundation of your looks, career, or health? What would change in your emotions and outlook if you based your identity on being made and valued by God?

What would change if your main purpose each day was to know God, live under his rule, and work in his world as he directs you?



Snapshot: Genesis 1 – 2

The people God made enjoy perfect life with each other, under his rule, in his very good world.

The implicit promise of Genesis 1-2 is that the creation will be "very good" (1:31). That is what God says this world will be like. BUT today, our world is only a poor reflection of the world as it was created. Can the world God promised be recovered, or has his plan gone wrong?

Part 2: Fulfilment
Investigate
□ Read John 1:1-5, 9
9. What similarities are there between these verses and Genesis 1:1-5?
10. What do we learn about "the Word"?
11. Read John 1:14. What is amazing about these words?
-
• God's word brought light to creation (v 5)—here, the Word became

flesh to bring "light", too. What is that "light" (v 4)?

• This Word was called Jesus (v 17). And John wants us to see that Jesus' coming is where God begins creating again. How is God creating through Jesus coming to earth?

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

God's children (John 1:12) are not only part of his original creation, but also part of his new creation, begun when the Word became flesh to bring the light of life to the world.

What difference does that make to your life? Do you think about what can be enjoyed in this world too much, or too little? Do you care for it too much, or too little? Do you think of your future as part of God's re-creation too much, or too little?

Pray

Praise God that he is the Creator, and for making you to enjoy life in his creation. Praise him that he sent Jesus to bring life and begin recreating this imperfect world.

Confess to God ways you make too much, or too little, of his world.

Ask God to help you to be humble, to find your value in being made by God, and to live as he created you to each day (you might want to pray for specific ways in which you need his help in doing these things).

Explore More | OPTIONAL

Genesis 2 focuses on the climax of God's creation: humanity.

Read Genesis 2:18-25

- What is "not good"?
- What does God do about it (v 20b-22)?

The man responds with a love song (v 23—you may not rate it much!).

- What relationship have they been made for (v 24)?
- What kind of relationship do they enjoy in God's very good world (v 25)?
- What do these verses tell us about men and women?