In 1994, a 67-year-old carpenter named Russell Herman died in Marion, Illinois. In his last will and testament he left the following:

- $2.4 billion to a nearby town
- $2.4 billion to the city of East St. Louis
- $1.5 billion for projects in southeastern Illinois

And in a final act of unprecedented generosity, he left $6 trillion to the Federal Reserve to pay off the national debt (it would take a lot more today because the debt is now over $17 trillion). There was only one problem: at the time of his death, the only thing Mr. Herman actually owned was a 1983 Olds Toronado!

Russell Herman may not have left behind anything of monetary value, but he did leave us all with a good reminder: you can’t give away what you don’t possess. The bottom line is that he did not have the resources to make any of this a reality.

Not so with God. He has all the means to make good on all His promises.

We live in a world of broken promises, don’t we? From relational pain, to outlandish political promises, to over-the-top ads for fast food, many of us have become skeptical whenever we hear someone make a claim that appears too good to be true.

Our big idea today is this: In a world of broken promises, God can be counted on.

We’re beginning a brand new series today called, “A Summer of Promise.” According to one estimate, there are 30,000 promises in the Bible. That’s astonishing because there are about 31,000 verses in the entire Bible! In 1956, Everet Storms, a school teacher, during his 27th reading of the Bible, tallied up 8,800 promises – it took him a year and a half to write them all down!

I’ve not tried to count them all…yet, but we’re going to tackle a number of them this summer. Here’s where we’re headed:

The Promise of Eternal Life
The Promise of Guidance
The Promise of the Lord’s Return – Pastor Mel will be preaching July 12-13!
The Promise of Rest – Pastor Dan will be preaching July 19-20
The Promise of Victory
The Promise of Answered Prayer
The Promise of Wisdom
The Promise of Peace
The Promise of God’s Presence
The Promise of Forgiveness

Most frequently in the Old Testament the word promise refers to “speaking,” “speech,” or “to say.” Here’s the deal: When God says something…that settles it.

I like how one pastor puts it: “A promise is the assurance that God gives to His people so they can walk by faith…while they wait for Him to work.”

George Parsons weighs in on the difference between a command and a promise: “A command from God is something we should do; a promise from God is something God will do. A command must be obeyed; a promise must be believed. When God gives a command He says, “YOU WILL”; when God gives a promise He says, “I WILL.”

Adoniram Judson, the great missionary to Burma, once said: “The future is as bright as the promises of God.” D.L. Moody added: “God never made a promise that was too good to be true.” And here’s a statement worth pondering: “God never over-promises and He never under-delivers.”

Pointers about Promises

It’s important to pause at this point and establish some guardrails on the pathway to God’s promises.

1. Put the promises in their context to get their full meaning. One of the most popular promises is found in Hebrews 13:5: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” This is so comforting, isn’t it? But we seldom quote the first part of the verse: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said…” Because of the promise of God’s presence we can live free from the love of money and become more content with what we have. Now that’s a promise we all need.
2. Be willing to accept all God’s promises, not just the ones you like. For example, God also promises persecution and suffering and difficulty for the Christ-follower. John 16:33: “In this world you will have trouble…” We can’t just put the pleasant promises up on our walls and act surprised when suffering comes. We’ll dive into this topic this fall when we go through the book of 1 Peter verse-by-verse. Having said that, hold on to the second half of this verse because we know that we don’t suffer alone: “…But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

3. The ultimate aim of God’s promises is to glorify Himself. Be careful about demanding that God must do something for you. We can’t just name it and claim it without worshipping the Name that is above all names and desiring that He display His honor and glory. Psalm 119:38: “Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared.”

4. Some promises are conditional. God will do His part when we do ours. Often we see this in the use of “if/then” passages. Notice Deuteronomy 11:22-23: “For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him – then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.” We see something similar in Psalm 37:4: “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” We like the second part of this verse about getting the desires of our hearts but we must remember that this promise is linked to delighting ourselves in the Lord first. Conditional promises are also found in the New Testament. Here’s one from James 4:10: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

5. Promises must be appropriated and applied by faith. Charles Spurgeon once said: “Do not treat God’s promises as if they were curiosities for a museum; but believe them and use them.” By the exercise of our faith, God’s promises become personal. Hebrews 4:2: “…but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” We’re told that Jesus did not do many miracles in a certain town “because of their lack of faith” (Matthew 13:58).

This is clearly seen with the giving of the land of promise (that would be Wisconsin) in the Book of Joshua. Joshua 21:43: “So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers…” The promise of land was given to them but they had to take hold of the promise to make it their own: “…and they took possession of it and dwelt in it.” Let’s not be like the people...
described in Psalm 106:24: “Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise.”

6. **Don’t be passive about God’s promises.** Friend, if you want to profit from the promises, you can’t be passive about them. **Hebrews 6:12:** “That you do not become sluggish [lazy], but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Charles Finney put it like this: “The promises were made to be used by God’s children, by all who will believe them and appropriate them.” **Proverbs 13:4:** “The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”

7. **Make sure you are spiritually prepared to receive God’s promises.** 1 Samuel 2:30 says that God honors those who honor Him. God is looking for surrendered hearts and for those who are quick to confess sin. **Psalm 66:18:** “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”

8. **Hold on to hope.** Sometimes we have to wait a long time before a promise is fulfilled. **Hebrews 10:23-24:** “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” Don’t give up. Don’t bail when you think God has failed you. He hasn’t. **Hebrews 10:36:** “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” That beautiful promise of verse 4 of Psalm 37: “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” is followed by verse 7: “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him.”

Herbert Lockyer writes: “All God’s promises concerning his own, are dated in heaven and with our finite knowledge we cannot read the time when many of them are to be fulfilled.”

Remember this: “A promise is the assurance that God gives to His people so they can walk by faith...while they wait for Him to work.”

**Walking Through the Word**

*In a world of broken promises, God can be counted on.* I thought it would be good for us to soak up some Scriptures that speak of God’s promises. Let’s worship together as we walk through the Word. Would you close your eyes and allow these promises to do their work in your life right now?
Numbers 23:19: “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

Deuteronomy 1:11-12: “May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised!”

Joshua 23:14-15: “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”

1 Kings 8:24: “You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it – as it is today.”

1 Kings 8:56-57: “Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”

1 Chronicles 17:23: “And now, Lord, let the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house be established forever. Do as you promised.”

Nehemiah 9:8: “You have kept your promise because you are righteous.”

Psalm 77:8: “Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time?”

Psalm 106:12: “Then they believed his promises and sang his praise.”

Psalm 119:50: “My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.”

Psalm 119:116: “Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.”

Psalm 119:162: “I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil.”

Psalm 145:13: “The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.”
Malachi 3:10: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!’”

2 Corinthians 7:1: “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

It strikes me that our missionaries are serving Christ in hard places because they have learned how to claim the promises of God. One reason they serve the Savior is because of His promise to save people from every nation, tribe and tongue.

➔ Deshon Interview

1. 

2. 

3. 

Powerful Promise Passages

Let’s look a bit more closely at two key passages as we set the table for the rest of the series.

2 Peter 1:3-4: “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Isn’t it comforting to know that God has already given us everything we need to live our life and grow in godliness? I see two things that we’re called to do.

Unleash God’s power. Friend, do you know that you don’t need another book or blessing or seminar or experience if you know Jesus? Notice the past tense: “has given to us all things…” You have all that you need right now to be all that God wants you to be – the “all things” means everything!
Utilize God’s promises. God’s promises are great and they are precious. The word “great” is the superlative root word “megas,” which means exceedingly outstanding. The word “precious” means prized and of such great value that a suitable price is hard to estimate.

His promises are to be prized because they are precious. God’s promises are mega magnificent! John Bunyan, who spent much of his life in prison for his faith, wrote these words: “The pathway of life is strewn so thickly with the promises of God that it is impossible to take one step without treading upon one of them.”

Notice the two benefits of appropriating these promises:

We get closer to the Savior: “…that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.”
We get farther from sin: “…having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

In a world of broken promises, God can be counted on.

Turn now to 2 Corinthians 1:20: “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” The promises of God are not “yes” and then “no.” They are not “I don’t know” or “Maybe so.” The promises of God are yes in Yeshua.

The context here is that some Christians were accusing Paul of breaking his promises because his travel plans changed and he was not able to come to Corinth. That could have happened to me Thursday night. I told a number of Edgewood runners in the “Run for God” ministry that I would be running the Bix at 6. When I saw the weather, I chickened out and was a no-show. They could think I was a promise breaker. What they don’t know is that I was hoping it would rain so I had an excuse to not go…

In Paul’s day, some people were even casting doubt on the message of Christ that he preached so he wrote back to establish that he was not a promise breaker. And God certainly isn’t either. I wrote down these statements as I reflected on this passage.

God’s promises are many, running from Genesis to Revelation. These promises are made by God Himself and therefore will be kept.
These promises reflect God’s character.  

These promises are established beyond all doubt.  The word “yes” is Greek and means certain and true.  Someone has said that God’s favorite word is “yes.”  “Amen” is Hebrew and means “so be it” or “it’s already done.”  It can also mean “fully accomplished.”

All of God’s promises are fulfilled in the person of Christ.  We could say that all of the conditional promises are kept by Christ.  We could change the “if” to “since.”  Since He has fulfilled all of the Father’s conditions, then all God’s promises come through Him because Immanuel is God’s Amen.  Revelation 3:14: “These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.”

These promises come through Christ but must be claimed by us.  One must know Christ in order to claim the promises that come through the Promised One.  God is looking for people who say “yes” and “Amen” to Him.

These promises are given for the glory of God, not just for our good.  God gets the glory “through us” when we take Him at His Word.

Saved by a Promise

Aren’t you glad that salvation has nothing to do with our promises to God but rather with His promises to us?  Have you received the promise of eternal life?  1 John 2:25: “And this is what he promised us – even eternal life.”  This will be our topic next week.  Until you have believed and received, God’s promises will not be accessible to you.

You need to know that there is extreme urgency in being saved by Christ.  One day it will be too late.  That’s a promise.  But because God is patient, He is giving you time right now to decide to follow His Son.  2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

If you’re ready to receive the promise of forgiveness and eternal life, then confess that you are a sinner and repent of the way you’ve been living.  Believe that Jesus is the Promised One and that when He died on the cross He did so as your substitute.  He’s paid the price for all your sins.  But none of this is applied to you until you surrender and receive Him into your life.  You can do that right now.

Action and Interaction
Here are a couple ways to allow God’s promises to percolate in your life.

1. **As you read your Bible underline every promise you come across.** See if you can find 30,000!
2. **Share these promises with your family and friends.** I was struck by a post I saw on Facebook this week about two young Edgewood guys:
   “Amazing 6 mile run! With my bro...last 2 miles nothing but scripture back and forth, our strength doesn’t come from only ourselves but from God almighty himself.”

God’s entire communication with us can be put into two words: “I Promise.” We don’t have to worry if He will make good on what He has promised because He never over-promises and He never under-delivers. When His Son died, he guaranteed that those who are adopted into His family through faith will inherit all that He has promised. *In a world of broken promises, God can be counted on.*

Dwight L. Moody once said, “Take the promises of God. Let a man feed for a month on the promises of God, and he will not talk about how poor he is. You hear people say, ‘Oh, my leanness! How lean I am!’ It is not their leanness it is their laziness. If you would only read from Genesis to Revelation and see all the promises made by God to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to the Jews and to the Gentiles, and to all His people everywhere – if you would spend a month feeding on the precious promises of God – you wouldn’t be going about complaining how poor you are. You would lift up your head and proclaim the riches of His Grace, because you couldn’t help doing it!”

In short when we dive into the promises of God we’ll spend less time complaining about our problems and spend more time praising. And that’s not false advertising!

Closing Song: “He Has Made Me Glad”