



Covenant PPT #3

Welcome to the opening doors, to discipleship module on covenant community. We all want to belong. When we commit to God's covenant, we become part of something bigger than ourselves.

For Christians, covenant communities of belonging can be the families we are related to, or our church family. Everyone must decide what it means to belong to their families of birth or their families of choice.

Our responsibilities for each family member may differ and may change drastically over time and circumstance. These covenant communities require a living into, and sometimes a living apart from in our daily lives.

What does it mean to say yes to the covenant community? We call the church within the church. We are now connected in deep ways to people, to whom we are not related, but to whom we now belong, it cannot be stressed enough.

We worship a covenant, making an, a covenant, keeping God in the Old Testament. The covenant God made with creation itself with Noah, with Abraham and Sarah Moses and David.

Those covenants are not kept very well yet. God continues to renew the covenant. The story goes from bad to worse from Kings to divided kingdoms until the devastation of the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the temple.

The people of Israel are at a loss. It seems God has deserted them. The prophet Ezechiel was called by God to tell the people of Israel about their failure to uphold their end of the covenant and its serious consequences.

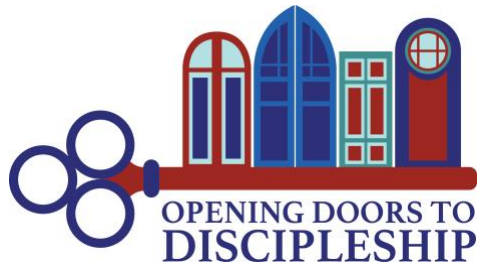
But the good news was that God had not and would not abandon them. His vision is of a valley filled with the dry dead bones of God's exile to people.

God, we breathe new life into those dry bones and the unfaithful people could try again. God would do this because God is ever faithful.

The covenant theme that began in the Old Testament is carried into the new Testament and connected to Jesus Christ. Paul picks up the new covenant theme and runs with it.

He connects this to the newly formed covenant community's celebration of Jesus's last meal with his disciples. Paul sees Jesus essential role in renewing this covenant and bringing it to fulfillment.

Paul also broadens the new covenant communities to include Gentiles. This is a bold and radical move, but Paul believes that just as Abraham was included, despite not having the law.



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So to the Gentiles are welcomed. The gospel writers also use the concept of the new covenant.

However, since they are writing to particular and varied covenant communities, they tailor their messages appropriately.

The people who first encountered the gospel of Jesus Christ, bring with them, their Jewish Greek, or Roman education and economic backgrounds.

There's a lot of diversity to be incorporated into the new covenant communities. The writers and the people must be creative to find ways to express their new found faith.

Christianity was pre-reading fast throughout the Roman empire. There was no time for across the board agreement and no possible way that these new covenant communities now called churches would have uniform beliefs and worshiping practices.

Two of the earliest attempts to state what the church believes, where the Nicene creed and the apostle creed. The nice increase says the following about the church quote.

We believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic church end quote, the apostles. Creed is slightly different. Quote, I believe in the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints we don't use or hear this language today, unless we were affirming our faith in a worship setting using these ancient creeds, the creeds reflect what the early church hoped.

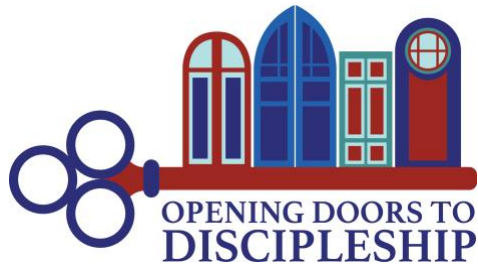
The church would become one holy Catholic apostolic and a communion of saints. As the first apostles were sent into the world, baptizing, preaching and teaching.

So disciples throughout history and today carry the church of Christ mission. Alas. The church has failed often to meet these high standards.

And yet God is faithful. God keeps inviting humanity to belong to God's family. God keeps adopting everyone as siblings in Christ Jesus.

For those within the reform tradition, our official belonging occurs with baptism. God reaches out and we, or our families respond.

Water is the sign of our belonging. God's mark on us cannot be washed away. Our lives are changed because we are called children of God.



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God's promises are forever. We affirm this every time a baptism occurs. And if we celebrate the renewal of baptism, we are affirming we are part of the new covenant.

The church still follows. Paul's early teaching and remembers the new covenant. Every time we celebrate communion also called Lord's supper.

Some of our communion tables have the words do this in remembrance of me carved into them. So reminded of this covenant of Jesus Christ and of the holy spirit who helps the church keep its end of the bargain.

This is a family table and Christ. Jesus invites us to join him at a meal. What an image, a family reunion.

Every time we celebrate, we belong and there's always space at the table for anyone who wants to eat and drink with us.

This table always has room. The church is not like any other organization to which we might belong. We are now children of God and always will be no matter how many times we fail or the church fails.

And no matter if life goes from bad to worse, we belong to a covenant making and covenant keeping God, God will never abandon us in this life or the next reformed theology affirms that God is in the center of our stories.

God has always been at the heart of the covenant and now the covenant is written on our hearts and in our lives, if someone asks you, what is your only comfort in life and death, remember you are not your own, but you belong body and soul in life and death to your faithful savior.

Jesus Christ. Amen. Thank you for joining us for this module about the covenant community. Also known as the church, you are invited to continue exploring in this module by doing some of the reflection questions and continuing your reading.