Principles for New Covenant Living

This session covers:

- Four basic principles for New Covenant living
- How we enter the New Covenant by taking our own walk unto death

This session corresponds to:

- Chapter 13 of Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ book
- Session 8 of Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ CDs

As we learn to hold fast to the covenant, no matter what we see happening around us, there are several principles that we must live by in order to inherit the full measure of God’s promises. We will look at four of these in this session.

Four Principles for New Covenant Living

1. We must take our own walk unto death.

   - In Session 2, when we discussed the steps in ancient covenant making, remember that one of the steps specified that each party to the covenant was to take their own walk unto death.
   - Recall that the walk unto death took place after the animal had been cut into halves from head to tail. Each party to the agreement had walked through the pieces of the sacrificial animal and made their vow to the other. They would face each other, look to heaven, and say something like this: “Do to me as has been done to this animal if I break this covenant. If I fail to keep this covenant, may I die even as this animal has died.”
- Remember also that Jesus, mankind’s New Covenant representative, took the walk unto death on behalf of all men and women. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39), He was saying in essence, “I will cut the covenant. I will take the walk unto death. I will be the covenant sacrifice. I will be the mediator of the New Covenant.”

- As we have previously seen, the New Covenant was cut between the heavenly Father and Jesus. We enter the New Covenant by faith in the finished work of Jesus at the cross and by taking our own walk unto death. To do this, we must believe that Jesus’ death on the cross paid for our sins and we must surrender our lives to God.

- Just as the ancients entered into covenant by taking their own walk unto death—vowing their very life to covenant devotion—we must make a similar statement of surrender to God: “Let me be as this slain animal [let me die] if I don't keep my part of the covenant.”

- Entering into a covenant relationship with God requires that we take our own walk unto death. We must take it for the first time by really surrendering our life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And then we should take it on a daily basis by continuing to live for Jesus rather than for ourselves.

- As we understand this aspect of the covenant ceremony, the words of Jesus take on a much deeper meaning. Look at some of His sayings to all who would follow Him:

  And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?” (Luke 9:23-25).

  Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions” (Luke 14:25-33).
Everyone who wants to follow after Jesus is required to deny themselves. We must place Him above all earthly desires, take up our own crosses daily, and follow Him with our whole heart. We are called to take our own walk unto death by surrendering our lives to Christ everyday.

This may be the most important principle in positioning ourselves to be blessed by God. Jesus stated the importance of this principle in Matthew 6:33 when He said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." In this verse of Scripture, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness implies that we place Him above anyone or anything. It means that we deny ourselves, dying to our own plans, desires, and purposes so that we can follow Him fully.

As we make this type of decision in our hearts and keep doing it day after day, He will shower us with His blessings.

The walk unto death is illustrated powerfully in the book of Ruth. In Chapter 1, Naomi's two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, both made a decision to follow Naomi back to Bethlehem (which means the house of bread). But only Ruth returned with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem. Note Ruth's attitude toward Naomi:

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me," When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. So they both went until they came to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16-19).

It was not until Ruth made this declaration of surrender and commitment—her own walk unto death—that she returned to Bethlehem. And it was only in Bethlehem that she experienced blessings, such as gleaning from the fields, marrying Boaz, and giving birth to King David's grandfather. This beautiful love story reiterates the point that we position ourselves to be blessed only after we have taken our own walk unto death.

The first step to success in covenant living is to take the walk unto death—a once and for all surrender to Jesus Christ and His purposes. And when we sense our commitment waning, to take up the cross afresh and once again yield entirely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is the lifestyle that positions us for blessing!

2. We must expect a blessing.

Expecting a blessing is another foundational principle for successful covenant living. This sounds simple, but few believers actually expect God's goodness in their lives. Though we have been redeemed from the curse, many of us have a greater expectation of bad things happening than good things.
There was a television commercial out recently where a man went through a series of trials. He felt like he had passed through them, but as he was walking along, a piano fell on his head. This is the way many Christians live—waiting for the piano to fall on their heads. Rather than looking up to God, expecting His goodness to fall upon us in every circumstance, we expect the piano to fall on our head.

God doesn't want us to live this way. He doesn't want us to live expecting trouble, problems, failures, sicknesses, poverty, lack, oppression, and defeat. He desires that we go through life expecting to be blessed, expecting good things to come our way, and expecting victory over every obstacle.

When opposition comes into our lives, as it certainly will, God wants us to overcome. When we expect a blessing, we no longer grumble at the problem, but thank God that He is the way of escape; we get our eyes off the circumstances and focus on covenant promises; we stop magnifying the devil and his work, and start praising the Lord for His power and strength.

In expecting a blessing, we are not suggesting a presumptuous attitude toward God that demands His blessings. We are not implying that we have the kind of “faith” preached by some faith teachers that has caused many to be greatly disappointed, even disillusioned in their walk with God.

God wants us to maintain an attitude that doesn't deny the reality of the circumstance, but in the face of opposition, expresses true hope, faith, trust, and expectancy in God.

The story of Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego illustrates this kind of attitude. As they were about to be cast into the furnace of blazing fire, they said:

If it be so [if they were to be cast into the fire], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up (Dan. 3:17-18, emphasis mine).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego demonstrated three basic traits of faith. First, they believed God was able and powerful enough to deliver them. Second, they believed He desired to deliver them. That is, they expected Him to actually come through. They were not looking for the piano to fall on them in the furnace. They were expecting God to deliver them from death. Finally, they were not presumptuous; they didn't demand that God set them free. Even if they died with the promise unfulfilled, they were not going to turn from a lifestyle of worshiping and obeying God. Nor were they going to get angry with God and question Him about His ways. They were not going to turn from Him saying that He doesn't answer prayers. Even if God did not come through, they were going to keep walking with Him until death.

This kind of an expectant attitude, while not presuming upon God, is a healthy one for positioning ourselves for blessings. Therefore, begin-
ning today, begin to expect a blessing.

3. We must stand against the curse.

- Although we are redeemed from the curse of sin, death, and the Law in Christ, the devil still roams about seeking whom he can devour. He wants to bring symptoms of the curse into our lives.
- It is in this context that the third principle of living in covenant blessings is set—we must stand against the curse. We must stand against the curses that inevitably come against our life, family, church, business, city, or nation.
- Often the Church is far too passive when it comes to standing against the curse. Some people live for years, some even a lifetime, allowing the curse to rule their lives. Some never begin to fight the fight of faith. Some even live with a divided heart, wondering if the symptoms of the curse are from the devil or God.
- The Bible calls us to stand against the devil and his work in our life. Note a few Scriptures about our fight of faith:

  
  **Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).**

  Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

  Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

  For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm (Eph. 6:12-13).

- The devil continues to roam about, seeking to kill, steal, and destroy. Jesus has promised us that we can overcome the devil by faith since He overcame the devil on the cross.
- For us to overcome, we must take off an attitude of complacency, passivity, and tolerance toward the works of the enemy and put on an attitude of aggressive faith that fights for the blessings of God.
- We can fight in many ways. We can praise and worship. We can pray. We can confess, proclaim, declare, or decree the truths of God as acts of spiritual warfare. And we can believe in faith. Let the Holy Spirit show you how to fight. But fight! Faith is a fight.
• If you are trying to accomplish something of value for the kingdom of God, the devil will come against you. Either through oppression, depression, discouragement, sickness, lack, or accusation, the devil will attack.

• But we are in covenant with God, we are not under the symptoms of the curse, and we should not accept anything less than the full measure of God’s blessings.

• As we become militant toward the enemy and his lies against us, as we take our position in the heavenly realm, seated with Jesus far above all rule, principality, and authority, and resist the work of the devil, God will come to our aid and the devil will flee just like the Bible promises.

• The Word works, but we must be aggressive in standing against the curse. We must stand on the promises of God and resist the curse.

4. We must live by the Spirit.

• The fourth principle for New Covenant living is to develop your spirit-man so that you can live in and by the Spirit of God.

• Why is this connected to successful New Covenant living? Look at several Scriptures that highlight this connection:

  "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).

Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:5-6).

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:13-14).

• Jeremiah prophesied that under the New Covenant, the Law would be
put into our heart so that we would know right from wrong, have wisdom to make proper decisions, and be equipped to know God in an intimate way.

- These magnificent promises come to us through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us in Christ. In these last two references, Paul tells us very clearly that the Old Covenant was of the letter, but the New Covenant is of the Holy Spirit. He writes that the blessings of God are ours because we have been given the Holy Spirit.

- How do we live by the Spirit? Very briefly, living by the Spirit is the skill of recognizing the voice of God in every situation and following Him fully. Living by the Spirit involves obeying the Scriptures, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit continuously. Spirit-led living includes nourishing and strengthening our spirit-man so that our soul is yielded to the Spirit and we become sensitive to the voice of God.

- Whatever the issue, whatever the problem, the Holy Spirit will lead us to the solution. He is for us, wants the best for us, and will lead us into the blessings of God. Though learning to live by the Spirit is a life-long journey, and it often requires major transitions from the way we are used to living, the rewards of a Spirit-led life far outweigh the price of changing our lifestyle.

- Therefore, it is imperative that as people who desire the blessings of God, we learn to live by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-led living enables us to know the truth, produce the fruit of the Spirit, be transformed into the character of Jesus, operate in the gifts of the Spirit, and experience the blessings of God.

Each of these four foundational principles is essential to a life that really experiences the blessings of God. Each represents a truth that must be matured and perfected throughout life. But each principle can also be enacted today as you begin your journey of being blessed. Get started now and enjoy the great adventure.
Review Questions

**True or False**

1. In order to live by covenant, we must take a walk unto death.
2. To live by covenant, we must expect a blessing.
3. To live by covenant, we must learn to ignore Satan’s attack against us.
4. Living by the Holy Spirit helps us to live in the blessings of God.
5. In covenant with God, we are not subject to the symptoms of the curse, and we should not accept anything less than the full measure of God’s blessings.
6. The walk unto death is another way of saying that we must offer our life to the Lord in absolute surrender.
7. Over the years, the Church has done a good job of taking an aggressive stand against the enemy.
8. We can fight the enemy in many ways, but praise and worship is not one of them since it should be reserved totally toward honoring God.
9. Living by the Spirit is the skill of recognizing the voice of God in every situation and following Him fully.
10. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are good examples of walking by faith.

**Short Answers and Fill in the Blank**

11. What Scripture passage from the book of Ruth describes what it means to take the walk unto death? ________________

12. ________________ a blessing is a foundational principle to inherit the blessings of God.

13. People who desire the blessings of God must learn to live by the leading of the ________________ ________________.

14. Although we are redeemed from the curse of sin, death, and the Law, the devil still roams about seeking whom he can devour. What must we do to resist him? ________________ ________________ ________________.
15. Often the Church is far too ____________ when it comes to standing against the curse.

From the list on the right, identify the five that best describe how to live in the reality of the New Covenant.

____ 16.
____ 17.
____ 18.
____ 19.
____ 20.

Possible Matches for 16-20

a. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.
b. The blessings of Abraham
c. Take a walk unto death.
d. A better covenant based on better promises.
e. Expect a blessing.
f. Stand against the curse.
g. The New Covenant was cut between the Father and the Son.
h. Live by the Spirit.
i. In the face of opposition, express true hope, faith, trust, and expectancy in God.