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## How Reliable Are Your Promises?

**2 Peter 3:13:** (NASB) *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*



We all have had the experience of making or receiving a promise that was not kept. When you think about it, the experience is a sad one, for with a broken promise comes some level of a damaged trust towards the one who did not deliver. Over time this can lead to all kinds of deep and permanent damage to our relationships. What makes a promise? How do we better keep our promises? What about God? What had He promised us, and is He keeping His promises?

### Are some promises more breakable than others?

The Scriptures present three basic groups of promises. First, there is a self-committal without ceremony. This is the most common:

**Promise:** Strong's #1862 epaggelma (ep-ang'-el-mah); a self-committal (by assurance of conferring some good): KJV - promise.

**2 Peter 1:4:** God is saying it, so we expect it will be fulfilled. This is the type of promise where one would say, "My word is my bond."

🔊 Introduction, *How to Keep a Promise*, [www.howcast.com](http://www.howcast.com)

- *Keeping a promise offers many rewards. Highlight your impressive moral character by following through on a promise you made to yourself or to someone else. You will need a pen and paper, organization, and commitment.*

Second, a self-committal or agreement with ceremony:

**Covenant:** (Old Testament) Strong's #1285 beriyth (ber-eeth'); from 1262 (in the sense of cutting [like 1254]); a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh): Properly, of a covenant between man and man; i.e. a solemn compact or agreement, either between tribes or nations, or between individuals, by which each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions, and was assured of receiving certain advantages. In making such a covenant, God was solemnly invoked as witness, whence the expression "a covenant of Jehovah." Accordingly a breach of covenant was regarded as a very heinous sin.

**Malachi 2:14:** A marriage ceremony is a good example of this. Asking God to bless the promise is invoking another level.

🔊 Introduction, *A Promise Kept, Locke High School's Turnaround*, [www.UsEd.org](http://www.UsEd.org)

- *Before the transition, Locke was a pretty chaotic place. There wasn't much learning going on, kids ran the school, gangs ran the school, it was just an uncomfortable place to be for an adult, let alone a kid.*
- *(Student) Teachers were really lazy. They would just sit down, read a book or something and just tell people, "Oh, copy the board."*
- *(Student) Or you could just walk out of school and they wouldn't say anything. They would ignore you.*
- *Kids were feeding off the negativity, dissension, and aimless wandering.*

The third and final type is a self-committal to God:

**Vow:** (Old Testament) Strong's #5087 nadar (naw-dar'); to promise (to do or give something to God):

**Deuteronomy 23:21-22:** We don't want to be disappointing the Lord God Almighty!

### How do we react when we break our promises?

Here are a couple of great biblical promises: **Ruth 1:16** **John 15:13-14:** Notice this command is conditional - if you do...

🔊 Step 1, *How to Keep a Promise*, [www.howcast.com](http://www.howcast.com)

- *Step 1: Write down promises you have made to yourself and others on a piece of paper. Break down big promises into smaller steps.*

**Peter's denial was predicted:** **Matthew 26:31-35:** Peter's promise is emphatic - perhaps partly as a gut reaction to the shocking prophecy that Jesus just gave, and partly because he actually, in that moment, believed what he said.

🔊 Student and teacher reaction, *A Promise Kept, Locke High School's Turnaround*, [www.UsEd.org](http://www.UsEd.org)

- *A sweeping change was needed to change what was going on at Locke.*



- (Student) ...everybody knows everybody. Every eighth grade has their own counselors and teachers. It's very nice to be here in school.
- (Student) We actually have class now, and that's something I like and never saw since we've been here at Locke. It's a beautiful environment.
- (Student) The teachers do care what we are doing overall. They want to see us succeed, and we want to succeed for them and for us.
- I think the main difference that Green Dot has brought to Locke is the small learning community. The cornerstone of our success is in the fact that we are able to make relationships with students and have the students actually buy into themselves.

So this means someone made a promise and kept it. It brought about huge change for this Los Angeles school.

Sometime, however, promises are just words used to pacify a circumstance.

**Peter's denial - a bit later that night:** Luke 22:54-58: Here we have two denials within a very short time. Lying is often the result of the breaking of a promise, which ends up requiring backup - in this case a second lie...



**Promises build basic trust, Anne Corwin (author of children's books), [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)**

- New Year's resolutions are not just for adults. This is actually the perfect opportunity for teaching your kids the value of making and keeping promises. What promises do is they build what is called basic trust. As human beings, one of the highest priorities we have for survival is being able to trust others. It builds intimate, connective relationships with others, and of course that's what you want to establish with your child. So you want to model what a promise is. So for example, if your child says, "I'm going to take my new ball out to the cul-de-sac, and I'm going to share it with everyone and play with everybody out in the cul-de-sac," what you want to do is get down to their level, make that eye to eye contact with them and say, "I think you just promised me something. You said you were going to take that new ball out, and you were going to play with the kids in the neighborhood. That's great! I love that promise."

It is good to teach integrity at an early age. We want to get them excited about keeping their word.

**Soon Peter denied Jesus yet a third time:** Luke 22:59-62: Obviously Jesus was close enough to both see and hear what had happened! It was heartbreaking. Peter realized how foolish and weak he was. Don't we feel that way when we break our promises? Yes, if our consciences are functioning correctly.

### Does God keep His promises?

Let's take a closer look at a few of the many promises of God. These particular promises serve as a template for the types of promises that we have an opportunity to make and to keep.

Genesis 1:27-28: God's act of creation and His word were promises to the human race of their dominion over the earth. This promise was given and kept. He did not remove the dominion, even after Adam sinned.



**Steps 2 and 3, How to Keep a Promise, [www.howcast.com](http://www.howcast.com)**

- Step 2: Organize your schedule in order to keep promises.
- Step 3: Track the progress of your promises in a journal.

Some of God's promises have conditions attached. This can be seen as a "two-edged promise," one that produces good on the side of conditions being met and one with consequences on the side of conditions being violated.

**Here is an example:** Genesis 2:16-17: God promised life everlasting to human beings! Eating of the garden's trees would allow man to live forever. But this was conditional that Adam *not* eat of the one tree. Adam, of course, defied the condition and as a result was subject to the *other* half of this two-edged promise.

**Some of God's promises are emphatic and multi-faceted!** Hebrews 6:13-18: Because God could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself. If God has the integrity that we say God has, then we can be certain that this promise will come true.

This was a detailed promise that would take a long time to completely fulfill, but notice that only one particular facet was fulfilled - that Abraham's seed would multiply greatly. This can only mean that the other facets are yet to come! It is a guarantee.



Follow the lesson through, *Anne Corwin (author of children's books)*

*And when they come in and they've actually fulfilled that promise, you want to say to them, "You know what? You said you were going to take your ball out and share it with all of your friends. You promised me that you were going to do that, and that's exactly what you did. That's great! That's what we do in our family!" So when you think about resolutions and you think about promises with kids, don't just ask them to promise, or don't just promise them - especially if you don't think you will be able to keep your promise - but think to yourself, I want to teach my kids the concept of resolutions and promises. The only way to do that is to be concrete and show them when they did it and then congratulate them when they do and say, "Hey, you should be so proud of yourself because you promised and your promise came true!"*

**Some of God's promises are hard and fearsome!** Amos 3:1-2

**How do we become better promise keepers?**

A promise keeper is **HUMBLE**. An accurate assessment of one's self is an important starting place: Psalms 24:1-6: The earth is the Lord's. Man was given dominion over the earth, but it still belongs to God. Humility brings us to genuine appreciation of God, which makes us want to be people of integrity and will bring us vindication and salvation. We have to be honest about our limitations, because that will influence the kind of promises we can make.

Step 4, *How to Keep a Promise*, [www.howcast.com](http://www.howcast.com)

- Step 4: *Examine the consequences you will encounter if you break a promise.*

A promise keeper is **NOT** focused on how things look; rather they are **FOCUSED ON WHAT IS REAL**. Matthew 23:27-28: If we aren't keeping our promises, we can look very nice on the outside but not be right on the inside.

Results, *A Promise Kept, Locke High School's Turnaround*, [www.UsEd.org](http://www.UsEd.org)

- (Student) *I feel like I'm being pushed, even if I don't want to, to do something.*
- (Student) *...My hopes of going to a four-year university have changed tremendously.*
- *...they are here not because their friends are here, but because they want to do something with themselves. They are here because they finally believe. I think that you feel that culture at every single Green Dot school, including Locke.*

A promise keeper is **CONVICTED** in their direction. James 5:12

Do what you say, *Danielle LaPorte*, [positivelypositive.com](http://positivelypositive.com)

- *I'm going to give you the secret of success. Are you ready for it? Lean in. Do what you say you are going to do. No "rounding up," saying I'll get it to you tomorrow when you really mean maybe I'll get it to you tomorrow, maybe I'll get it to you the next day. No more leaving the room after you've made a commitment to someone and then think to yourself, well, they didn't really hear me, and she's not going to take me seriously, so I don't really have to do it. Just do what you say you're going to do. It is one of the most creative, empowering, godly acts.*

A promise keeper is **MATURE**. Ephesians 4:14-15

A promise keeper is **WILLING TO MEND HIS WAYS** swiftly and generously. Luke 19:2-9

**What should we promise to others?**

**Shouldn't we promise God what is reasonable? What is reasonable?** Psalms 116:12-14: The benefits God gives to us **far outweigh** anything we can give back to Him. We owe Him everything. Pay your vows to God.

Deuteronomy 23:21-22: As a follower of Christ, we have promised God everything. No compromising!

Steps 5 and 6, *How to Keep a Promise*, [www.howcast.com](http://www.howcast.com)

- Step 5: *Make promises that you can keep.*
- Step 6: *Do not make up excuses that will deter you from fulfilling your promises.*

**We should promise our spouse the complete fulfillment of our covenant:** Genesis 2:21-24

Promise kept, *Locke High School's Turnaround*, [www.UsEd.org](http://www.UsEd.org)

- (Student) *You feel that the school is nicer for you to walk around and be a part of your school, and tell kids that you come here. Before I was embarrassed...*



(Student) ...The promise that Green Dot said they were going to make school better for us, a safe environment, and just overall a place that we can come and actually learn. And so far they are keeping a promise that LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School District) couldn't keep, which is to let us succeed.

**We should promise our family the care they deserve:** 1 Timothy 5:8: This promise is based on taking responsibility. We aren't to slack off. We need to give our effort and integrity.



**Become divinely predictable, Danielle LaPorte, [positivelypositive.com](http://positivelypositive.com)**

- *You begin to value your word. You become more discerning, more selective with what you commit to. Your promises really become promises. Your love really does get delivered. You build trust for yourself; you build respect for yourself and from others.*
- *You become predictable in the most divine sense of the word. Of course, at times life intervenes and you can't do what you said you were going to do. In those cases, you tell the truth and you tell it fast. You show up with sincerity and you alter the plan and you get back to the place where you can do what you say you are going to do.*

**We should promise the brotherhood our support:** Galatians 6:2: Note we are supposed to help them to bear the weight of their responsibility, not remove it and take it on ourselves.

**We should promise the brotherhood our prayerful devotion:** James 5:13-16: This shows mutual accountability and prayer. This is a promise we ought to make and keep.

**We should promise all men our respect and love:** Galatians 6:9-10

**We should promise ourselves a decisive devotion:** Joshua 24:15: So, we promise God, our spouse, our family, our brethren, the world around us, and finally we promise ourselves that we will live a devoted life.

#### What are God's promises to the world?



**Step 7, How to Keep a Promise, [www.howcast.com](http://www.howcast.com)**

- *Step 7: Recommit yourself if you break a promise. Apologize to others if you've let them down and then get back on track.*

If you break a promise, face it and move forward. Don't let it discourage you or freeze your actions.

**God has promised his unwavering word and will, given for our ultimate benefit:** Isaiah 55:8-11: This is like a giant security blanket from God! **God has promised an ending to this society of sin and death on earth:** 2 Peter 3:10-13: The word "new" here actually means "renewed." Fire can both destroy *and* purify. Symbolically, fire destroys the old and purifies it so that it can become renewed with a system of righteousness. God has promised this destiny to all mankind on earth. God promised heaven to the followers of Christ, but there is an additional level of promises in the Bible from God for the "everybody else." **God had promised and prepared a heavenly reward for Jesus' true followers:** John 14:1-3

**God has promised a destiny for all men - it is a good destiny and it is an earthly destiny:** Micah 4:1-4: Zion represents the true followers of Christ, through which God's word will go out to the nations. The nations will no longer be at war. Along with shelter and sustenance, the nations will need to care for themselves. Man will keep his dominion, but can now create a kingdom on earth under the rule of God through Christ and the true followers of Christ. *God promised the kingdom to everybody.* This is one of many similar promises God made to mankind. Refer to Isaiah 35, for example. This is a future reality guaranteed to be.

Promises are made to be kept. God promised and will deliver - what about you?

1 Thessalonians 5:24: (NASB) *Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*

***So how reliable are our promises?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,  
Think about it...!***