
A STUDY GUIDE AND WORKBOOK

STONES OF REMEMBRANCE

*A Study of God's Promises Then, and a Record of
His Faithfulness Now*

“Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of
Israel had failed; all came to pass.”

JOSHUA 21:45, ESV

Introduction

Scripture diagnoses humanity's deepest recurring failure not as a lapse of memory but as a lapse of trust — forgetting God's word and character by displacing them with self-reliance, pride, or the voice of another (Gen 3:6; Deut 8:14; Heb 3:12). Salvation itself is by grace through faith, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8–9); the practices this study commends are not the ground of that salvation but the ordinary means by which God sustains and evidences it in His people, keeping their confidence firm to the end (Heb 3:13–14; Phil 1:6; John 10:28–29). Because God knows His people's tendency to forget, He has graciously and repeatedly given them tangible means of remembrance — altars, stones, feasts, and ordinances — so that His promises would be kept alive across generations (Josh 4:6–7; 1 Sam 7:12; 1 Cor 11:24–25). Joshua could declare that “not one word of all the LORD’s good promises had failed” (Josh 21:45) precisely because Israel was equipped to remember them. This study catalogs those promises — fulfilled in whole or in part, given to individuals or to all God's people — as raw material for that same kind of remembrance: a resource for believers to exhort one another daily, hold fast their confidence, and build their own altars of remembrance for the generation that follows.

A Working Definition: Biblical Forgetfulness

Biblical forgetting (Hebrew, ‘shakach’) is not primarily a cognitive failure — data slipping from memory — but a covenantal failure: ceasing to let a known truth about God’s character or word continue to govern present trust and action.

It is typically triggered by:

- Pride or self-sufficiency — comfort or success displacing dependence on God (Deut 8:11–14)
- Self-trust over God’s word — elevating one’s own perception, reasoning, or experience above what God has said (Gen 3:6)
- Being led astray by others — trusting a competing voice in place of God’s clear word, sometimes while bystanders who know better stay silent (Gen 3:6; 2 Cor 11:3)

It is evidenced not by an admission of memory loss, but by the outward act of disobedience that follows — hearing without doing is, definitionally, a form of forgetting (James 1:22–25).

Types of Altars

Throughout Scripture, God's people mark what He has done in six recognizable ways. Each type resurfaces across this study — they're named here up front so they're recognizable wherever they appear.

STONE — A fixed, physical marker set at the site of God's action. Jacob's pillar at Bethel (Gen 28:18); the twelve stones at Gilgal (Josh 4:1–9); Samuel's Ebenezer (1 Sam 7:12).

PRACTICE — A repeated rite or rhythm, observed again and again rather than built once. Passover (Exod 12:14); the Sabbath (Exod 31:12–17); the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19); confession (1 John 1:9).

NAMING — Scripture's most portable and personal altar. To name a place, an object, or a child after what God has done is to build a memorial that requires no pilgrimage and no physical object to preserve — only a word, spoken and repeated by anyone who knows it. Yahweh Yireh (Gen 22:14); Bethel and Peniel (Gen 28:19; 32:30); Samuel (1 Sam 1:20); Ichabod (1 Sam 4:21); Jesus (Matt 1:21).

WRITING — Scripture's own historical narratives, preserved specifically so future generations would not forget. Psalm 78:4–7; the flood, the exodus, and Jericho (Gen 6–9; Exod 1–15; Josh 6); Jonah; the reign of David (1–2 Samuel); the four Gospels (John 20:31).

SPIRIT — Not an object at all, but a living Person, indwelling every believer to bring God's word to remembrance. John 14:26; Ephesians 1:13–14; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

CHURCH — The gathered people themselves, described as living stones still being built into one house. 1 Peter 2:4–10; Ephesians 2:19–22; Hebrews 10:24–25.

The first four are occasional — set up at a particular moment, for a particular purpose, by a particular generation. The last two are abiding — given without interruption to every believer, in every era. What that distinction means, and why it matters, is unpacked in full further on (see 'Three Altars That Remain').

Altars Require Engagement

No altar in this study functions automatically. A stone left unexplained is just a stone; Joshua's twelve stones only serve their purpose when a child asks “what do these stones mean to you?” and someone answers (Josh 4:6–7). A feast observed without explanation is just a meal. A name spoken without its story is just a sound. Every altar in Scripture requires a second act beyond its own existence: someone must engage it, explain it, retell it, and receive it.

This holds even for the greatest and final altar this study traces — the Holy Spirit Himself, promised in John 14:26 to bring God's own words to remembrance in every believer. Unlike every other entry in this catalog, the Spirit is not an object, a name, or a rite; He is a living Person, indwelling every believer permanently and unconditionally (John 14:16–17). But this can never become an excuse for passivity. Scripture commands believers not to grieve Him (Eph 4:30) or quench Him (1 Thess 5:19), to actively feed on the word He works with (Ps 119:11), and to ask directly for His help (Luke 11:13). Even the most gracious, most permanent altar in all of Scripture still calls for relationship, not mere possession. If this is true of the Spirit Himself, it is certainly true of every stone, name, feast, and page in this study — including the blank pages at the back of this very document. They will do nothing on their own. They exist to be engaged.

Three Altars That Remain: Word, Spirit, and Church

‘Types of Altars’ named the Word, the Spirit, and the Church as abiding rather than occasional — given to every believer, in every era, without interruption. This study treats them as the ones the rest are ultimately in service of.

The Word is Scripture itself, preserved specifically so that no generation would need to reconstruct what God has said from memory alone. Psalm 78 states the principle directly: “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done... that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God” (Ps 78:4, 7). Nearly every historical narrative in Scripture is, in this sense, an altar in written form — the flood and the ark, the exodus from Egypt, the crossings at the Red Sea and the Jordan, the walls of Jericho, Jonah and Nineveh, David’s kingship, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, recorded by four separate witnesses “so that you may believe” (John 20:31). Worth noting Psalm 78’s own sober warning alongside its exhortation: it names the reason this matters as generational failure already witnessed once — “that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation... whose spirit was not faithful to God” (v.8). The text that commands remembrance was written because a prior generation had already failed to remember.

The Spirit has already been named as the altar that is not an object at all, but a living Person indwelling every believer (John 14:26; Eph 1:13–14). The church is the third member of this same set — not a building, but the gathered people themselves, described by Peter in exactly the same language this study began with: “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house” (1 Pet 2:5). Every physical stone in this catalog — Bethel, Gilgal, Ebenezer — was inanimate, set up once, and left standing. The church is a stone altar that is alive, still being built, incomplete without each person added to it (Eph 2:19–22). And it is not optional scaffolding around the Christian life — Scripture commands believers not to neglect gathering together, “encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:24–25), the same ‘one another’ language already central to this study’s thesis (Heb 3:13).

These three are not three unrelated conveniences. They are glimpses of the same coming reality. The Word is how God’s people hear Him now, imperfectly, until the day they see Him face to face. The Spirit is how God’s people are indwelt by Him now, in part, until the day He dwells with them fully and visibly (Rev 21:3). The church is how God’s people belong to one another now, still growing, still being built, until the day the whole company stands complete — “the holy city, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). Every other altar in this study points forward to Christ. These three point forward to something more specific: what it will actually feel like to live in His finished world — perfect communion with God, and perfect communion with His people, no longer partial, no longer occasional, no longer needing anything to help anyone remember, because nothing will be absent any longer.

THE CATALOG

The Promises of God, Genesis to Revelation

ENTRY 1 OF 20

Genesis 3:15

The First Promise

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

PROMISED TO

Spoken as judgment to the serpent; overheard by Adam and Eve.

FULFILLED FOR

All humanity, through Christ.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fulfilled at the cross and resurrection (Col 2:15); a remaining dimension awaits completion (Rom 16:20).

ALTAR

No sign was instituted at the time of the promise. Its instituted memorial belongs to its fulfillment — the Lord's Supper, which proclaims Christ's death “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Even the naming of Eve, “mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), spoken in the same breath as the curse, is an early act of faith clinging to this promise.

APPLICATION

Partake of the Lord's Supper sincerely and consistently, not as routine, but as active remembrance that Christ crushed the power of sin and death, reconciled us to the Father, and secured ongoing fellowship with Him — both in this meal and always.

STUDY NOTE

This is the first promise in the whole Bible — spoken as a curse on the serpent, but overheard as hope by the two people who had just broken the only command they'd been given. Every covenant this study traces after this one is, in some sense, an installment on this first promise: a further unfolding of how the offspring of the woman will finally deal with the serpent for good.

ENTRY 2 OF 20

Genesis 9:8–17

The Noahic Covenant

“I establish my covenant with you... never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

PROMISED TO

Noah, his descendants, and explicitly “every living creature” (v.10, 12, 16).

FULFILLED FOR

All creation, unconditionally.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fully and continuously fulfilled since it was given.

ALTAR

The rainbow (v.12–17). The text is precise about who remembers: “When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant” (v.14–15). God creates the sign, and God is the one it reminds.

APPLICATION

Every other altar in this study exists because we are prone to forget — the rainbow exists as evidence that God is not. It isn't a cue for us to remember; it's a witnessed instance of God remembering His own promise, without prompting, without failure. Its full weight is tied to the vessel that made survival possible: Noah's household was “brought safely through water” by an ark God provided and sealed Himself (Gen 7:16). Peter names this directly: “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:20–21). To be found in Christ is to already dwell inside that same mercy — the storm having passed, the judgment already borne.

STUDY NOTE

This is the first formal use of the word ‘covenant’ in Scripture, and the broadest in scope of any promise in this study — not just to Noah, not just to humanity, but explicitly to ‘every living creature.’ Unlike nearly every covenant that follows, this one asks nothing of its recipients. It is a one-way pledge, sealed by a sign that, on close reading, God gave to remind Himself — not us. That detail reframes the whole entry: the endurance of this promise was never resting on human vigilance to begin with.

ENTRY 3 OF 20

Genesis 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–22

The Abrahamic Covenant

“I will make of you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

PROMISED TO

Abraham and his offspring.

FULFILLED FOR

Israel directly (nationhood, land, kingship); through Christ, “all the families of the earth” — Gentile believers included as heirs by faith, not lineage (Gal 3:8–9, 16, 29). Ruth the Moabite, later grafted into this same line as David's own great-grandmother (Ruth 4:17), is one concrete, pre-Christ outworking of this promise.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Already/not yet — nationhood and land were possessed under Joshua (Josh 21:43–45); the “blessing to all nations” dimension is inaugurated in Christ and still expanding.

ALTAR

Circumcision (17:11), later revealed as a sign of the heart already within the Torah (Deut 30:6), fulfilled in Christ and continued in baptism (Col 2:11–13). At Sinai's precursor, the covenant is ratified while Abram sleeps — only God, symbolized by a smoking fire pot and flaming torch, passes between the divided animals (Gen 15:17). God alone bears the covenant's risk. God renames Abram “Abraham” and Sarai “Sarah,” both tied directly to the promise — a name spoken for the rest of their lives restating the covenant every time.

APPLICATION

The covenant's security never rested on Abram's performance — he is asleep for its ratification. Paul's argument in Galatians 3:16 uses this same logic: Christ is the singular Seed who represents the whole collective; every believer's inclusion runs through union with that one Head, not independent standing. “If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29). What was promised to one man in Genesis 12 is delivered whole to a countless collective in Revelation 7 — because the One who received it shares everything He has with those united to Him.

STUDY NOTE

This is the hinge covenant of the entire Old Testament, and one of the most theologically dense entries in this study. Three things are worth understanding together. First, the covenant is ratified in Genesis 15 through a ceremony where Abram is asleep while a smoking fire pot and flaming torch — representing God alone — pass between the divided animals. In the ordinary version of this ancient ritual, both parties would walk the path, each pledging self-destruction if they broke the covenant; here, only God walks it. The security of this covenant was never resting on Abraham's faithfulness. Second, circumcision (17:11) is given as the covenant's sign, but Scripture itself later reveals this was always pointing to something internal — Deuteronomy 10:6 promises God will circumcise the heart, and Paul identifies this as accomplished in Christ (Rom 2:29; Col 2:11–13), continued now in baptism. Third, Paul's argument in Galatians 3:16 that the promise belongs to a single 'offspring' — Christ — isn't fighting against the ordinary collective sense of that Hebrew word, but using it: Christ is the singular Seed who represents the whole collective, so that everyone united to Him by faith shares in a promise that was always meant to reach 'all the families of the earth,' not requiring each person to qualify on their own.

ENTRY 4 OF 20

Genesis 21:1–3; 22:1–19

Isaac, the Promised and Provided Son

“The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised.” ... “So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’”

PROMISED TO

Abraham and Sarah, named specifically before birth (Gen 17:19, 21).

FULFILLED FOR

Abraham and Sarah personally; typologically, all who are saved through the greater Son this episode foreshadows.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fully and explicitly fulfilled — the text itself uses a self-conscious fulfillment formula (21:1), the same pattern later stated of the whole nation in Joshua 21:45.

ALTAR

Two forms converge: the literal altar Abraham builds on Moriah (22:9), and the naming of the place itself — ‘Yahweh Yireh,’ The LORD Will Provide (22:14) — which became a lasting proverb passed down through generations. Isaac’s own name, commanded before his birth, means ‘he laughs,’ tied to Sarah’s and Abraham’s disbelieving laughter at the promise (17:17; 18:12).

APPLICATION

Isaac carries the wood for his own sacrifice up the mountain, as Jesus would carry His own cross. The ram, substituted “instead of his son” (22:13), is a direct picture of substitutionary atonement. Hebrews 11:17–19 resolves the apparent contradiction between the promise and the command to sacrifice Isaac: Abraham reasoned God could raise Isaac even from death, since the promise required it — resurrection-shaped faith, centuries early. Whatever it costs and however impossible it looks, the LORD will provide.

STUDY NOTE

Isaac’s birth is one of the few places Scripture explicitly narrates its own fulfillment — ‘the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised’ — the same formula later applied to the whole nation in Joshua 21:45. The near-sacrifice on Moriah then tests whether Abraham actually believed what God had promised: Hebrews 11:19 says Abraham reasoned God could raise Isaac even from the dead, since the promise required a living Isaac. That’s resurrection-shaped faith operating centuries before the resurrection itself.

ENTRY 5 OF 20

Genesis 37, 39–50

Joseph — Dreams, Providence, and the Bones That Waited

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” ... “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”

PROMISED TO

Joseph individually — two dreams (37:5–11) foretelling his family's future dependence on him.

FULFILLED FOR

Jacob's household, preserved through famine; more broadly, Egypt and “all the earth” who came to buy grain (41:57).

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fulfilled within the narrative — the brothers literally bow before Joseph three times (42:6; 43:26; 44:14).

ALTAR

No physical site — what Joseph leaves instead is a promise carried in his own body across four centuries. Dying still outside the promised land, he binds his family under oath to carry his bones with them (50:25). Exodus 13:19 records that Moses kept this oath; Joshua 24:32 records their final burial at Shechem, roughly four hundred years later. Hebrews 11:22 names this specific act as faith.

APPLICATION

Genesis 50:20 gives one of Scripture's clearest statements of providence — human evil intent does not defeat God's promised good; it becomes the means through which He accomplishes it. Joseph's bones are this study's only moving altar — not a stone set up to be looked at once, but a physical testimony carried forward, mile by mile, by people who never met him. The one who believed the promise becomes, in death, part of how the next generation is carried toward receiving it.

STUDY NOTE

Joseph never receives a direct spoken promise from God the way Abraham or David do — his only promise comes through two dreams as a teenager, and the entire rest of his story is God fulfilling it through decades of betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment before any of it makes sense. The instruction to carry his bones out of Egypt (50:25) is easy to read past, but it means Joseph died still trusting a promise he would not live to see kept — and that his body would go on testifying to it, carried through the wilderness for roughly four centuries, until his family finally buried him in the land God had promised.

ENTRY 6 OF 20

Exodus 16; 19:1–8; 24:1–8; 31:12–17

The Mosaic Covenant

“If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant... you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” ... “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

PROMISED TO

Israel corporately, conditioned explicitly on obedience — “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient” (24:7).

FULFILLED FOR

Israel under the old covenant, with a missional purpose: a “kingdom of priests” mediating God to the nations.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Broken almost immediately — the golden calf (Exod 32) happens while the covenant terms were still being received on the mountain. Its provisions and identity are later reapplied to the church (1 Pet 2:9, quoting Exod 19:6 directly).

ALTAR

Three forms converge here. (1) The blood ceremony (24:6–8) — “the blood of the covenant,” directly quoted by Jesus at the Last Supper (Matt 26:28). (2) The manna jar, kept permanently “as a reminder of God's faithfulness and provision” (Exod 16:32–34). (3) The Sabbath (Exod 31:13, 16–17; Deut 5:15) — a recurring, weekly enactment of trust rather than a monument.

APPLICATION

Before Israel ever reached Sinai, the manna in Exodus 16 was already a test: gather only a day's portion, trust God for tomorrow. The golden calf's root cause, per the text itself, is the people demanding a replacement to ‘go before them’ (Exod 32:1) the moment Moses' fate became uncertain — an immediate collapse of trust, not slow drift, weeks after witnessing the plagues, the sea, and daily bread from heaven. The Sabbath is this covenant's direct countermeasure: where the calf says ‘we must create our own provision,’ the Sabbath says the opposite by simple, embodied refusal — rest, do not create, trust what God has already promised to supply.

STUDY NOTE

This is one of the richest entries in the whole study, and it rewards slow reading. Israel formally and verbally commits to obey God — ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do’ — and then breaks that vow within weeks, building a golden calf while Moses is still on the mountain receiving the covenant’s terms. The text of Exodus 32:1 shows exactly what triggered it: the people feared Moses was dead and demanded a replacement to ‘go before them’ — the very language used elsewhere for God’s own guiding presence. This was not slow doctrinal drift; it was an immediate collapse of trust the moment circumstances looked uncertain, even though the same generation had personally witnessed the plagues, the sea, and daily bread from heaven. The Sabbath, given even before Sinai during the manna narrative (Exod 16), functions as this covenant’s built-in countermeasure to that exact failure: a weekly, embodied refusal to create or provide for oneself, practiced in advance of the crisis it’s meant to prevent.

ENTRY 7 OF 20

Joshua 2:1–21; 6:22–25; Matthew 1:5

Rahab, Grafted Into the Messianic Line

“Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”

PROMISED TO

Rahab individually, by the two Israelite spies she sheltered, sworn by the LORD at her own request.

FULFILLED FOR

Rahab and her entire household — “she has lived in Israel to this day” (Josh 6:25). Extended further than the promise ever stated: Rahab is named directly in Christ's genealogy (Matt 1:5).

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fulfilled fully and immediately at Jericho's fall.

ALTAR

The scarlet cord tied in her window (Josh 2:18, 21) — the agreed sign of the promise, functioning the way the Passover blood on the doorposts had functioned a generation earlier.

APPLICATION

Rahab's inclusion is total, not partial — spared, grafted into Israel by marriage, and placed in the direct line of the Messiah, despite standing entirely outside the covenant people by birth. Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 both single her out — the only figure besides Abraham singled out by both authors as proof that genuine faith produces action. Her story is Scripture's own early, concrete demonstration that the promise to Abraham was never going to stay confined to ethnic Israel.

STUDY NOTE

Rahab stands entirely outside the covenant people by birth, ethnicity, and occupation, yet Scripture treats her inclusion as total rather than partial — not just spared, but married into Israel and placed directly in the genealogy of Christ (Matt 1:5). She and Abraham are the only two figures singled out by both Hebrews 11 and James 2 as proof that real faith produces action. Her story shows the Abrahamic promise that ‘all the families of the earth’ would be blessed was never a later theological development — it was already being lived out in Joshua’s generation.

ENTRY 8 OF 20

1 Samuel 1:10–20, 27–28; 2:1–10

Hannah's Vow and Samuel, “Asked of the LORD”

“O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son...” ... “And the LORD remembered her.”

PROMISED TO

No unprompted divine oracle — this is a vow made and a specific petition granted.

FULFILLED FOR

Hannah personally and immediately — with outsized redemptive-historical weight. Samuel becomes the prophet who anoints both Saul and David, the hinge between the judges and the monarchy.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fulfilled explicitly and quickly: “she called his name Samuel, for she said, ‘I have asked for him from the LORD’” (1:20).

ALTAR

Two forms. (1) The naming itself — Samuel's name makes the child a walking, permanent memorial. (2) Hannah's own act of dedicating him to lifelong service at Shiloh (1:24–28), making her son a living testimony rather than a private blessing kept to herself.

APPLICATION

Hannah's Song (2:1–10) is one of the strongest literary parallels to Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) in all of Scripture — both women conceived in miraculous circumstances, both dedicated their sons, both songs center on God's reversal of fortune. A small, personal answered prayer becomes, centuries later, the literary scaffolding for the announcement of the incarnation.

STUDY NOTE

Hannah's story doesn't begin with God speaking a promise — it begins with her vow, and God's answer to it. That makes Samuel's birth a slightly different kind of entry than most in this catalog: a personal petition granted rather than an unprompted covenant. The consequences reach far beyond Hannah herself — Samuel becomes the prophet who anoints both Saul and David, making her private prayer the historical hinge between the judges and the monarchy. Her song of praise (2:1–10) is also widely recognized as the closest literary model for Mary's Magnificat, a striking thread connecting one grieving woman's answered prayer to the announcement of the incarnation itself, centuries later.

ENTRY 9 OF 20

2 Samuel 7:8–16

The Davidic Covenant

“I will raise up your offspring after you... and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... your throne shall be established forever.”

PROMISED TO

David and his royal line.

FULFILLED FOR

Israel (a specific dynasty, a temple built by Solomon); ultimately, through Christ, all who are brought under His eternal reign. Ruth, David's own great-grandmother (Ruth 4:17), means this covenant was built from the start on a line that already included a Gentile ancestor.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Partially fulfilled in the first coming of Christ — the ‘Son of David’ (Luke 1:32–33), enthroned and reigning even now (Acts 2:29–36; Heb 1:5) — and ultimately fulfilled in His eternal reign over the new heavens and new earth (Rev 11:15; 21:1–5). The roughly four-century gap between the exile's end of the visible throne and Christ's birth is a strong test case for ‘not one word has failed’ (Josh 21:45): proof that God's promises can go a long time without visible fulfillment without having failed.

ALTAR

No physical sign is instituted, as with the Genesis 3:15 promise. What Scripture supplies instead is liturgical: David personally appoints Levites “to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD” (1 Chron 16:4), giving them a psalm that commands, “Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations” (1 Chron 16:15).

APPLICATION

The dynasty's endurance is unconditional, but individual kings still face real consequences for sin: “when he commits iniquity, I will discipline him... but my steadfast love will not depart from him” (7:14–15). The covenant survives even when its human recipients fail badly — a pattern consistent with everything this study has traced since Genesis 3.

STUDY NOTE

Like the Abrahamic covenant, God's promise to David is unconditional in its endurance even though individual kings remain accountable for their own obedience (7:14–15). The starkest test of this promise is historical: the visible Davidic throne ended at the exile in 587 BC and was never restored as a political reality — a roughly four-hundred-year gap between the promise's 'forever' language and its next visible sign of life. The New Testament resolves this not by restoring an earthly monarchy in the interim, but by relocating the throne's fulfillment to Christ, whom Luke explicitly identifies as heir to exactly this promise (Luke 1:32–33).

ENTRY 10 OF 20

2 Kings 20:1–19; 2 Chronicles 32

Hezekiah's Fifteen Added Years

“I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you... I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria.”

PROMISED TO

Hezekiah individually — explicit, first-person, and unusually specific.

FULFILLED FOR

Hezekiah personally, tied explicitly to Jerusalem's protection — “for my servant David's sake” (v.6), connecting back to the Davidic covenant.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Fulfilled without ambiguity — one of this study's cleanest examples of a purely personal promise kept in full.

ALTAR

None. Unlike the golden calf, which at least received a perverse altar, Hezekiah's failure that followed leaves behind no memorial of any kind — positive or negative. That silence is itself instructive.

APPLICATION

This is the same king, in the very next scene of the same chapter, who receives Babylonian envoys and shows them ‘all his house’ (v.13, 15) — total, exhaustive self-display, likely intended to impress a potential ally with his own wealth rather than credit the God who had just proven Himself sovereign over life, death, and time itself. Contrast this with the previous chapter: when Assyria sent a genuinely threatening letter, Hezekiah spread it before the LORD in the temple and prayed, ‘that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone’ (19:19). Ease exposed what threat had not. 2 Chronicles 32:25 supplies the diagnosis: ‘his heart was proud.’ Even the most personally, dramatically fulfilled promise does not exempt anyone from needing daily exhortation (Heb 3:13) — if anything, the season right after an answered prayer may be the season requiring the most vigilance, since self-sufficiency has its most plausible cover exactly there.

STUDY NOTE

This entry deserves careful attention because the same chapter contains both one of the most specific answered prayers in Scripture and one of its clearest warnings against the pride that can follow. God heals Hezekiah, adds fifteen years to his life, and confirms it with an extraordinary sign — and within the same chapter, Hezekiah receives Babylonian envoys and shows them ‘all his house’ (v.13, 15), almost certainly to impress a potential ally with his own wealth rather than credit the God who had just proven Himself sovereign over life, death, and time itself. The contrast with the previous chapter is pointed: facing a genuine military threat, Hezekiah had spread Sennacherib’s letter before the LORD in the temple and prayed for God alone to be glorified (19:14–19); facing a friendly diplomatic visit, his instinct reversed completely. 2 Chronicles 32:25 supplies the diagnosis directly: ‘his heart was proud.’ The lesson this entry offers is not that answered prayer is dangerous, but that the relief and confidence that follow answered prayer can be exactly the moment self-sufficiency finds its most plausible cover — which is why this study’s call to daily, ongoing exhortation (Heb 3:13) doesn’t pause just because a promise has just been kept.

ENTRY 11 OF 20

Jeremiah 31:31–34

The New Covenant

“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts... they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest... I will remember their sin no more.”

PROMISED TO

The house of Israel and the house of Judah, explicitly.

FULFILLED FOR

Extended to all who are in Christ — Hebrews 8:8–12 quotes this passage in full and applies it to the church; Luke 22:20 names the very covenant being inaugurated at the Last Supper.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Inaugurated at the cross, ongoing now by the Spirit (Ezek 36:26–27), not yet the total, unmediated reality Jeremiah describes.

ALTAR

The Lord's Supper (Luke 22:20) — this covenant's own explicitly named point of institution. Every earlier ‘blood of the covenant’ thread in this study (Passover, Exodus 24, the sin offering) converges here.

APPLICATION

This covenant does not add one more external memorial to the pile — it addresses the root of forgetfulness itself, writing God's law where earlier failures actually originated: the heart. And in a striking inversion worth noticing, the one time forgetting is presented as unambiguously good in all of Scripture is God's own promise to forget: ‘I will remember their sin no more.’ The human problem throughout this study has been forgetting what should be remembered; the New Covenant's crowning mercy is God remembering what He would be entirely just to hold against us — and choosing instead to forget it forever.

STUDY NOTE

*Jeremiah explicitly names this a *new* covenant, distinct from the one Israel broke at Sinai (31:32), and its content is different in kind from every covenant before it: rather than giving another external sign, God promises to write His law directly on the heart — addressing the root of forgetfulness rather than adding one more memorial to help manage it. The passage also contains the one moment in this entire study where forgetting is presented as unambiguously good: ‘I will remember their sin no more.’ Every other entry has been about God's people forgetting what they should remember; here, the crowning mercy is God remembering what He would be entirely just to hold against His people, and choosing instead to forget it forever.*

ENTRY 12 OF 20

John 14:1–3, 16–17, 26

The Promised Spirit, Sent to Remember

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth... he dwells with you and will be in you.” ... “The Helper, the Holy Spirit... he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

PROMISED TO

The eleven disciples directly, in the upper room, on the night of His betrayal.

FULFILLED FOR

Extended to all believers — the church's historic understanding of Pentecost applies this indwelling beyond the original twelve.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Inaugurated at Pentecost, ongoing now; the return promised in 14:3 remains not yet fulfilled.

ALTAR

None physical — and this is the study's culminating point on the whole altar theme. Every other entry has required an external object because human memory needs something outside itself to lean on. This promise is different in kind: the altar here is not an object at all, but a Person, indwelling the believer directly.

APPLICATION

The Spirit needs raw material to remind a believer of — verse 26 says He will bring to remembrance ‘all that I have said to you,’ meaning the content must already be present through Scripture for the Spirit to recall it. Engaging with Him relationally looks like: taking in the word so there is something for Him to recall (Ps 119:11), obeying what is already known (John 14:15, 21, 23), not resisting or grieving His prompting (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19), and asking directly, trusting He delights to answer (Luke 11:13). This document is not competing with the Spirit's work — it is one of the ordinary means He uses to do exactly what He promised to do in this passage.

STUDY NOTE

This is arguably the theological hinge of the entire study, because it explains why any of this is even possible. Every other altar in this catalog is external — a stone, a name, a feast — something a person has to go back and look at. This promise is different in kind: God Himself, present within the believer, actively working to keep His own word from being forgotten. But this is not a promise of automatic, effortless recall. The Spirit is said to bring to remembrance ‘all that I have said to you’ (v.26) — meaning the content has to already be present, through Scripture taken in, for the Spirit to call it back to mind. Real engagement still matters: not grieving Him (Eph 4:30), not quenching Him (1 Thess 5:19), asking directly for His help (Luke 11:13), and obeying what is already known, which this passage itself ties to Christ manifesting Himself more fully to a believer (14:21, 23). The Spirit’s presence is permanent and unconditional once given — but relationship with Him, like every altar in this study, still has to be lived out, not merely possessed.

ENTRY 13 OF 20

Acts 2:38–39

The Promise for You, Your Children, and All Who Are Far Off

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

PROMISED TO

The crowd at Pentecost, immediately.

FULFILLED FOR

Three widening circles, stated in the text itself: the immediate hearers, future generations, and people everywhere the Lord calls.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Inaugurated at Pentecost — Peter identifies this moment as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16–17) — and ongoing, still reaching new people today.

ALTAR

Baptism, named in the same breath as the promise itself — the outward act by which a person publicly demonstrates belief in what God has promised and received.

APPLICATION

This promise was worded from its very first proclamation to include people not yet born and places not yet reached. It directly answers the ‘when your children ask’ pattern from Joshua 4 — generational transmission is built into how the promise was stated at Pentecost, not something believers have to add on their own.

STUDY NOTE

Peter delivers this promise at the very moment the church is born, and its wording already reaches further than his listeners likely understood in the moment — ‘you,’ ‘your children,’ and ‘all who are far off’ covers every generation and every distance in a single sentence. It directly answers the pattern set at Gilgal: this promise was never going to depend on believers remembering to pass it forward, because passing it forward was written into the promise itself.

ENTRY 14 OF 20

Romans 8:28–39

The Golden Chain

*“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined... and those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” ...
“Neither death nor life... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

PROMISED TO

“Those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (8:28).

FULFILLED FOR

All who are in Christ.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Every verb in this chain — foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified — is written in a way that treats even future glorification as settled and certain, not merely hoped for.

ALTAR

No physical object or rite — this passage functions as its own altar: a composed, spoken text meant to be memorized and returned to, not a place visited once (see ‘Three Altars That Remain,’ front matter).

APPLICATION

Paul's closing list is deliberately exhaustive — tribulation, distress, persecution, death, life, angels, rulers, height, depth — precisely because hardship is where believers are most tempted to forget God's love and purpose. This text is meant to be memorized in advance of hardship, so the answer is already stored and ready when it's needed most.

STUDY NOTE

This passage functions less like a promise to be looked up occasionally and more like a creed meant to be memorized in advance of hardship — its closing list of everything that cannot separate a believer from God's love is deliberately exhaustive precisely because suffering is where this kind of promise gets forgotten fastest. It stands in this study as the clearest example of Scripture itself serving as an altar: not a place to visit, but words meant to be carried and recalled the moment they're needed.

ENTRY 15 OF 20

1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 20–23, 54–58

The Bodily Resurrection

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...” ... “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

PROMISED TO

All who are “in Christ” (15:22).

FULFILLED FOR

Christ Himself, already and historically; believers, at His future coming.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Already/not yet in the sharpest form this study traces. Christ's resurrection is a completed, historically attested event — verses 3–5 are widely recognized, even by skeptical scholars, as an extremely early creed, dated to within a few years of the crucifixion itself. The believer's own resurrection remains entirely future.

ALTAR

Paul's chosen word — ‘firstfruits’ (15:20, 23) — is drawn from Israel's harvest-offering law (Lev 23:9–14), where the first portion of a crop guaranteed the rest of the harvest would follow. Baptism converges here too, identified in Romans 6:3–5 with union in Christ's death and resurrection — the same rite that fulfills circumcision and mirrors the ark now also marking identification with the resurrection.

APPLICATION

Paul draws his own conclusion directly: ‘Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain’ (15:58). The same certainty that secures the future fuels present perseverance — forgetting this promise looks like functional despair; remembering it looks like continued, purposeful work.

STUDY NOTE

Verses 3–5 are widely recognized by scholars — including many who don’t themselves believe the resurrection occurred — as an extremely early creed, likely formulated within a few years of the crucifixion itself. That matters for this study’s larger claim: the ‘already’ half of this promise rests on some of the earliest, most independently-attested material in the entire New Testament, even before considering the theological weight of what it promises for believers still waiting on the ‘not yet.’

ENTRY 16 OF 20

Ephesians 1:13–14

Sealed and Guaranteed by the Spirit

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

PROMISED TO

Everyone who hears the gospel and believes — Jew and Gentile alike.

FULFILLED FOR

All believers, immediately upon belief.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Already/not yet, held in two commercial-legal images: the Spirit is both a seal (marking ownership) and a guarantee — Greek ‘arrabon,’ a legal term for a first installment that legally bound the payer to complete the transaction, still used in Modern Greek today for an engagement ring.

ALTAR

The Holy Spirit Himself, given directly at the moment of belief — converging with John 14:26 as this study’s altar that is not an object at all, here framed in economic rather than pedagogical terms.

APPLICATION

This text gives believers an unusually concrete category for assurance — not a subjective feeling that salvation is secure, but an objective transaction already partially executed. When forgetfulness takes the form of doubting whether one’s salvation will hold, this text answers with a commercial guarantee: the down payment has already been paid, in a currency that cannot be defaulted on, and the full transaction is bound to close.

STUDY NOTE

Paul reaches for commercial language here — a seal and a down payment — to describe something believers often think of only in emotional terms. The Spirit’s presence isn’t offered as a feeling to be chased, but as a legally binding pledge already paid in full, guaranteeing a transaction that cannot be defaulted on. For anyone whose confidence in their own salvation rises and falls with their emotions, this text offers something sturdier to stand on.

ENTRY 17 OF 20

Hebrews 13:5–6

I Will Never Leave You Nor Forsake You

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’”

PROMISED TO

Originally spoken to Jacob (Gen 28:15), Israel and Joshua through Moses (Deut 31:6, 8), Joshua directly (Josh 1:5, 9), and Solomon (1 Chron 28:20); restated in Hebrews to the church generally.

FULFILLED FOR

All believers.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

A promise repeatedly kept across at least five separate individual recipients across roughly eight centuries before being extended corporately — its own repetition is evidence for the ‘not one word failed’ thesis (Josh 21:45), demonstrated in miniature.

ALTAR

None physical — functions as Scripture-as-altar, a quoted assurance meant to be recalled by name in moments of financial anxiety specifically.

APPLICATION

This is a direct continuation of the golden-calf warning logged earlier in this study — the temptation to secure one's own provision, whether through an idol or through money, is met the same way both times: not by self-sufficiency, but by trusting a God who has proven, across a five-fold repetition spanning the whole canon, that His presence never withdraws.

STUDY NOTE

This exact promise — ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’ — is given, almost word for word, to at least five different people across roughly eight centuries: Jacob, Israel and Joshua through Moses, Joshua directly, and Solomon, before Hebrews restates it one final time to the whole church. It sits here in a passage about money and contentment, which connects it directly back to the golden calf earlier in this study — the same temptation to secure one's own provision, whether through an idol or through wealth, answered the same way every time: not through self-sufficiency, but through trusting a God who has proven, repeatedly, across the whole canon, that His presence never withdraws.

ENTRY 18 OF 20

1 Peter 2:4–10

Living Stones, Being Built Into a Spiritual House

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...” ... “For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’”

PROMISED TO

Originally spoken through Isaiah (28:16) concerning a cornerstone to be laid in Zion; picked up by Peter and applied directly to Christ and to everyone who believes in him.

FULFILLED FOR

Christ himself, as the cornerstone; every believer built together with him into a ‘spiritual house’ (2:5) — the church, corporately, not merely individuals.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Already/not yet — Christ, the cornerstone, has already been laid at His first coming; believers ‘are being built up’ (present, ongoing) into the completed structure, which is not yet finished.

ALTAR

The church itself is the altar in this entry — not a building, but the gathered people, described in the exact stone-language this study began with (Bethel, Gilgal, Ebenezer), except these stones are alive, self-adding, and incomplete without each person joined to them (Eph 2:19–22). Unlike every other altar in this catalog, this one requires no one to build it from outside — it builds itself, person by person, as each new believer comes to the cornerstone.

APPLICATION

Scripture commands believers not to neglect gathering together, ‘encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near’ (Heb 10:24–25) — the same ‘one another’ pattern already central to this whole study (Heb 3:13). The church is not optional scaffolding around the Christian life; it stands alongside the Word and the Spirit as one of the altars given to every believer without interruption, and it is where the other two are meant to be lived out loud — read, taught, and shared among God’s people — rather than kept private.

STUDY NOTE

This entry closes a loop that opened at the very start of this study. Every physical stone this catalog has traced — Jacob's pillar at Bethel, the twelve stones at Gilgal, Samuel's Ebenezer — was inanimate: set up once, at one place, by one generation, and left standing for others to find. Here, Peter uses the identical word category — stones — but the stones are alive, and the building is never finished. Every believer who comes to Christ, the cornerstone, becomes part of the structure themselves. This is also one of the few entries where the promise being fulfilled is a direct, named Old Testament prophecy — Isaiah 28:16 — quoted by Peter and applied without qualification to Christ and to everyone united to Him by faith. The church, in other words, is not a metaphor borrowed loosely from Israel's altars; it is what those altars were always going to become once they came alive.

ENTRY 19 OF 20

1 John 1:9

Confession and Forgiveness Already Secured

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

PROMISED TO

Believers, in the context of ongoing fellowship with God, not initial salvation.

FULFILLED FOR

All who confess.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

Continually and repeatedly fulfilled — a standing promise activated by confession, as often as needed.

ALTAR

Confession itself, functioning as a repeated spiritual practice — closer in category to the Sabbath than to a stone or name, a rhythm rather than a monument.

APPLICATION

God forgives not merely because He is faithful, but because He is just — the penalty was already paid in full at the cross (1 John 2:1–2). This is the direct positive counterpart to Jeremiah 31:34, ‘I will remember their sin no more,’ and names a distinct form of forgetfulness worth noting: not forgetting God’s character or provision, but forgetting a forgiveness already granted, and continuing to carry guilt God has already resolved.

STUDY NOTE

This promise addresses restored fellowship with God, not the security of salvation itself — a believer’s standing before God was already settled at conversion (Rom 8:1). What this verse offers instead is the practice of walking closely with God day to day, and it names a form of forgetfulness this study hasn’t addressed elsewhere: not forgetting God’s character or provision, but forgetting a forgiveness already granted, and carrying guilt God has already resolved.

ENTRY 20 OF 20

Revelation 21:1–22:5

The Restoration of Eden, the End of the Altar

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God... No longer will there be anything accursed... They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”

PROMISED TO

All who overcome, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (21:7, 27).

FULFILLED FOR

Everyone in Christ — the consummation this entire catalog has been tracing toward.

FULFILLMENT STATUS

The one entry in this whole study with no ‘already’ component at all — wholly future. Its covenant formula, ‘they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God,’ is the exact language issued at the Exodus and reissued as the centerpiece of the New Covenant (Jer 31:33), now finally complete.

ALTAR

This is the entry where the entire category dissolves. ‘I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb’ (21:22). Every altar this study has catalogued existed because God's presence was in some way distant, partial, or mediated. In the new creation, that need does not get met more fully — it ends completely, because the reality every altar pointed toward becomes permanent, direct, and total.

APPLICATION

The tree of life reappears, absent since Genesis 3:22–24; the curse pronounced in Genesis 3 is fully lifted; unmediated access to God's presence, lost at the fall, is fully restored — even Moses was never permitted to see God's face. This is where the whole study has been walking: every promise catalogued, every altar built exists because God's people live in the ‘not yet.’ This is the day that ends — not because remembrance failed, but because it succeeded completely: nothing will ever again need to be remembered, because nothing will ever again be absent.

STUDY NOTE

This closing entry is the only one in the entire study with no ‘already’ component — it is wholly future, and it functions as the deliberate bookend to Genesis 1–3. The tree of life reappears after being lost since Eden; the curse is fully lifted; and unmediated access to God's presence, denied even to Moses, is fully restored. Most strikingly for this whole study: there is no temple in the new Jerusalem, because the need for altars themselves comes to an end. Every altar this catalog has traced existed because God's presence was, in some way, distant, partial, or mediated. Here, that need doesn't get met more fully — it ends completely, because the reality every altar pointed toward finally becomes permanent, direct, and total.

Every Altar Points to Christ

All the promises of God find their Yes in him, and through him we utter our Amen, to the glory of God (2 Cor 1:20). Every altar this study has traced — every stone, sign, feast, and covenant — was never an end in itself. Each one was a signpost, and every signpost points the same direction.

He is the seed who crushed the serpent's head, promised in the garden before judgment was even finished being pronounced (Gen 3:15; Col 2:15). He is the greater Ark — Noah and his household were “brought safely through water” by a vessel God provided and sealed Himself, and Peter names the connection directly: “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:20–21). And when the storm had passed, God set His bow in the clouds — not as a reminder for us to hold onto, but as His own pledge to remember (Gen 9:14–16). To dwell in Christ is to dwell already inside that same mercy.

He is our Passover Lamb, whose blood was always the true substance behind the blood on the doorposts — “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). He was present with Israel in the wilderness itself, not merely typified by it: “they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). He is the fulfillment the Law itself was always awaiting — not its abolition but its completion (Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4). And he is both priest and king, seated now on David's throne — the office Zechariah foresaw in one figure, “a priest on his throne” (Zech 6:13), fulfilled in the One who “always lives to make intercession” (Heb 7:24–25) and who will reign forever over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32–33).

Every altar in this study was pointing here. This is why the practice of remembrance matters — not because memory itself saves, but because every true act of remembering God's promises eventually leads back to the one Promise every other promise was always in service of. To remember rightly is to remember Christ.

So take up the three altars that remain, and let them do the work God gave them to do. Read the Word of God — not occasionally, but as ongoing nourishment, the raw material the Spirit works with. As you do, trust that the Spirit Himself will take what you have read and bring it to remembrance exactly when it is needed (John 14:26) — in the moment of temptation, in the season of doubt, in the ordinary Tuesday that needed a promise more than it knew. And then do not keep what He brings to mind to yourself. Bring it to the church — speak it, teach it, share it with the people God has built you into (1 Pet 2:5) — so that what the Spirit has done in you becomes part of how He builds up the whole body (Eph 4:11–16). This is the ordinary shape of a remembering life: the Word feeds the Spirit's work in you, the Spirit brings it to remembrance at the moment it is needed, and the church is where it

multiplies — no longer only your own altar, but stone added to stone, until the whole house stands complete.

Building Your Own Altars of Remembrance

Throughout Scripture, God's people built altars — stones, names, feasts, written accounts — not because the objects themselves held power, but because remembering rightly requires help. This section is for you to do the same: to catalog the promises God has made and kept in your own life, the way this study has catalogued His promises across Scripture.

1. What promise has God made?
2. When did you first hold onto this promise?
3. What made you believe God's promise?
4. What is your altar?
5. When you see or return to this altar, what do you want it to remind you of?
6. Has anything happened since that made this promise harder to trust?

A sample, filled out from one believer's own story, follows on the next page.

Three blank sets are included after that to get you started — but don't stop there. Feel free to photocopy these pages, print extras, or start a dedicated notebook or journal of your own. The goal isn't to fill out three promises and be done; it's to keep an ongoing, growing record for the rest of your life — one you can return to, add to, and eventually hand down to someone else, the way Joshua's generation was meant to hand down the stones at Gilgal.

Sample Altar Page

Included here to show how these prompts work in practice, using one pastor's own story.

1. What promise has God made?

Write it in your own words, and cite the Scripture it comes from if you know it.

God has a plan and a purpose for my life. Even when I don't know what the future holds, He does — and His will is perfect. He is sovereign, and if He has said something, He is both willing and able to do it (cf. Jer 29:11; Isa 46:10; Phil 2:13).

2. When did you first hold onto this promise?

What was happening in your life? How did — or does — this promise apply to your life?

After I got saved, and eventually recognized God's call on my life to preach and pastor. This promise applied directly to that calling — I didn't know what it would look like or when it would come, but I held onto the fact that if God had called me, He would bring it about in His timing.

3. What made you believe God's promise?

How has God kept his promise — in whole, in part, or is it still unfolding? Be honest if the answer is 'I'm still waiting.'

I trusted His character — that He doesn't call someone without equipping and positioning them for it, even when the path isn't visible yet. I faithfully served in whatever capacity He allowed for years, without knowing when or if it would lead anywhere. God kept His promise in full, though not on my timeline — I was eventually voted in unanimously as pastor by the church I was serving.

4. What is your altar?

A photo, an object, a place, a name, a habit — something that brings this promise back to mind. Describe it, or tape/draw it here.

A photo taken at my ordination. I keep it as one of the rotating backgrounds on my phone's lock screen.

5. When you see or return to this altar, what do you want it to remind you of?

*Finish this sentence: "Thus far, the LORD has—"**

Thus far, the LORD has— called me, confirmed that call through a body of believers who voted unanimously to affirm it, and kept that call intact even when the position it first came through did not last. He has proven that His purpose for my life was never tied to a title or a church staff line, but to His own sovereign will — which cannot be voted out, stepped down from, or misaligned away from me.

*Phrasing from the NASB, used here for its clarity: "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Sam 7:12). The ESV renders this "Till now the LORD has helped us."

6. Has anything happened since that made this promise harder to trust?

This is often where the altar matters most — write honestly.

Yes — I had to step down from that pastoral position due to doctrinal misalignment. It would have been easy to read that as the promise failing. But it doesn't change God's sovereign call on my life. I'm still called to preach and pastor, and I can and should do that in every opportunity I get, formally or informally — because the One who called me is faithful, and I can trust Him even in the uncertainty of my own ministry's future.

Altar Entry — #1

RECORD A PROMISE GOD HAS KEPT IN YOUR LIFE

1. What promise has God made?

Write it in your own words, and cite the Scripture it comes from if you know it.

2. When did you first hold onto this promise?

What was happening in your life? How did — or does — this promise apply to your life?

3. What made you believe God's promise?

How has God kept his promise — in whole, in part, or is it still unfolding? Be honest if the answer is 'I'm still waiting.'

4. What is your altar?

A photo, an object, a place, a name, a habit — something that brings this promise back to mind. Describe it, or tape/draw it here.

5. When you see or return to this altar, what do you want it to remind you of?

*Finish this sentence: "Thus far, the LORD has—"**

**Phrasing from the NASB, used here for its clarity: "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Sam 7:12). The ESV renders this "Till now the LORD has helped us."*

6. Has anything happened since that made this promise harder to trust?

This is often where the altar matters most — write honestly.

Altar Entry — #2

RECORD A PROMISE GOD HAS KEPT IN YOUR LIFE

1. What promise has God made?

Write it in your own words, and cite the Scripture it comes from if you know it.

2. When did you first hold onto this promise?

What was happening in your life? How did — or does — this promise apply to your life?

3. What made you believe God's promise?

How has God kept his promise — in whole, in part, or is it still unfolding? Be honest if the answer is 'I'm still waiting.'

4. What is your altar?

A photo, an object, a place, a name, a habit — something that brings this promise back to mind. Describe it, or tape/draw it here.

5. When you see or return to this altar, what do you want it to remind you of?

*Finish this sentence: "Thus far, the LORD has—"**

**Phrasing from the NASB, used here for its clarity: "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Sam 7:12). The ESV renders this "Till now the LORD has helped us."*

6. Has anything happened since that made this promise harder to trust?

This is often where the altar matters most — write honestly.

Altar Entry — #3

RECORD A PROMISE GOD HAS KEPT IN YOUR LIFE

1. What promise has God made?

Write it in your own words, and cite the Scripture it comes from if you know it.

2. When did you first hold onto this promise?

What was happening in your life? How did — or does — this promise apply to your life?

3. What made you believe God's promise?

How has God kept his promise — in whole, in part, or is it still unfolding? Be honest if the answer is 'I'm still waiting.'

4. What is your altar?

A photo, an object, a place, a name, a habit — something that brings this promise back to mind. Describe it, or tape/draw it here.

5. When you see or return to this altar, what do you want it to remind you of?

*Finish this sentence: "Thus far, the LORD has—"**

**Phrasing from the NASB, used here for its clarity: "Thus far the LORD has helped us" (1 Sam 7:12). The ESV renders this "Till now the LORD has helped us."*

6. Has anything happened since that made this promise harder to trust?

This is often where the altar matters most — write honestly.
