

Promise Principle

The promise principle is based off of 3 texts of scripture. Within these 3 texts of scripture is a guide or blueprint for how to read God's promises in scripture, apply it to your life, respond to the promise with your spirit in prayer, and experience the transformation of his character in your life! Before we go any further in unpacking the promise principle, you might be wondering about the significance of the phrase "respond with your spirit in prayer", it is an important phrase and to receive its meaning there is something that we need to understand about the way God made us. We were created in the image of God, and this not only gives us incredible value, but it also means that just as He is 3 in 1, we also were created 3 in 1. Who we are is made up of body, soul, and spirit. Our body is obviously what we experience physically. Our soul represents our mind, how we think and feel, and our spirit is ultimately who we are, it's our heart.

This is important to understand because we tend to think of ourselves as physical beings having a spiritual experience from time to time, but we are actually spiritual beings having a physical experience. That is why if you have ever seen a dead body at a funeral, even though their body hasn't changed physically, they look completely different, and the reason why is because their spirit, what made them who they are, is now gone, spending eternity in heaven or hell. Ephesians 2:1 describes us as dead in our sins, this means that our present condition apart from Jesus is that we are spiritually dead. But verse 4-5 tell us that when we choose to follow Jesus and are saved by his grace that he makes us spiritually alive in Christ Jesus. This is good news, our spirit has been raised from the dead, given completely new life, and we have been filled with the Holy Spirit. This is why responding to God with your spirit in prayer is so important. When we are a new believer, our spirit has been made new, but we still have some bad habits. We tend to respond to God and all of our circumstances with our soul rather than our spirit. We respond and react based on how we feel. This is why so many people who have been in Bible studies forever collecting information never "spiritually" mature, because they never learned to respond to God's promises with their spirit, letting their new spirit who has been brought to life by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11) lead their soul, rather than the other way around. Instead of being ruled by our feelings and circumstances that are constantly changing, we can be ruled by the principles of God that never change and will always lead us into victory.

This is what is so powerful about the promise principle. It is not about gaining information, but it is about experiencing transformation by the power of the Word of God. Romans 12:2 tells us to "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" The mind, how we think, and feel is controlled by our soul. The promise principle teaches a student how to submit their spirit to the word of God and be led by the Spirit experiencing the nature and character of God rather than their own sinful nature! The first text of the promise principle is 2 Peter 1:3-4.

2 Peter 1:3-4 — *³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

What an incredible promise for a college Student! The power of God has literally given them everything they need for life and for godliness. That means everything they need for security, everything they need for purity, everything they need to forgive those that have hurt them, everything they need to respect authority, and everything they need to honor and obey their parents! They have everything they need

for life and for godliness, but they only have that through their knowledge of God. This makes knowing God more important than anything and the way that we know God is through his word. The greatest part is, in His word, He has given us his very great and precious promises so that by them we can participate in his nature or character instead of our sinful nature or ungodly character! Isn't that incredible?

When we come to know the promises of God, apply them to our life, and then respond to them with our Spirit in prayer, then our lives start to look complete different. We truly begin to become transformed because we start overflowing with the character of God rather than the things of my flesh (Galatians 5:19-23). This is why we pray the promises of God. For example, 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* This promise is ours if we are in Christ! So this means when we pray it, we need to thank God for it, and not beg him for it because 2 Peter 1:3-4 tells me that he has already given it to me because he has given me everything I need for life and godliness through his promises! So the way to pray this is as simple as reading it and making it personal, *"Thank you God that your word says that if I confess my sins you are faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to purify me from all unrighteousness."* It is responding to God's word in prayer that allows me to begin to learn God's promises with my spirit, rather than just my mind, resulting in me beginning to participate with the character of God and be set free from the strongholds that have been a part of my life because of sin. When I am praying the promises of God, I am fighting with divine weapons. And that leads us to the second text of the promise principle, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 — *³for though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*

This verse really echoes 2 Peter 1:3-4 when speaking of *"Divine power"* and *"the knowledge of God."* We have an enemy, Satan, who is constantly lying to us raising arguments against the knowledge of God that appeal to our flesh. This verse shows us that it is the promises of God that are our divine weapons and it is with these weapons that we fight the lies of the enemy! God's promises have the power to break us free from every stronghold in our lives. Every lie that the enemy raises against the knowledge of God, every temptation that goes against God's word, I can take completely captive when I respond to the promises of God with my spirit! There is nothing more important than me knowing the promises of God, so that as the Holy Spirit leads me into all truth (John 16:13) and reminds me of everything Jesus said (John 14:26), I can claim and pray those promises over my life and experience their power in Christ Jesus.

The third text of the promise principle is Philippians 4:6-7.

Philippians 4:6-7 — *⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The key phrase in this text is, *"in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"* When we thank God for what he has given us in Christ, the promise is that our heart and mind will be guarded in unlimited fullness of the character of God, in His peace and wholeness. How important is this? God's promise to us is when we take everything to him *"by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"* our

heart and mind, our feeler and our thinker, will be guarded in the wholeness of Jesus. This is how we live the abundant life in Jesus that is not contingent on our circumstances but is 100% about who he is. OUR GOD IS SO GOOD!

Now that you understand the 3 Texts of the promise principle here is how they will play out in your groups at ZOE. You will collectively read the chapter or passage together, each person reading one verse at a time, (if a student is uncomfortable reading you can let them pass.) After you have finished reading the chapter, it is not your job to begin teaching, it is your job to facilitate and guide the students in responding to the promises.

For the sake of example, let's say that your group just read through 1 John 1. To begin discussion you will ask, "Does anybody have a promise they want to share?" after a brief moment of awkward silence, one of your students says, "I want to share 1 John 1:9." You would then say, "ok read it!" After they read it out loud you then ask them, "Why did you underline this promise and how does it apply to your life?" This allows them time to think and process out loud how they can take this truth from the scripture, that is information, and submit to it with their spirit to lead to transformation. After they are done sharing how the promise can apply to their life you ask them, "What is the argument that sets itself up against the knowledge of God in your life with this promise?" This gives them an opportunity to expose the lie and the scheme of the devil (2 Corinthians 2:11) and respond to God's truth rather than the lie they hear from Satan, their flesh, and the culture.

After they share the arguments and lies, they hear against that promise, you ask them, "Well, what does the knowledge of God say about that?" This allows them to share the truth and crush the lie! Then you ask them to "Pray that promise and respond to God's promise with your Spirit" After they have prayed, you move on to the next student that would like to share. This should fill up your time together and result in the most encouraging and transforming Bible study that you have ever been a part of!

You can copy and paste this link to your web browser to see a demonstration of this:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnfCOx_8Ki0&list=PLu3O4EGc1Dg_r20sd6vmouxQYcmfHyYW-&index=5