



GET IN THE GAME

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP [AM I ON THE TEAM?]

THE HURDLE

I love playing on this team. After all the years sacrificing time, personal comfort, and the normalcy other people experience, I've certainly earned my spot. I acquired it through my own effort and it's mine for now. But I know the deal: they're always looking for the next person to replace me, either a current teammate or someone not yet on the team. Whatever can be earned can also be lost, right? So when I step on the field of play today, I need to be just as good or better than I was yesterday. I can't let my teammates down or give my coach a reason to bench me. I belong on this team and deserve to play—I just have to prove it everyday. If I'm honest, sometimes I wonder if God handles people the same way—if he'll "cut" me if I don't act right or don't keep my commitment to him. They say He's different; I hope it's true.

In what ways do you struggle to prove or reprove that you belong on your team or on the field/court?

How do you respond when your performance "earns" you criticism from your coach or teammates? How do you process the criticism? What happens inside your head?

Have you ever felt your "position" with God is dependent on how well you stack up against the next guy?

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The relationship between commitment and doubt is by no means an antagonistic one. Commitment is healthiest when it's not without doubt but in spite of doubt.

Dr. Rollo May
Psychologist/Author

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I HEAR YA

In the Bible, God says if you belong to Him He will never leave you, but that doesn't keep people from struggling to believe His promise...

David cries out to God: "Do not forsake me when my strength fails." (Psalm 71:9)

Israelites question if God still loves them: "I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness." (Psalm 89:33)

Paul reminds young Timothy of God's faithfulness: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

Israelites fear that God has left them: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine." (Isaiah 43:1)

The writer of Hebrews talks of God's commitment: "I will never leave you or fail you." (Hebrews 13:5)

LISTEN UP

Misunderstanding God's covenant relationship with us will inevitably produce insecurity in us. If we think we initiated the relationship by asking Christ into our lives, we might conclude that we can end the relationship at will. Or if we believe our status with God depends on keeping His rules perfectly, we'll always feel bad about ourselves because we never measure up. We need to understand what God's covenant with us really means if we're to live in confident freedom.

Peter shows us how our covenant relationship with Christ is rooted in work He already did on our behalf, binding us to Him and giving us position and purpose on His team!

Read I Peter 2:9,10.

1. When God forgave you and called you out of darkness into His light, He made you a new creation. Fill in the blanks below with what Peter says is true of you because of your relationship with God.

You are a _____ race
You are a _____ priesthood
You are a _____ nation
You are God's own _____

Though this may be the first time you've read the words above, what do they mean to you?

2. The Bible communicates ideas like being called, chosen, belonging to God, adopted into His family. What can you discern from these words regarding who initiates the relationship between God and people, i.e. do we choose God or does He choose us?
3. How much of your life was perfect when He initiated this relationship with you? What do the phrases/words from #1 and #2 imply about God's desire to know you and His ability to "keep" you in spite of your failures and imperfections?
4. God not only places you on His team, He gives you a significant new purpose. Peter states this purpose at the end of verse 9. How would you say it in your own words?

FOR THE RECORD

God keeps His promises. That's His nature. Unlike other people, He doesn't break contracts and won't cast us aside when a new and better recruit or free agent comes along. God isn't a fickle coach who uses fear to compel us, nor will we be cut from His "team" when we make a mistake. He's committed to us for the long haul—no matter what happens—a truth both reassuring yet alarming. Who can imagine a love like this? Connecting to the living God

and to His family secures a purposeful and endless adventure together, and while His family sometimes wanders, He never rejects us or turns His back on us. Counting the cost to follow Christ includes forming a new allegiance with God, His people, and His purpose for our lives, a covenant that sets us free to risk living and loving to the fullest. By surrendering ourselves fully to Him, we gain ourselves and more in return!

YOUR MOVE

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being “completely uncertain” and 10 being “completely certain”), where would you place yourself regarding the following statement and why:

I know that I am chosen, forgiven and loved by God for eternity.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Everyone sometimes feels that they can't hold up their end of the bargain. What might make you feel that your relationship with God is not secure?

- I am not spiritually committed enough
- I will sin and not trust His forgiveness
- My sport will take priority over my new allegiance to God
- Peer or parental pressure
- Other religious ideas

3. Paraphrase the verse below where Jesus speaks about his followers. How does this truth affect your sense of security and desire to follow him?

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.”

(John 10:27,28)

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The Bible is not a record of man's faithfulness to God, but of God's faithfulness to man. We're in the game and stay in the game by His grace alone.

*Bruce Dishnow,
Campus Minister, University of Michigan*

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4. Are you presently aware of areas in your life that you are “pledging allegiance to” that hinder you from fully following Christ? If so, what are they and what makes them attractive to you?
5. How could you live out God's new purpose for you (“to proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”), through both your words and actions today (especially in areas identified in question #4)?

For additional work on your own, visit **The Training Room** on the next page to understand more about God's covenant relationship with you.

AS YOU ENTER

**“FAITHFUL IS HE WHO CALLED YOU AND WILL ALSO BRING IT TO PASS.”
(1 THESSALONIANS 5:24)**

God Knows His Own

Read John 10:22-30

Who are the characters in this scene?

Jesus uses the analogy of sheep to describe His followers. What characteristics does He ascribe to sheep in this passage?

What, if any, information does this passage add to the nature of a believer’s relationship with God?

From these verses, how would you summarize the security and/or certainty of a believer’s relationship with God?

What is a Covenant?

- A binding agreement
- Involves agreements between groups more than individuals
- One party initiates the agreement and the other party responds to it
- The agreement is binding on both parties
- Violating the agreement results in adverse consequences to the violator

The Bible teaches that God is a covenant-making God. He is into promises, agreements, and faithfulness to His agreements. He is offended when someone backs away from a promise made to Him, yet faithful to keep His promises. Covenants between God and man include:

1. Noahic Covenant - Genesis 9:8-11
2. Abrahamic Covenant - Genesis 12:1-3
3. Mosaic Covenant - Exodus 24:1-8
4. Davidic Covenant - 2 Samuel 7:8-16
5. New Covenant - Matthew 26:26-28

A Marriage Contract

Read the sample wedding vows from weddings.about.com.

“I, (name), take you (name), to be my (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part”.

“I, (name), take you, (name), to be my [opt: lawfully wedded] (husband/wife), my constant friend, my faithful partner and my love from this day forward. In the presence of God, our family and friends, I offer you my solemn vow to be your faithful partner in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, and in joy as well as in sorrow. I promise to love you unconditionally, to support you in your goals, to honor and respect you, to laugh with you and cry with you, and to cherish you for as long as we both shall live”.

Compare and contrast the difference between a marriage contract between a man and a woman and a covenant relationship between God and man.

AS YOU LEAVE

**» REMEMBER: OUR SECURITY WITH GOD IS BASED ON HIS FAITHFULNESS TO US,
NOT OUR DAILY PERFORMANCE.**