

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

[Introduction]

[1] This past week we were Rainforest Explorer’s at VBS!

And this was our mantra all week.

[2] I say, pointing one finger in the air:

God keeps His promises!

[3] Then you say, pointing one finger in the air:

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!

[4] Then you raise a second finger and say:

JESUS LEADS THE WAY!

The kids perfected this throughout the week.

Let’s see how you got it!?

[5] ***God keeps His promises!***

[6] ***GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!***

[7] ***JESUS LEADS THE WAY!***

[8] Yes, God keeps His promises and Jesus leads the way.

For the past week of Vacation Bible School,

we’ve learned about how God leads us through the adventures of life
to the depths of the riches of His love and mercy.

[9] We learned about how God led Noah and his family through the floodwaters
to dry ground.

[10] We learned how God led Moses and the people of Israel
by giving them the Ten Commandments, instructions for how to live.

[11] We learned how Jesus invited His disciples
to follow Him.

[12] We learned how Jesus leads the way by healing people,
even those who are outcasts.

[13] And we learned how Jesus leads us
to share His love with our neighbors.

In Jesus, we see God’s love for us.

In Jesus, who laid down His life for us and rose to new life on the third day.

It is Jesus who leads us to the depth of the riches of God.

Jesus leads the way to eternal life.

[We Don't Follow]

[14] But we don't always care to follow Jesus, do we?

[15] Sometimes, we wander off on our own.

[16] Sometimes, we want to have it our own way.

[17] Sometimes, we even tell God how things should be.

[18] Sometimes, we try to be above God,

[19] to be His counselor.

When we seek to counsel God, to lead the Lord,
we are in the wrong place and it will not go well.

[20] When we tell God how things should be and wander off on our own,
we will always fall flat on our face.

[21] This is what happened to the people of Israel— over and over again.

God sought to lead the Israelites by giving them the Ten Commandments.

God had already led them out of slavery in Egypt
and across the Red Sea on dry ground.

Now, on Mount Sinai, God gave Moses instructions for how the people were
to live as God's people.

But the Israelites continually failed to follow God's leading.

[22] They made a golden calf to worship.

[23] They grumbled against God and against Moses
because the Israelites didn't care for the miraculous bread
that was being provided for them to eat.

And after the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land,
they flip-flopped back and forth between worshiping the one true God
and worshiping false gods.

Over and over again, Israel fell flat on its face.

[24] *God keeps His promises!*

[25] *GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!*

[26] *JESUS LEADS THE WAY!*

[27] The same thing happened with Jesus' disciples.

He called them to follow Him,
but sometimes, they went their own way.

[28] When little children were coming to Jesus,
the disciples tried to stop them,

but Jesus told His disciples to let the little children come to Him,
for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

[29] The disciples would have prevented Jesus from coming to Jerusalem for what we now call Holy Week, knowing He might be arrested.

[30] And on the night before Jesus' death,
when Judas came to betray Jesus,
all of the disciples fled, running away from Jesus
rather than following Him.

[31] They all fell flat on their faces in fear.
And the same thing happens to us.

As we seek to follow Jesus, we fail.
We fall flat on our faces.

We confess this every week toward the beginning of the worship service.

We confess that we are sinful,
that we have sinned in our thoughts and words,
in what we've done and what we've failed to do.

We confess that we deserve God's punishment both now and forever
because we have failed to follow Jesus.

We confess that we have wandered off on our own and fallen flat on our faces.

We plead with God to have mercy on us
because of Jesus and His death and resurrection.

And God shows us that mercy.

[32] ***God keeps His promises!***

[33] ***GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!***

[34] ***JESUS LEADS THE WAY!***

Our merciful God comes for us.

We hear this proclaimed every week,
that God in His mercy has given His Son to die and rise
for our forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Jesus' death and resurrection forgives your sins.

[35] Jesus picks you up every time you fall flat on your face
and continues to lead you.

He will never give up on you.

He will never forsake you.

He will always seek you out so that He can lead.

[36] God didn't abandon Israel.

Oh! They fell on their face time and time again, wandering off on their own.

And yet, God continually sent prophets to lead them back.

And God eventually sent Jesus to die for them, to die for us all.

[37] Death could not hold Jesus.

He burst forth from the tomb.

And in this miraculous event, in this turning point of history,

Jesus leads all creation in a new direction: resurrection.

Adam and Eve had led the world into sin, and the consequence of sin is death.

All humanity followed Adam and Eve into sin and into death.

Jesus, true God, took on humanity and became man. True God and True Man!

He, too, followed Adam and Eve into death,

but Jesus had knowledge and power no other human being had.

Jesus knows the way out of the grave.

Jesus knows the way out of death to everlasting life.

Jesus' resurrection is the first of its kind, but more will come.

We will all follow Him out of the grave when He returns

to raise the dead and reign forever as King of the new creation.

[38] After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples numerous times.

Even though they had fallen flat on their faces, He didn't abandon them.

He sought them out, restored them, and sent them forth —

forth to be witnesses of His resurrection to the ends of the earth.

And Jesus does not abandon us.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:35).

NOTHING AND NO ONE!

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vv. 38–39).

Nothing can separate you from God's love in Christ.

Not death.

Not Satan.

Not your own sin of falling on your face.

Christ's love will always come after you and chase you down and pick you up.

[39] ***God keeps His promises!***

[40] ***GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!***

[41] ***JESUS LEADS THE WAY! Amen!***

So we... Declare his glory among the nations,

his marvelous deeds among the people. AMEN! (Psalm 96:3)
