

Christian Service Organizations: Example: Doctrinal Analysis of Promise Keepers' Seven Promises; All Spiritual Advancement Originates in the Local Church

9. The "Seven Promises" of a Promise Keeper are:

PROMISE 1

A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: This can be consistently accomplished only through the teaching ministry of a pastor-teacher in the confines of a local church.

PROMISE 2

A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

NOTE: This is spiritual weakness on the part of one and an invasion of privacy on the part of another. You cannot advance by another person's *oida*. The believer is not to take oaths, make vows, or enter into promises: "Above all, fellow believers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment" (James 5:12). In other words, keep your word. If you can't, other people cannot loan you their integrity, also neither can you loan yours to them. Integrity is developed through resident doctrine. A promise has no more validity than the integrity of the person who makes it. So in light of James 5:12, forget about making promises and develop integrity so that when you give your word it will be your bond and you will be regarded by others as honorable. In this way you will depend on the Word of God rather than making flesh your arm (Jeremiah 17:5).

PROMISE 3

A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.

NOTE: These are worthy goals, but commitment is meaningless unless one has a clear understanding of what defines "purity" in these several categories. Only spiritual growth from Bible study in a local church under the teaching ministry of one pastor-teacher can develop such an inventory.

PROMISE 4

A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.

NOTE: The disposition that enables a believer to accomplish these objectives is learned from Bible study. Without development of doctrines that clearly define how these obligations are met results in human viewpoint and production of human good. "Biblical values" is a nebulous concept if not defined by the Word itself.

PROMISE 5

A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.

NOTE: Honoring one's pastor-teacher is accomplished by submitting to his teaching ministry. If he is not providing the level of teaching that leads to spiritual growth then one needs to quietly withdraw and find a pastor-teacher that does. "Actively giving his time" is the function of one's ambassadorship through the function of his spiritual gift, a doctrine learned from the pulpit and made efficient through spiritual growth. "Actively giving his ... resources" must be determined "as he has decided in his own heart, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, because God loves a grace-oriented giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

PROMISE 6

A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.

NOTE: According to the Scripture there are no races in the royal family of God: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). It is either doctrinal naïveté or the evil of diversity that would seek biblical unity among denominations. One must subscribe to a ministry that produces spiritual growth and this can only legitimately occur in the local church under a pastor-teacher who submits to the literal-grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics. Unity among denominations demands that both parties compromise their beliefs. This requires apostasy—abandonment of truth—which results in heresy—acceptance of the lie—and is therefore evil.

PROMISE 7

A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19-20).¹

NOTE: There is absolutely nothing wrong with anyone striving to fulfill either of these passages. The former is the duty of one's royal priesthood and the latter is the obligation of one's royal ambassadorship.

10. The organization's statement of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone is to be commended, but the absence of a shepherd to consistently communicate doctrine to its followers is clearly absent among all but one of its "Seven Promises."
11. The point of this illustration is to amplify the importance of the local church. Organizations outside the local church can effectively communicate the gospel, but they are ill-prepared to maintain order among its followers if they go beyond this point.
12. All spiritual advancement originates in the local church. Although some churches fail in this mission it does not change the fact that it is God's classroom for the believer and the pastor-teacher is his shepherd.

¹ "About Us: Overview: Seven Promises." (Denver: Promise Keepers, 2008), <http://www.promisekeepers.org/about>.

13. When the sheep have no shepherd they become ignorant of truth, wander into the pitfalls of cosmic thinking, and enter into the spiral of reversionism.
14. The local church is Paul's subject in 1 Timothy 3:15. This brings us back to our central passage:

1 Timothy 3:15 - But if I am delayed, I write for the purpose that you may know how one ought to habitually conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.