

The
POWER
of a
PROMISE



Nurturing the Seeds of God's Promises
through the Seasons of Life

Jen Baker

‘Jen writes from a deep well of understanding, having practised over many years the principles she preaches. Writing of the soil we need to cultivate to grasp and propagate the great grace and love of God, Jen says our story is our soil in which seed is placed, to be nurtured and encouraged into the growth of a healthy, strong future. Laced with humour and self-deprecation, Jen writes to all of us, showing us how to be transparent, vulnerable and open to whatever God wants for us. Invariably that includes seasons experiencing the dark night of the soul, yet Jen gently teaches the reader not to be afraid, but to embrace what God is doing. It is from that point, she makes clear, that great freedom comes. It is such freedom that enables us to leave a legacy which lasts far beyond our own lives and into generations to come. This is a powerful and beautiful book.’

*Bev Murrill, preacher,
leadership consultant, mentor and author*

‘From soil and seed to life and legacy, Jen Baker skilfully guides the hopeful heart through the process of waiting for the fulfilment of their developing promise. With deep wisdom, tender instruction, and moments of true grit, Jen’s anointed and artful words in *The Power of a Promise* will be a catalyst, inspiring the reader to hold on to the promise of their dream until it becomes reality. A must read for anyone who hopes for the fruition of their potential.’

Dawn Scott Damon, author

‘In an easy, “grab-a-coffee and chat” style, Jen uses the illustration of the season of the seed to talk about the power of a promise. Using her own experiences, she writes with humour, honesty and wisdom. A great reminder to cultivate the promises spoken over our own lives. I was gripped reading it and highly recommend this book for those holding onto promises in their own lives.’

Leanne Mallett, National Aspire Leader, Elim

'I know Jen Baker for her passion and authentic approach in life. *The Power of a Promise* is filled with inspiration and will prepare you to stand tall when the odds are against you. Jen's personal experiences of life and adventures on a journey of healing, freedom and truth fill the pages and she captures the art of celebrating who she is, while still believing the best is yet to come. This book makes for a captivating read and even more passion for life!'

Shaneen Clarke, author and international speaker

'God has placed in the heart and mind of all man a dream, a divine design, a promise. Of course, it begins by entering into a deep and abiding relationship with our Creator, through his son Jesus Christ, but far too many have taken this initial step and assumed they have arrived. Nothing could be further from the truth, or a greater waste of the divine gift. Read this book, allow God to speak to your heart and reveal to you the promise he has for your life, and then live every day cultivating that promise in your life and the lives of those around you.'

Jerry Shaffer, pastor, The Well, Geneva, Illinois, USA

'If you dream of taking some time out with a good friend who is also a wise mentor, I recommend curling up with this book and hanging out with Jen. From start to finish, Jen invites you to join her in exploring God's promises in new and insightful ways. You'll love her stories, you will smile, you will stop and think and you will leave with a fuller heart and a renewed faith.'

Cathy Madavan, writer, speaker, author and member of Spring Harvest Planning Group

'Jen Baker believes that God plants seeds in your life, seeds that will grow and multiply. She shares stories from the Bible and her own experiences that attest to the wonderful ways he cultivates new life. If you need a boost to your faith, don't miss this book.'

Amy Boucher Pye, author and speaker

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The Power of the Blessing

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Gal. 3:29

Behind the Scenes

By the time I was three years old I had mastered the pout.

My bottom lip was always on standby and within a moment's notice it could march forward, stand to attention, and defend self-pity till its dying breath. I was the younger sibling and it was always on high alert with my sister around, as competition only fuelled its fury. So, when our family fishing trip to Wisconsin found my sister and me standing on the dock fishing with our father, I was prepared.

I gave it time, fixing my eyes on the tiny, wobbling bobber underneath my watchful gaze, just waiting for my bite. This was my time; I could feel it.

'I got one!' I heard my sister yell. I ignored her and stared harder at my bobber, willing it to go under the water.

A few minutes later I heard her squeal 'I got one!'

Not long after, she cheerfully exclaimed ‘Daddy, I got another one!’

Life was not going according to my three-year-old plan. Putting down my pole I walked over to peruse her haul of fish. I couldn’t believe it – she was catching all my fish.

Pout time.

Looking up at my father I adamantly declared ‘I can’t do it’ . . . lip wide enough for a seagull landing.

‘Just try again,’ my father suggested while busying himself around me.

Head down, pout out, I declared: ‘No, it won’t work – she’s catching all my fish!’

Kneeling down to my level, my father gently said once again, ‘Just try one more time. I bet this time you’ll catch something . . .’

Looking into his smiling eyes I gently took his hand, walked to the pole he handed me and tried again. Time stood still as I looked down to see – my bobber had disappeared! I glanced up at my father, who smiled and said, ‘Well, go on then – pull it up!’

At that moment my sister could have had a ship full of fish – I didn’t care. I had finally caught . . . my fish.

(Fast forward thirteen years.)

Our family was sitting around at dinner time and we began talking about that family holiday and fishing together. I nonchalantly mentioned the fish I had finally caught after so many tries and how pleased I was with my catch. Suddenly I noticed the dinner table grow quiet, stolen glances moving between my sister/mom/dad. Finally I heard my dad gently say, ‘I thought you knew.’

‘Knew what?’ I asked while chewing my dinner.

‘*Ummm . . . well . . . you see . . . I . . . well, your sister had so many fish that when your back was turned I just reached over and . . .*’

(Insert time standing still.)

‘All these years I’ve been catching . . . my sister’s fish!’ I shrieked.

The phrase ‘bubble bursting’ was made for moments like that.

But one day as I was preparing a message, the Lord brought that (still bruised) memory to mind, and gently showed me the Father’s heart. I saw that it was my father’s idea to go fishing, therefore my father would do whatever necessary to bring about the desire of his little girl’s heart, because it was also his desire for her. And I realized my heavenly Father will work behind the scenes, doing whatever he needs to do, in order to bring about the desires he has planned for my life, using the abundance of others when necessary, knowing that in the future I would be the one sharing the harvest.

The Blessing

The blessing of the promised fish that day reminds me of Jesus telling Peter to pay his taxes by casting his hook and bringing in the first fish he catches, for the money he needed would be in the mouth of the fish (Matt. 17:24–27). I imagine Jesus grinning from ear to ear as he watched Peter give him a ‘You’re kidding, right?’ look, just before hauling in the miraculous provision. God’s ways are truly beyond ours, and his possibilities are endless when it comes to provision and blessing. As we close out this chapter I want to remind us of our heritage in Christ, because it is within that heritage that the power of our promises begins taking root.

Deuteronomy 28 is a well-known chapter on the blessings of God. It outlines what we can expect if we walk in obedience to the Lord and his word, things such as blessing over our homes, finances, health and families. Of course, we live in a fallen world and, as we have seen, the enemy will

always be there to steal, kill and destroy the intended blessing, but there is a blessing God longs to give us regardless. Proverbs 10:22 ESV says: ‘The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.’

‘The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it’ (Prov. 10:22 ESV).

The first words God spoke to Adam and Eve were a blessing as he told them to ‘multiply’ (see Gen. 1:28). After the flood we see the same words when God blessed Noah and said his family were to ‘be fruitful and increase in number’ (Gen. 9:1). And there are many more scriptures we could add here; in summary: God loves to bless!

One of the best-known passages on blessing is found a few chapters later in Genesis 12:1–3:

The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

Galatians 3:16 says: ‘The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds”, meaning many people, but “and to your seed”, meaning one person, who is Christ.’ If Christ was Abraham’s seed, and if we are in Christ, then we are heirs of all the blessings he received. We see

this in Galatians 3:29 of the New Testament: ‘If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’

I remember when this truth first started to resonate in my spirit and I grabbed hold of it, not by looking at my circumstances for confirmation, but rather looking at God’s word for clarification, of how he intended me to live – the result was clearly blessed and as a blessing. Like any good father, God loves to bless his children, but he also expects his children to be like their heavenly Father, blessing the world around them. Abraham waited for twenty-five years to see his blessing begin to take shape, Jesus waited for thirty years to begin his ministry and we might need to wait even longer for our desired dreams to become reality. Yet both saw their promise fulfilled and blessing multiplied to the next generation – this is our heritage as believers in Christ.

So . . . How’s Your Heart?

The first part of this book has intentionally focused on cultivating a rich, fortified soil because, as I have said several times for emphasis, without good soil you will not reap a strong harvest – naturally or spiritually. We all have seeds of promise given to us, both generally in the word and more specifically through our unique purpose, and as we begin exploring the process those seeds undergo to bring forth life, we must first be honest about the soil of our hearts.

As much as the Lord wants to bless us – and he does – he cannot bless disobedience. And it would be unfair to speak about a rich heritage without being honest about the consequences of a disobedient heart. Staying in line with our theme of the seed,

we read in Galatians 6:7: ‘Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.’ We cannot sow to the flesh and expect to reap in the Spirit. It is simply impossible. So, let’s take a moment for an honest inventory of our hearts.

I would be remiss if I didn’t say upfront that above all, the key to rich soil is a strong, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the one who makes life worth living. I grew up knowing about him, but I didn’t realize I could know him personally, as a friend, for many years. I remember the day I finally chose to surrender my life, goals and dreams to him; it was the best decision of my life. I was a Resident Assistant at my university, which meant that I was in charge of a group of girls a year younger than me in their halls of residence.¹ Soon after they arrived I discovered most of them were Christians, and as I was studying for a degree in theatre, I created my own theatre assignment – to convince them I too was a Christian. I like to tell people I lied my way into Christianity.

The key to rich soil is a strong, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

As the weeks went by and I ‘faked’ my Christianity, I found myself becoming more and more interested. So, one day when walking with one of the girls, I casually asked how she would help someone become a Christian, taking mental notes as she talked. A few days later, alone in my bedroom, I gave God my name/birthdate/address/phone number (I assumed Jen Baker was a common name, so he might need some assistance finding the right one) . . . and waited sixty seconds for him to find me across the universal divide. After that it became a bit of a blur as I fumbled my way through a prayer, feeling like a fool and finally squeaking out an amen. I asked him to clarify that he had heard me by releasing a bit of lightning into the sky – lightning seemed like a ‘God-tool’ he would have on standby.

Nothing happened. I felt even more foolish. So, I got angry, swore like a sailor and went to bed thinking it was all a load of rubbish. Two weeks later I had a horrible day, decided to pick up a Bible . . . and haven't put it down since. The first time I read the Bible I realized *something* had changed, though I could not verbalize what. All I knew was that I experienced a peace inside I had not felt before and that I could have sat and read the word for hours. It was as if a veil had been removed and I could see clearly for the first time in my life. I have told the Lord numerous times that 'my life is not my own', and he knows I mean it.

It was on that basis that I sold everything, moved countries, overcame fears, stood on platforms, wrote books and followed the cloud multiple times to new locations and fresh assignments. What a journey it has been, full of promises – some fulfilled and some I am still holding near my heart thirty years later, wondering if they will ever come to pass.

Whether the promise has been received or is still in the waiting room, I continue to believe, because I have learned that it is daily decisions such as that which decide the direction of my future.

So, how much access to your heart does God have? Are there any rooms he is not allowed to enter? Richness of relationship is what ultimately grows richness of soil, producing the best environment for promises to be grown. He is a gentleman and will never push his way into our hearts, but at an invitation he will move in with grace, peace and love – one step at a time.

If you desire to become a Christian, or to re-dedicate your life to Christ, please see the prayer in the 'Author's Note' at the end of the book. I promise, inviting him in to your heart is the best decision you could ever make.

For reflection

- How do you feel knowing that God *desires* to bless you? How has he tangibly shown you those blessings over the years? (Take some time to give him praise and thanksgiving!)
- What seeds are you choosing to plant into good soil today? What kind of harvest are you believing to see?
- At the end of this chapter I asked: how much access to your heart does God have? How would you answer that question?
If you have never prayed to receive Christ, or perhaps have walked away from the faith, I would encourage you to pray the salvation prayer found in the Author's Note. And then please send me an email and let me know so that I can rejoice with you!