

*foreword by  
Larry Stockstill*

# FOUR CUPS

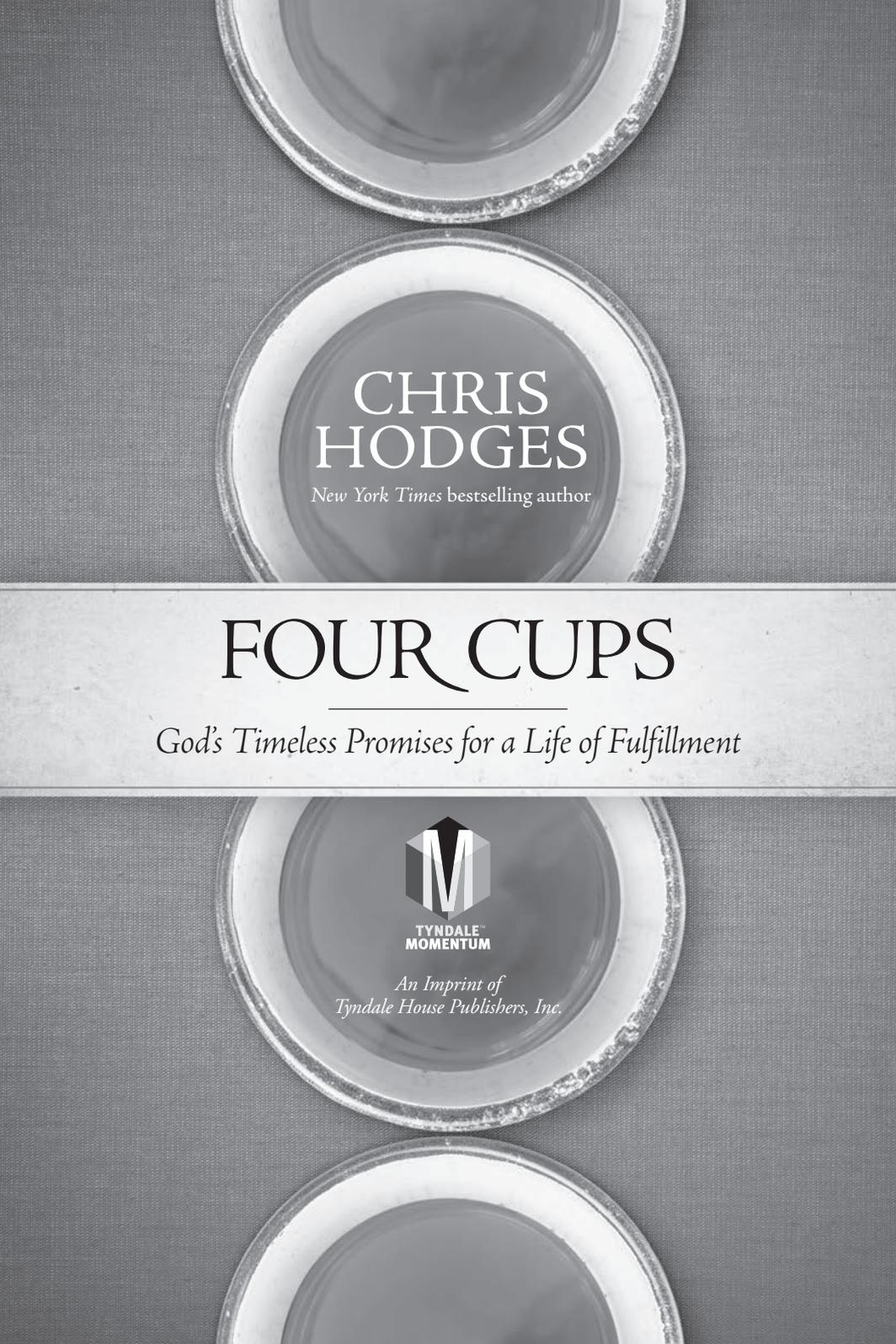
*God's Timeless Promises for a Life of Fulfillment*

CHRIS  
HODGES

*New York Times  
bestselling author*

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*Four Cups: God's Timeless Promises for a Life of Fulfillment*

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## FOREWORD

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*I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.*

PSALM 116:13, ESV

I HAVE BECOME FASCINATED recently with the “table of the Lord.” God’s covenant usually comes down to a meal, a “cup” that seals and guarantees all of His covenant promises. This cup was the guarantee of the “new covenant” that Jesus served His disciples: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20, NIV).

The book you are holding is one of the best explanations of God’s covenant “cup” you will ever read. This powerful cup is rich with meaning, all made clear in the first Passover meal that Israel had in Egypt.

Having pastored for more than thirty years, I have seen people struggle with each of these four areas: freedom from sin, deliverance from bondage, finding their purpose, and living a life of fulfillment. The “cup of the Lord” is actually four separate cups, each of which promises freedom, deliverance, purpose, and fulfillment! *Wow!*

I am convinced that if each believer, each church in the world, could grasp these four powerful principles, the

church would move into nothing short of revival. I have seen average, moderate, lukewarm, half-interested believers turn into powerful, passionate, and proactive believers when they became convinced of their *total* freedom from their past, were *delivered* from their bondage, *discovered* their life's purpose, and *launched* into a life of service!

Since 2001, Church of the Highlands has grown from a handful of believers on a “launch team” to tens of thousands in weekly attendance, through these four principles. They are not complicated; they are life-changing. Having ministered at Highlands numerous times, I've seen some of the most passionate, powerful, and proactive members you will find anywhere in the world.

I have known pastor Chris Hodges since he was saved at Bethany at fifteen years of age. He served faithfully as our youth pastor, and as one of our most effective associate pastors. His life, marriage, ministry, and motives are impeccable. His wife, Tammy, his mother (his father is now in heaven), his siblings, and children are all deeply involved in the Highlands dynamo that is reaching the entire state of Alabama—and now America and the world.

Don't put this book down until you drink from all four cups! God's plan for your life, your future destiny, your joyful fulfillment, and your eternal reward could all depend on how slowly and carefully you digest this book. If God spread a table in front of you and offered you these four cups, wouldn't you drink every drop?

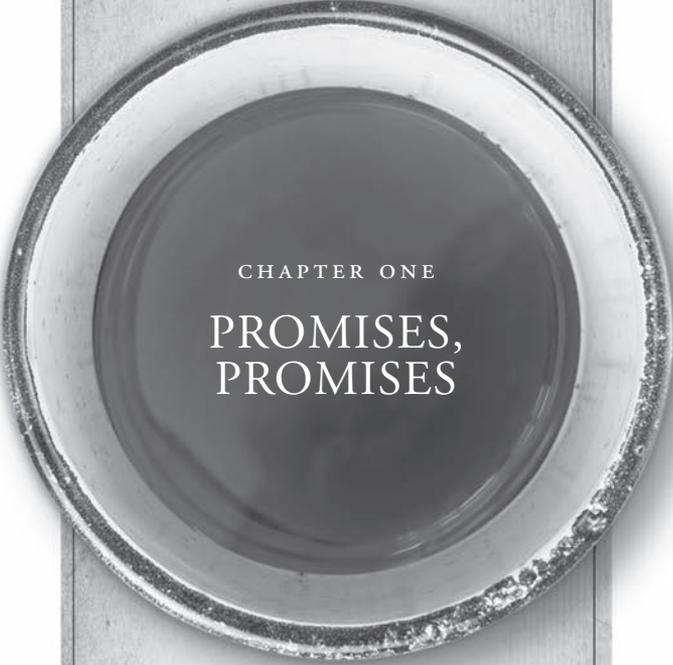
It's not an accident that this book made its way into your

hands. I believe that Jesus Christ, who shed His precious covenant blood for you, is saying right now, “Give me a little time with you. Have a meal with me. Receive all of my promises and blessings. Let me change your life, change your past, and enlighten your future.”

Pull up a chair.

*Larry Stockstill*





CHAPTER ONE

PROMISES,  
PROMISES

*I praise your name for your unfailing love  
and faithfulness; for your promises are  
backed by all the honor of your name.*

PSALM 138:2

## FOUR CUPS

GOD HAS MADE YOU SOME PROMISES. He made them at the very beginning—not the beginning of your life, but from the beginning of faith itself. They are promises that are close to his heart, and they have never changed. They are the key to your fulfillment in life—both this life and in the life to come.

God promises to rescue you from bondage.

He promises to deliver you from whatever holds you back.

He promises to help you discover his original intention for your life.

And he promises to make you part of a family that is making a difference in the world.

God's promises are at the center of what we often call "the mystery of faith," the way we live our lives in response to God's loving pursuit of us. Though God spoke his promises to his people thousands of years ago, generation after generation, according to the apostle Paul, missed their significance.

*The wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God—his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began. But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord. That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,*

*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,  
and no mind has imagined  
what God has prepared  
for those who love him.”*

I CORINTHIANS 2:7-9

\* \* \*

Maybe you're thinking that promises don't mean much anymore.

Every day, men and women promise to stay together for the rest of their lives, and yet many couples fall apart after only a few years. Political leaders promise hope and change, to reverse the slippery slope of economic decline and restore the public's trust, and yet most rarely follow through on their campaign promises—at least not until the next election rolls around. Businesses promise to take care of their employees, and everyone talks about creating new jobs, but downsizing and outsourcing have become the norm.

Chances are you've heard plenty of promises in the past. And chances are that some, if not all, of those promises have been broken. At home, at work, even in the church, people have a tough time keeping their promises.

If we define a promise as “an offer with a guaranteed result,” it's not surprising that God is the only one who always keeps his promises. When he makes a promise, he always fulfills it. It may not be fulfilled in the way we want or expect, or on the timetable we'd choose, but God always comes through. When he gives you his word, he keeps it.

*God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?*

NUMBERS 23:19

\* \* \*

When someone makes a promise, it piques our interest. For example, when someone says, “I promise you’ll like it,” we know he or she wants to intrigue us, stimulate our imagination, and get us to try something new. When God makes promises, he hopes to pique our interest so that we’ll experience the fullness of the exciting journey he’s designed for us.

We’re all on a spiritual journey. And no matter where *you* are along the way—whether you’ve been a follower of Jesus for most of your life or you’ve just recently surrendered to him, or maybe you’re somewhere in between—you’re probably longing for more. Maybe you’re in survival mode: You’re just trying to keep your head above water by holding down a job, paying the bills, and providing for the kids. Or maybe you’re in a spiritual rut: Your faith used to be vibrant, but now feels kind of stale. Maybe you’re experiencing wonderful joy on your journey with God, but wish you knew how to share your faith more effectively with others.

Regardless of where you are, you’re not alone in wanting to move forward. We all want to know where we are,

where we're going, and how we're going to get there. We want to be empowered for life's journey and equipped by God to do more than just survive. We want to experience the abundant joy, peace, and satisfaction he promised us.

Though it's tempting to think that the process of spiritual development involves obeying a bunch of rules and guidelines, it's much simpler than that. When we read the history of God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, in the Bible, we discover that God made four significant promises to his children.

At the time, the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. Many years before, they had migrated south from Canaan in order to survive a terrible famine that had devastated the land. As the Hebrew population increased, however, the Egyptians felt threatened and eventually forced the Jewish people to become slaves. But God was not about to leave his chosen people in bondage in a foreign land.

God raised up Moses to lead the people of Israel to a new home, a promised land. After a protracted negotiation with Pharaoh in which God revealed his power by unleashing a series of plagues on the Egyptians, Moses came to a stalemate with the stubborn leader who still refused to free the Israelites. As a final inducement, the Angel of Death was allowed to visit each household, Egyptian and Hebrew alike, and claim the life of every firstborn male. However, the angel was instructed to "pass over" any home where the doorpost had been painted with the blood of a lamb, thereby allowing those children to live. At the time of this

## FOUR CUPS

dreadful display of his power, God made it clear that not only would he spare his people, but he would also lead them to a life of freedom they could not even imagine.

So God made them four promises:

1. “I will free you from your oppression.”
2. “I will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt.”
3. “I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment.”
4. “I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God.”

These four “I will” statements in Exodus 6:6-7 laid the foundation for the nation of Israel and became crucial elements of their annual celebration of God’s faithfulness—which they still observe today—known as Passover. At this yearly event four cups of wine are used to commemorate and celebrate God’s four promises. These four cups of promise, as they’re called, bridge ancient history with the yet-to-come future. For Jewish families, it’s like celebrating Independence Day, a time to remember when God brought them out of slavery and into freedom, redemption, and fulfillment.

These four cups hold the same promise for those of us today who have surrendered our lives to God and been grafted into his family through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By placing our faith in Jesus, we have become recipients of these “offers with a guaranteed

result,” which begin with God’s declaration of what he will do for us if we will let him. These promises are foundational to God’s desire to know and love his children. Though most Christians aren’t familiar with them, the details of the Passover celebration hold the key to what God wants to do in our lives right now.

\* \* \*

Each of the four cups reveals God’s presence in a distinct and dramatic way. As we discover more of the historical background and biblical significance behind the four cups, I want to show you how each cup is also uniquely *personal*. It’s not only fascinating as background, but I’m convinced these four promises also reveal the process of interactive development—spiritual transformation—that continues to take place between God and us.

Though we’re all on a spiritual journey, no one has arrived at perfection yet—nor will we in this lifetime. As Paul writes, “I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us”

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*By placing our faith in Jesus, we have become recipients of these “offers with a guaranteed result.”*

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(Philippians 3:12-14). God calls each of us to grow and mature in our relationship with him. No matter where we may be on our spiritual journey, the four cups of promise provide a simple, powerful, unforgettable way of tracking our progress in growing closer to God.

Whenever I'm asked about the meaning behind the name of our church, Church of the Highlands, I'm reminded of my passion for helping others grow. I started the church with other like-minded believers because we wanted to reach new heights and take people to higher ground. Our church is rooted in the common desire that says, "There has to be more."

Are you satisfied with where you are? Or would you like to reach higher ground?



From my experience, our spiritual journey is like mountain climbing. When I lived in Colorado, I loved scaling some of the "fourteeners," the more than fifty Rocky Mountain peaks above 14,000 feet of elevation. Although I climbed only eight of them, I've never worked harder or been more exhilarated. Well above the tree line, the narrow footholds became sharper (making each step more treacherous) and the air became thinner (making it harder and harder to breathe) the higher I climbed. But the unbelievably stunning beauty at the summit? Wow! There's nothing like the view from the top—jagged, snowcapped peaks in shades of purple, blue, and gray, stretching out as far as the eye

can see. As difficult as each climb was, after I came back down, I couldn't wait for the next one.

I want to take you on a journey to the summit of some spiritual fourteeners. Each step along the way will be both challenging and rewarding. But as you learn to walk in the promises of God, you won't believe how beautiful the view can be.

God wants so much more for us than we realize. We often get hung up on our circumstances and live with blinders on to the big picture. As we climb and explore and learn to drink from the four cups of promise, my hope is that your thirst will be quenched and you will experience a wellspring of joy, peace, and hope in the midst of the purposeful life you were created to live.

The Christian life was never intended to be a flat, rutted path of obligation, disappointment, and mediocrity. Don't settle for less than God's best for you. Don't stifle that voice in your heart that tells you there has to be more. Don't stay on the treadmill of conformity, trudging along to someone else's idea of who you should be. God wants your relationship with him to be every bit as adventurous and exhilarating as climbing Mount Everest. The journey won't be easy, but it promises to be life-changing.

The Israelites probably expected Moses to lead them to

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*Don't settle for less than God's best for you. Don't stifle that voice in your heart that tells you there has to be more.*

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their new home in Canaan right away. But as you might recall, it wasn't that simple. It took forty years of trailblazing in the desert, and then a faith-based fight, before they were able to claim the Promised Land. And along the way the children of Israel grumbled and stumbled and second-guessed God most of the time.

I suspect they thought much like we do. In the Bible, God makes his promises seem so simple. So simple, in fact, that we tend to expect *immediate* fulfillment. When that doesn't happen, we may begin to hear God's promises as purely rhetorical—or merely historical. In any case, they

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become one more sound bite in the weekly mix of information overload.

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*But God's promises are real.  
When life doesn't make sense,  
we must hold on to those  
promises as the basis of our  
faith in God and our hope  
for what he is going to do.*

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But God's promises are real. And when life doesn't make sense, we must hold on to those promises as the basis of our faith in God and our hope for what he is

going to do. The Hebrew people grew up hearing and telling the stories of God's promises to Abraham. But somewhere during those four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, the stories must have become little more than fables of a more illustrious past.

When God doesn't act on our timetable, it's tempting to dismiss his promises as untrue or irrelevant. But that's what our enemy, the devil, wants us to believe! Instead, like

Abraham, we must keep the promises of God before us, *especially* during trials. “Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises” (Romans 4:20-21).

Our faith is not simply a *mental agreement* with a set of facts. It is a firm reliance and trust in a *person*—namely, God—and his ability to do what he says he will do. Faith is *leaning* and *depending* on God and his promises. If you’re ready to join me on this journey to discover more about the reality of God’s faithfulness, let’s start by looking at how, when, where, and why God made these four promises to us—and what each one means for reaching our personal summit with him.

To help you get started, here’s a prayer you can use as a model for asking God to reveal his promises to you:

*Father, you know where I am and all that’s going on in my life—the big things, the little things, the secrets, and the burdens. I trust you to meet me right where I am and reveal your promises to me. I don’t want to settle for less than your best, Lord, so guide my steps and lead me to your higher ground. Amen.*