

Entering the promised land is both a future and a present endeavor. We will enter fully into the promised land after our death, but we begin to enter the promised land as soon as we begin to have faith in Christ. The extent that we enter the promised land in our lives before our death depends upon the extent of the faith that we develop in our lives over the years that we are a believer. The book of Hebrews tells us that Israel failed to enter a Sabbath rest (another word for promised land) because they did not combine the word of God that they heard with faith. So how do we increase our faith? This week we will begin to understand.

Day 1

Responsibility

The first step in any change of behavior is to take responsibility for the state that you are in currently. As long as we see our present condition as outside of our control, the result of forces beyond us we will remain passive observers of our life unable to determine its course. We must understand that our lives are the way they are because of choices we have made about how we will think and how we will act. You may argue that I don't understand what people have done to you, and that is quite true. However, our lives are not shaped by what others have done but how we have reacted to those things. Some things in our lives are truly difficult and cause sorrow and deep troubles, but seeing those things as opportunities for growth and trust in God is an option everyone possesses. Scripture tells us that the Lord disciplines those He loves, and it is our choice if we see events and circumstances in our lives as proof of God's love for us, or proof of God's rejection of us. We have the amount of faith we have chosen to have. If we want more, we must choose to have more. We must make a conscious effort to change our mindset and our actions, and the only way to begin in this journey is to know that you have chosen the starting point. The only way to know that your life can get better is to know that you have chosen to make it what it is, therefore you can choose to make it something else.

Verses: Joshua 24:15; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Revelation 3:20; Deuteronomy 30:19-29; James 1:13-16

Prayer Topics: Faith, Choice, Responsibility, Gratitude, Grace, Forgiveness, Repentance, Joy

Day 2

Release

I have heard people who are opposed to faith in God say many times that believers have faith, but they (non-believers) have facts. This is a category error, trying to compare two things that are not alike, and not comparable because they belong to different categories. Faith is confidence, and that confidence is found in relation to facts. The believer has confidence that God's existence is a fact, and the non-believer does not have this confidence. The non-believer has confidence or faith in just as many things, if not more, than the believer, it just happens that those things in which the non-believer believes are different than those things in which the believer believes. Both have faith in their view of what is a fact. This is important because the person who finds their faith in God weak is usually putting their faith or confidence in something else. I can put my faith in government, in experts, in science, in a spouse or other loved one, in nature, in fate, in yourself, or in any number of things. It matters completely what you put your ultimate trust in, because if you put your trust in something untrustworthy, you will experience anxiety and fear. You will lack confidence, rest, and peace if you put your trust in something that cannot ultimately prove trustworthy. Everything except God is ultimately untrustworthy, because nothing but God can overcome death. How do you know what you ultimately trust in? If there is a conflict, what do you give up? If science and the bible disagree, what do you trust in? If God and a loved one oppose each other, who wins? Anything that is trusted more than God must be released from the

position of ultimate trust if you are to ever find your promised land, your sabbath rest. Meditate on the weaknesses of the things you put your trust in today. This is not an easy or pleasant exercise, but it must be done if we want to make progress.

Verses: Colossians 3:2; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; Romans 12:2; Matthew 16:26

Prayer Topics: Love of the World, Trust in the World, Renewed mind, Purity, Cleansing

Day 3

Replace

Now that we have gone through the terrifying (if done correctly) exercise of releasing, we must replace our confidence or faith in worldly things with faith in God. God, being the greatest thing (person) to exist, is our ideal. He is what we ultimately aim for, and what we put our trust in. God is the ideal that can never be reached, the thing you will always fall short of, the standard you can never achieve. But God is also the great provider, the all-sufficient savior, the author, and giver of life who sustains us by His word of power. There is no place you can go that He is not there, no mountain too high and no valley too low. There is no sin too great for his mercy and no suffering that his love cannot redeem. When we stand before God we stand before Him naked in the theological sense, meaning we have no achievement, no glory, no sufficiency in ourselves. We do not trust in anything but His love, His power, His glory, His salvation, His all-surpassing majesty. When we replace our trust in all other things, including ourselves, we take the most difficult step in entering our sabbath rest, our promised land.

Verses: Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 56:3-4; Mark 5:36

Prayer Topics: Trust in God, Love of God, Worship of God, Joy in God

Day 4

Rebuild

We find ourselves in the place of rebuilding our lives on a different foundation. Where we used to be confident in men, we are now confident in God. Where we used to trust in ourselves, we now reserve our trust for God. It is difficult to overstate how many aspects of our lives must be remade when we place our trust in God. In the olden days, when a person joined the army, they were immediately torn down. Picture R. Lee Ermey screaming at an 18-year-old recruit, shouting that he is a maggot and a worm. Not a pleasant picture. Why did they do this? Because the recruit must change the locus of his trust, from himself to his superior officer. His natural trust in himself and what he knows will get him killed. If the recruit trusts in himself he will look out for himself and take actions to protect himself, which ironically will result in his death. If, on the other hand, the recruit trusts in his superiors and takes actions for the unit, they will work cohesively and will prevail. In the same way, when our trust is transferred to God, our whole identity and all our life is built on a new foundation. Our trust is in God and our lives are lived in Him and for Him. Rebuilding our lives takes the rest of our lives, it is not accomplished overnight. But the new life that is built is marked by rest, peace, joy, love, and the other fruits of the spirit.

Verses: Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Peter 1:14; 1 John 5:3; Exodus 23:22

Prayer Topics: Obedience, Love, Trust, Joy, Faithfulness

Day 5

Repeat

This week we have taken responsibility, we have released our trust in inadequate things, we have replaced that faith with faith in God, and we have begun to rebuild our lives on a new foundation. So, what now? Now we repeat. We do it all over again. For the rest of our lives, we will be rooting out little areas of trust in inadequate things. Little areas where we find our trust in God weak. We will be, furthermore, finding new ways in which God is superior to all else, finding new confidence in Him. We will be finding new ways to rebuild our lives on this new foundation. Maybe yesterday you were disappointed in the lack of specificity to the rebuilding step. Good. The problem is that your whole life must be upended and rebuilt. As you find new areas that need overhaul, you must do the work to rebuild. I'm sorry I can't be more specific, but some of this is on you. All I can say is everywhere you look in your life, there is room for more faith in God, and that more faith in God will change how you do everything. This is the great adventure that is embarked upon only in faith. When the Israelites sent spies to the promised land, almost all of them saw the glory but lacked the trust in God to take hold of it. It was too big for them only because they lacked trust in God. May it not be said of us.

Verses: Galatians 6:9; Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 12:1; Hebrews 10:36; Romans 12:12

Prayer Topics: Persistence, Perseverance, Faithfulness, Joy, Hope, Obedience