



Believing God for Your Promised Land

The concept of a _____ is a primary example.

In fact, God not only _____ us to apply the concepts spiritually but also _____ (Heb. 3).

New Testament Applications of the Old Testament Promised Land

1. God originally promised a large segment of prime property (later termed the promised land) to _____ and his _____. New Testament believers are the _____ of Abraham.
2. While _____ is the ultimate land of God's promise, the concept of a promised land has profound applications in our earthly lives, just as it did in the lives of the Israelites. In essence, my "promised land" is the place where my _____ merges with my _____.
3. The most concentrated New Testament spiritual equivalent of the promised-land concept is perhaps best captured in _____.
 - a. Our promised land is a place of _____. In John 15 we are called to possess: _____, much _____ prayer, and the _____ of Jesus. Our promised lands are places of God's _____ to the _____.
 - b. Our promised land is a place of _____. Where? In Christ's _____.
 - c. Our promised lands are places where God brings forth a _____.
4. Our promised lands will always involve _____.
5. Our promised lands are places of _____ over our _____ (Josh. 3:10).
6. The original word for "amazing things" is _____ meaning "to _____, _____; _____, do wonderful things; wondrous things, _____." Used primarily with God as the subject, denoting the fact that He does things that are beyond the bounds of _____ or _____." Our promised lands are places where God is willing to work untold wonders, but He desires two critical preparations from us: _____ and _____.

five-statement Pledge of faith

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



W E E K



Believing God for Your Promised Land

DAY 1

CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF BELIEVING



Today's Treasure

His incomparably great power for us who believe ... is like the working of his mighty strength.
Ephesians 1:19

If you're unconvinced that nothing works like faith, I'll count on God to prove it to you over the next nine weeks. Faith brings God-ordained dividends, and its absence carries huge costs. Biblically speaking, faith is without equal in its effects on our lives because God is without equal and faith is the normative invitation He answers with proof.

This week we will study the paramount importance of faith and how it is acquired, but before we do, perhaps we'd better define it. In Greek, the original language of the New Testament, the word *pistis* means *assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity*. With very few exceptions the words *faith, belief, believing, and believe* are translated from the word *pistis*. When I use the phrase *believing God*, you can think of it interchangeably with *having faith in God*. I prefer *believing* for our purposes because it has a far stronger implication of action.

The kind of faith we'll study can turn a noun into an action verb quicker than you can say, "See Spot run." I can still picture my first-grade primer. Spot was neither getting ready to run nor in a past-tense heap of exhaustion beside his water bowl. "See Spot run" meant he could presently be caught in the act of running. What does seeing Spot run have to do with believing God? Verb tenses! Stick with me for a moment, and I'll show you how.

Please read Ephesians 1:11-23, and write a one-sentence synopsis.

The NIV uses two important and distinctive tenses of the verb *believe* in verses 13 and 19. Verse 13 speaks of Christians having believed. This faith-action refers to the exercise of belief that leads to salvation. Every Christian heard the gospel message at some point and chose to believe and receive it. Because we exercised this faith-action, we immediately became Christ's. We were given His Holy Spirit and marked with a seal. This faith-action was exercised in the past with obviously radical results.

Concentrate on verse 19. The tense of the Greek verb *believe* in this verse is vital. It is a present active participle. One of my Greek instructors explained it: "Beth, when you see a present active participle Greek verb, you can think of the word *continually* preceding the verb." In other words, the promise given in verses 19-20 is not applied to those "having believed" as in verse 13 where they had believed to become Christians. Rather, it is applied to those who are presently, actively, and, yes, continually believing God.

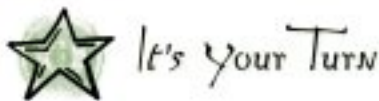
Our glorious faith walk began with an act of faith that brought us into relationship with Jesus Christ as our Savior, but it doesn't end there! Having believed in Him, we are called to continue believing all He came to do and say! Tragically, some who have believed

in Christ have believed little of Him since. He who began a work in us wants to accomplish far more! God is calling us to leave the passive life bred by a past-tense view of faith and to participate in present-active-participle believing! In the next few days we're going to study what is at stake, but you need turn no further than today's text to see something huge.

What specific promise applies to those who continue believing, as stated in verses 19-20?

Write that truth in permanent marker on the wallpaper of your mind. God exerts incomparable power in the lives of those who continue believing Him. Nothing on earth compares to the strength God willingly interjects into lives caught in the act of believing. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul likens it to the stunning power God exerted when He raised His Son from the dead!

Can you think of any need you might have that would require more strength than God exercised to raise the dead? Me either. God can raise marriages from the dead, and He can restore life and purpose to those who have given up. He can forgive and purify the vilest sinner. You have no need that exceeds His power. Faith is God's favorite invitation to RSVP with proof.



1. We've talked about belief and continuing to believe. God gave us His Word first and foremost to call us into relationship with its Author and our Savior. What additional reasons has God given us in 2 Timothy 3:16-17?

The doctrines of our faith and God's commandments are vital to our relationship with God. The Bible records the history of God's people and invites us to learn from their good and bad examples. However, we will focus on the fact that Scripture is stacked with truths and promises we are invited to personally apply and believe God to fulfill in our lives. The Bible bulges with opportunities to be caught in the act of believing God. For our purposes we've chosen to simplify and categorize them into a five-statement pledge of faith. This pledge helps us wrap our arms around the concept and clarify what we are believing God about. We learned and practiced the pledge in session 1. I want you to be able to say this pledge practically standing on your head and in your sleep.

Please write all five statements on the lines below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Computer Help

We will provide some word studies for those who do not have access to the Internet. If you do have access, please use it to go further in your personal study. Online Bibles and study tools are available from many Internet sites. The site www.lifeway.com provides links to several versions of the Bible as well as a Bible Search Tool.

As you use the KJV with *Strong's* in the online Bible library, notice that some words are underlined or appear in a different color. These words are linked; click on them to view the Greek or Hebrew definitions. Some are not underlined or in color because a word in one language may be translated as a phrase in another. If the word you want to know more about is not linked (underlined or in color), click on the words before or after it until you find the Greek or Hebrew word you seek.

Now, if possible, say the five-statement pledge aloud and add your hand motions. You may feel silly at first, but I promise these hand motions will become powerful reminders of an incomparable invitation to faith. And admit it! It's fun!

2. Look up each occurrence of the word *faith* in the Book of Ephesians. Record on the lines below what each tells you about the concept of believing God.

Ephesians 1:15 _____

Ephesians 2:8 _____

Ephesians 3:12 _____

Ephesians 3:17 _____

Ephesians 4:5 _____

Ephesians 4:13 _____

Ephesians 6:16 _____

Ephesians 6:23 _____



Lord, the biggest challenges I have before me right now are ...

The deepest desires about those challenges are ...

From what I understand so far from my relationship with You and from Your Word, Your will seems clear to me about the following challenges.

But it seems less clear to me in these challenges.

Please, Lord, give me insight into Your will so that I will know how best to pray and what to ask.



B E D T I M E M E D I T A T I O N

PLEASURE AND REWARD



Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Begin by stating your five-statement pledge of faith. Now soak in the words of Today's Treasure. Read it several times, emphasizing a different phrase each time. Over the weeks to come, we will treat this Scripture like a diamond, turning and tilting it at different angles in the light of divine insight so that we can behold its numerous dimensions. Today we are going to hold this diamond to the light with our eyes cast on the angle presented in yesterday's lesson. We want to consider what's at stake as we turn the noun of our faith into a present-active-participle verb. This week, days 1–3 center on why we should commit to lives of active faith, and days 4–5 will tell us how. In yesterday's lesson we discussed a wonderful motivation for a life of active faith, based on Ephesians 1:19.

According to Ephesians 1:19, what does God choose to exert in the lives of those who continually accept the challenge to believe Him?

Hebrews 11:6 includes two additional motivations for believing God. The most obvious is also the highest priority. Purely and simply, faith pleases God.

Hebrews 11:6 uses the Greek word *euaresteo*. Read its *Strong's* definition in the margin. Remember that *Strong's* is based on the KJV, but no matter which English translation you use, the original Greek word is the same.

please

GREEK STRONG'S NUMBER: 2100

Transliteration: *euaresteo*

Phonetic Pronunciation:

yoo-ar-es-teh'-o

Please, Pleasing, Well-Pleasing (Verb), Pleasure (Verb), Well-Pleasing 1) to be well pleasing 2) to be well pleased with a thing

Why were we created, according to Revelation 4:11? "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (KJV).

Viewing Hebrews 11:6 and Revelation 4:11 side by side can suggest both a means and an end. No greater or higher goal for our lives exists than to please God. Indeed, it is why we were created. Thankfully, we need not feel cheated or afraid. Romans 12:2 tells us God's will is good, pleasing, and perfect. It is never degrading, but it is always fulfilling. Through the unfolding of His pleasing will for each of our lives,

- God is glorified;
- the body of Christ is edified;
- our souls are satisfied;
- the world is further evangelized.

If the chief purpose of our lives is to please God, Hebrews 11:6 suggests the primary means to such a valuable end is faith. We can't experience the fulfillment and enjoyment of God's perfect will for our lives without present-active-participle believing God. Scan Hebrews 11. In weeks 4 and 5 we will consider the faith challenges of 10 different figures in this passage that is often called the "Hall of Faith." For now, realize that the very reasons their names appear in the chapter are that the end result of their lives was the pleasure of God and the means was clearly "by faith."

Our call to prioritize God and our faith in Him through Jesus Christ is reciprocated in stunning ways certainly not owed to us.

How will God respond to those who believe Him and seek Him (Heb. 11:6)?

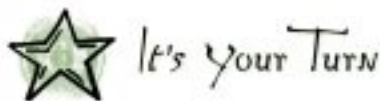
He is a _____ of those who seek Him.

Every time this concept falls on me afresh, I am amazed and dazzled. God has already promised that when we seek Him, we will find Him. Is that not enough? Do we need rewards as well? And yet He promises!

Do you see God's heart? Yes, He requires much if we're going to fulfill a divinely ordained destiny. I won't kid you, but what He is prepared to do in behalf of those who are obedient staggers the imagination.

Hear this: anytime you put forth the time and attention a God-seeking Bible study like this requires and you exercise the faith to apply what you learn, you will be rewarded. I don't believe you'll make it through this study without seeing all sorts of rewards. God is the giver of all good gifts. He wants to shower blessings on you! God wants us to be men and women He can bless.

God's pleasure is the end. Our faith is the means. You and I are invited to believe God. The eye-opening news may be that we can also believe Him for reward, as long as the desire for reward doesn't exceed our desire for Him personally. Sooner or later, Dear One, your God-seeking faith will be rewarded. You will never outspend God.



1. I think you'll love the definition for the Greek word translated "that diligently seek" in Hebrews 11:6. Read the *Strong's* definition in the margin.

2. The phrase "that diligently seek" is in the verb tense we're highlighting and encouraging in our series. It is a present active participle. Based on my Greek instructor's advice in yesterday's lesson, what does the verb tense tell us about the kind of seeking God most rewards?

seek

GREEK STRONG'S NUMBER: 1567

Transliteration: ekzeteo

Phonetic Pronunciation: ek-zay-teh'-o

Part of Speech: v

- 1) to seek out, search for
- 2) to seek out, i.e. investigate, scrutinise
- 3) to seek out for one's self, beg, crave
- 4) to demand back, require

Remember not to get discouraged because you don't have or don't presently practice everything God desires of you. Pray for what you lack! When we pray God's will, we will receive what we ask! Pray for a heart and a mind to diligently seek Him. Then immediately begin walking in faith as one who already has what she has asked. Start seeking God through His Word and spending time in prayer, at the same time asking Him for a hunger and thirst to seek Him diligently. He will develop in you what you are seeking!



Complete any of the sentences below that pertain to you.

Lord, I want to please You, but...

The biggest obstacles I encounter in diligently seeking You are ...

(Pray through each obstacle; ask God for insight and empowerment to move or climb over those obstacles.)

God, some of the rewards I've already received through seeking You are ...

Lord, I need to know that Your love for me is steadfast and unconditional even during seasons when my life is not pleasing to You.

(Read Isaiah 54:10. Write a prayer-response to God in the following space restating and receiving what He is saying to you.)



B E D T I M E M E D I T A T I O N

DAY 3

ACCORDING TO OUR FAITH

Sometimes our problem with God is that we don't like the rules. I can remember trying to hang on to both God and my idols. As my grandmother would say, I wanted to have my cake and eat it too. Have you tried that approach? I felt as if God spoke to my heart and said, "Child, My precepts are from everlasting to everlasting. You're not going to be the one for whom the rules change. Repent of your arrogance and lay those idols down."

Today we'll talk about a precept we often wish were different, but we are not going to be the ones for whom the rules change. God is all-wise, and His primary purpose in creating humans was to engage them in active relationship. He's in the business of making present-active-participle verbs out of our phlegmatic nouns. The requirement of faith before we see certain acts of God is one way He enforces engagement.

Read the following Scriptures and record what Christ says about faith. I'll use Scriptures from the same Gospel, but rest assured we could find the principle restated in all four Gospels, then underscored powerfully from the Book of Acts through Revelation.

Matthew 9:20-22 _____

Matthew 9:27-30 _____

Matthew 15:28 _____

Matthew 17:14-21 _____



Today's Treasure

*He touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you."
Matthew 9:29*

During week 3 we will discuss whether miracles have ceased in our day and whether God still heals often enough for us to even bother asking. Today, however, I want you to focus on the required means of faith intimated above rather than the specific kind of result. The faith-precept we're discussing today came straight from the mouth of Christ. Not a single Gospel writer missed it. Nor do we have any biblical grounds to believe that the teaching has changed.

What is this teaching? According to your faith it will be done to you. If you're the way I've often been, you want to have your cake and eat it too. We want to continue in our God-testing unbelief and still see Him move mountains. Sure, it occasionally happens in our individual lives. God is merciful that way.

Why do you think God is sometimes willing to reveal Himself dramatically even when we're not actively believing Him?

*Our God is in heaven;
he does whatever
pleases him.
Psalm 115:3*

Though God may have countless reasons, the most probable cause is to encourage belief. He graciously reminds us that He can . . . and still does. If we persist in stubborn unbelief after such merciful revelation, we can probably expect to see less and less activity of God. Mind you, God can do anything He wants under any conditions (see Ps. 115:3).

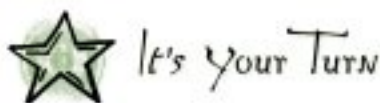
The story of the widow's son whom Christ raised from the dead is one of my favorite occasions in Scripture when faith was a nonissue (see Luke 7:11-17). Yes, God does what He wants, but He primarily wants our faith (see Heb. 11:6). He certainly makes exceptions, but His primary rule is: according to your faith it will be done to you. That means the more we believe God, the more we are likely to see and experience His intervening power.

You may really be bristling right now. If so, I understand. Perhaps you really believed God in the past for something, but it didn't happen. Later we're going to talk about our disappointments, some of the reasons we didn't get what we asked, and the overriding sovereign wisdom of God. For now let's talk about one of my old reasons for bristling and see if you share it.

My resistance to the faith principle—according to your faith it will be done to you—was primarily spiritual laziness. Believing God can really be work at times! When external evidences scream to the contrary, we have to exert volitional muscle. Deciding to believe God's Word over our circumstances can be a tremendous exercise of the will at times. I'll just go ahead and say it: the great adventure of faith is not for the languid, but if He can raise the dead, He can surely enliven the lazy! We have been called to a present-active-participle walk of faith, not a park 'n' ride.

The walk of faith assumes a walk with God. Faith cannot walk alone. Faith on its own changes nothing. In fact, it cannot even exist independently. Faith's very essence is dependency. For faith to have life, it must find a powerful object in which to be placed or a powerful Person by whom to walk. In your earlier Scripture readings, faith on its own did nothing to heal. The beneficiaries' faith in Christ healed them. Two

thousand years later, the God-ordained precepts have not changed. God wants to stretch forth His mighty hand in our lives in manifold ways, but as a rule, it is present-active-participle faith in Christ that most attracts Him. God has much He wants to do and say in our generation. Faith is the primary means by which we place our hand in the outstretched hand of God and join Him.



1. List the ways Acts 3:11-16 underscores the principles we've considered today.

2. So far, we've discussed four motivations for present-active-participle believing God (one in day 1, two from the same Scripture in day 2, and another today). Write the motivations beside the Scriptures that teach them.

- Ephesians 1:19 _____
- Hebrews 11:6a _____
- Hebrews 11:6b _____
- Matthew 9:29 _____

We have one more motivation to learn in day 4. Then in day 5 we will focus all our attention on how to have faith.



God, my primary hang-up with the faith principle we learned today is that ...

Please, Lord, grant me insight or help me simply hang up my hang-up and trust that I'll understand it all when I see You.

Lord, in all honesty I'm probably seeing little because I'm believing little of You in the area of ...

Thank You, Lord, that even this week You're going to teach me how to exercise a much greater faith. (Conclude by telling God how much you need Him and why.)



B E D T I M E M E D I T A T I O N

DAY 4

CREDITED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS



What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."
Romans 4:3

This lesson is one I begin with tears stinging my eyes. Oh, how I pray God will empower me by His Holy Spirit to do some semblance of justice to the fifth motivation for present-active-participle faith. The truth I'm sharing with you today has been a lifeline for me. Today's commentary will be longer than usual because I'll add a personal testimony. Before we read our text, let's review four motivations for a life of believing God.

- Incomparable power (see Eph. 1:19)
- The pleasure of God (see Heb. 11:6a)
- Reward (see Heb. 11:6b)
- God will often act according to our faith (see Matt. 9:29).

Romans 4 is the home of our next precept of faith. Because it is so critical to our series, I am going to ask you to do something unique to other Bible studies I've

written. I'm going to ask you to read it in its entirety, but over the course of the next eight weeks, I am asking you to read it 19 more times. It will not be part of your daily assignment. Rather, I am asking that you read it intermittently throughout the series on your own until it completely invades your belief system.

Week 4 will center on a very important part of Romans 4, so I'm hoping by then you've read it at least five or six more times. Today put a sticky note or a card on the page in your Bible where you find Romans 4, and write the date on it every time you read it. Starting with today's date, I'm asking for 20 date entries before our study ends. When possible, read it aloud. Read it to your spouse. Read it to your dogs, for crying out loud, but read it until it lives in you!

Now I'll hush and let you read. Record the principles that hit you most profoundly.

Right at this moment I wish all of us had a *New International Version*, but all of the major translations say the same thing in verse 12 with various wording. The NIV speaks of those of us who “walk in the footsteps of the faith.” I so desperately want to walk in the footsteps of the faith, still warm from the feet of our spiritual forefathers, don't you? I crave to leave a legacy of faith to my children and not just a list of works. I want us to center on the New Testament references and applications to Abraham's faith.

Meditate on the key words in the chapter: “‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’” (v. 3). God is obviously very intent on our receiving the concept because He not only stated it originally in Genesis 15:6, but He also said it repeatedly in Romans, then again in the Books of Galatians and James. Unlike me, God is never one to waste words. Any repetitions are to be considered paramount.

What evidence in Romans 4 shows that belief credited as righteousness applies to us?

No better time to make an index card! Please write the words of Romans 4:23-24 from your favorite version. I can hardly stay in my chair to type as I read the glorious words “not for him alone, but also for us”! Beloved, like Abraham's, our faith is what God credits as righteousness! You may ask, “Why is that such a big deal?” I can't answer for everyone else, but I'd be delighted to tell you why it's such a big deal to me: because I have such unrighteousness in my past!

I grew up believing and was still convinced into adulthood that a person's goodness is what pleased God most. By the time I was in early adulthood, I already had so many acts of unrighteousness credited to my account that I thought I'd have to live to be one hundred without a single mistake to tip the scale toward God's approval. Thank goodness not all of you can relate, but some of us have so much defeat in our past that we feel we lost the race before we knew it started. Imagine two teams coming out to the basketball court to play a game. One team lost its previous game by 45 points. The other team won, so it enters the game with no strikes against it. Now picture the new game beginning with the scoreboard reading "0 to 45." Many of us have felt so defeated by our last round that we feel as if we'll never win. Therefore, we play like losers. Beloved, every person God created needs to feel that some way exists to win. That's what Romans 4:23-24 is all about.

My fingers are hitting the keyboard with force as if to raise the volume. God does not credit our righteous acts as righteousness. Indeed, what does Isaiah 64:6 say?

As odd as the concept may seem, not our righteous acts but our faith is credited to our account as righteousness. You may ask, "Beth, are you suggesting we can act as sinful as we want, but if we believe God, we are counted righteous anyway?" Actually, believing God while continuing in wanton sin is ultimately impossible. I hope to prove that those who practice present-active-participle faith will eventually be freed from cycles of sin to live righteous lives the self-righteous could never hope to achieve. How do I know? Because I've lived a measure of this one.

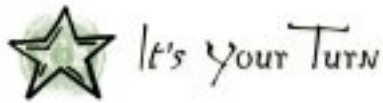
For much of my life I was a habitual sinner, cycling in and out of defeat. I wanted to be good more than anything in the world. I hated myself and the choices I continued to make, but I was powerless to stop. I became convinced that taking away alternatives would be the answer. I got married, moved away from many temptations, soaked myself in church work, and set about to be good. I don't regret those choices, but they weren't enough. I didn't understand that God wanted to heal my heart and change me from the inside—not just my behavior. In my early 30s I fell apart and entered a season of unparalleled despair and uncharacteristic depression. According to God's calendar, it was time to deal with my stuff. And deal we did.

To the praise, glory, and honor of my wonderful God, I have been free from the cycle of defeat for years. Do you know how? I chose to believe God. He said I was forgiven. That I was beautiful to Him. That He had a purpose for my life. That I was a new woman, a virgin, no less. That I no longer had to carry old baggage or turn to old comforts. That Christ Jesus took on my unrighteousness so I could be the righteousness of God in Him (see 2 Cor. 5:21). That His all-surpassing power was within my jar of clay (see 2 Cor. 4:7).

And one day at a time I chose to believe Him.

Some days I cried like a baby because I'd feel the old, destructive habits starting to rise. So often I said to myself out loud, "You are not that woman anymore. You get to make a different choice." And I would. Present-active-participle believing God. That's how God broke the cycle. We have no hope of authentic righteousness—imputed or imparted—without it.

Sweet One, when you feel as if you're surrounded by those with a better "score" than yours, believe God! They'll have nothing on you.



1. Read Romans 4:24. Notice the word *believe*. The Greek word is *pisteuo*. *Pisteuo* comes from the word *pistis*, the primary word for *faith* and *belief* in the Greek New Testament.

Strong's identifies this word as a verb. My *Complete Word Study New Testament* helps me by placing the letters *pap* above the word. Guess what *pap* stands for. You've got it: present active participle. I could shout hallelujah! Based on all we've learned so far, what does the verb tense suggest in context with this specific Scripture?

2. Read Romans 4:13-14. The NIV translates verse 14, "If those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless." According to this translation, what would make faith of no value and the promise worthless?

To the best of your ability, briefly explain why.

3. Read the original Greek word and meaning for *made void* in the margin. It is the same word translated "has no value" in the NIV.

Now read 1 Peter 1:7. What has greater worth or value than gold?

Righteous acts motivated by legalism: no value. Faith: more valuable than gold.

4. Based on today's lesson and the research you've just accomplished, do your best to summarize Romans 4 from your point of view into a one-sentence statement.

If you feel the way I do right now, I have some things I want to say to God. Share your heart with Him in the space below, whether you feel confused, disappointed, hopeful, or elated. Just be real with Him and respond to Him about today's lesson.

faith

GREEK STRONG'S NUMBER: 4100

Transliteration: *pisteuo*

Phonetic Pronunciation: *pist-yoo'-o*

Part of Speech: *v*

1) to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in 1a) of the thing believed 1a1) to credit, have confidence 1b) in a moral or religious reference 1b1) used in the NT of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul 1b2) to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith 1bc) mere acknowledgment of some fact or event: intellectual faith

void

GREEK STRONG'S NUMBER: 2758

Transliteration: *kenoo*

Phonetic Pronunciation: *ken-o'-o*

Part of Speech: *v*

1) to empty, make empty 1a) of Christ, he laid aside equality with or the form of God 2) to make void 2a) deprive of force, render vain, useless, of no effect 3) to make void 3b) cause a thing to be seen to be empty, hollow, false





B E D T I M E M E D I T A T I O N

DAY 5

HOW TO BELIEVE GOD



*Faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word
of God.*

Romans 10:17, KJV

Perhaps this lesson is the one you've been waiting for all week: finally, the how of faith! In days 1-4 we concentrated on why any rational, reasoning person should consider surrendering to a life of present-active-participle faith in God. Let's quickly refresh our memories on the motivations the following Scriptures offer.

- Ephesians 1:19 _____
- Hebrews 11:6a _____
- Hebrews 11:6b _____
- Matthew 9:29 _____

And we added a fifth yesterday:

- Romans 4:22-24: Believing God is credited to us as righteousness.

I don't know about you, but I'm pretty convinced at this point that I want to live my life believing God. Too much is at stake, and too much adventure stands to be missed. If faith pleases God and invites such incomparable divine intervention in my life, I want to exercise it lavishly, don't you? But how do we do it? We're going to discover that the better question is, How do we get it? You see, we can't just manufacture faith from what Scripture calls our "natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14, KJV). Like much of what God asks from us, we have to receive it from Him to offer it back. Even our initial faith to believe Christ for salvation comes through the work and conviction of the Holy Spirit. Through each of the following passages, we're about to discover how we can receive more faith so that we can exercise more faith. Today you won't have a separate "It's Your Turn" section because this lesson lends itself more appropriately to our taking turns.

Read in the margin Galatians 5:22-23. Underline the nine qualities of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Based on what you just read,

1. Faith is a quality of the fruit of the Spirit. As New Testament believers, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us when we receive Christ as our personal Savior, and He brings His personality with Him. When we are yielded to the Holy Spirit's authority, His personality fills us and eclipses our own. When we're not yielded, we grieve the Holy Spirit and operate from our carnal nature. Thank goodness, He still does not leave us, but our faith consequently shrinks. You see, the more we are filled with the Spirit, the more faith we can possess. Because the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, He always believes God. When He fills us, our fleshly faithlessness will yield to His belief system, and we get to possess and exercise it as our own.

The original word translated *faith* in Galatians 5:22 is one that has now become familiar to us: *pistis*. Most of the other major translations render the word *faithfulness*, but the original word is the exact one translated in a multitude of other passages simply as *faith*. I am no scholar, but I think the KJV may have done more justice to the translation. Why am I splitting hairs? Because I tend to define faith and faithfulness as two different concepts, based on their varying contexts in my own religious upbringing.

Before I began my research for this study, I conceptualized faith as believing God, while I tended to imagine faithfulness as obediently serving God and keeping His commands. Though faith certainly encompasses serving and obeying God, I am opening my spiritual eyes to the fact that faith is the root of all faithfulness to God. In fact, we might say that ultimately, faithfulness—serving and obeying God—is the outward expression of an inward fullness of faith. With a little different twist on the meaning, we can apply the first words of our first lesson: *faith works*. James, the brother of Christ, wrote an incomparable synopsis of the relationship between faith and works based on the life of Abraham: "You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did" (Jas. 2:22).

We've discovered that we receive the capacity to exercise action-oriented faith when we receive the Holy Spirit.

Now let's look at a second means of receiving faith. Please read Romans 10:17. Describe this means of gaining more faith:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
Galatians 5:22-23, KJV

Consequently,

2. Faith comes through hearing the Word of God. Without a doubt, one of the biggest faith-builders we have is a relationship with God through His Word. The more we receptively expose ourselves to God's Word through sermons, teachings, lessons, devotionals, and Bible studies, the more fuel we will add to the fire of our faith.

word

GREEK STRONG'S NUMBER: 4487

Transliteration: *rhema*

Phonetic Pronunciation: *hray'-mah*

Part of Speech: *n n*

1) that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, thing spoken, word 1a) any sound produced by the voice and having definite meaning 1b) speech, discourse 1b1) what one has said 1c) a series of words joined together into a sentence (a declaration of one's mind made in words) 1c1) an utterance 1c2) a saying of any sort as a message, a narrative 1c2a) concerning some occurrence 2) subject matter of speech, thing spoken of 2a) so far forth as it is a matter of narration 2b) so far as it is a matter of command 2c) a matter of dispute, case at law

Romans 10:17 says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (KJV). Read in the margin *Strong's* Greek term for *word* used in verse 17. Define the word as you understand it.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the Greek term rendered *word* in Romans 10:17 is *rema* or *rhema*. We would more commonly find the word *logos* in reference to God's Word. What's the difference? *Rema* refers not to the whole Bible but to an individual Scripture. In other words, *logos* can refer to the Word of God in its entirety, while *rhema* can refer to very specific words within the Word. Let me illustrate. In my early 20s I used to think if I carried around my Bible and claimed to believe the whole thing, I was doing well. I could live on the Ten Commandments and John 3:16. Wrong. Now I know that to grow in faith and live victoriously, I need to actually study it for myself and hear the expository teaching of others until many parts of the Word literally abide in me. That's what builds our faith! Let's consider a third means of gaining faith.

Please read Luke 17:1-6. What request did the apostles make of Christ?

3. We can ask Christ to increase our faith. One way to have more faith is to ask for it! Sometimes Christ may respond as He did in this context. Making reference to the grain of mustard seed, He seemed to intimate, *You have all you need for this challenge. Step out in what you have.* If you're like me, sometimes we don't need more of anything. We just need the courage to exercise what we already have. Other times we authentically require an increase to do God's will, and He will not refuse it if we ask in Jesus' name.

Read in the margin the original word for *increase* from the KJV with *Strong's*. Underline the Greek word.

The moving scene in Mark 9:14-25 suggests another means by which we can increase our faith. You can be sure we'll consider this encounter later in our series, but view it for now in our lesson's context. What request did this father make of Christ?

increase

GREEK STRONG'S NUMBER: 4369

Transliteration: *prostithemi*

Phonetic Pronunciation:

pros-tith'-ay-mee

Part of Speech: *v*

1) to put to 2) to add 2a) i.e. to join to, gather with any company, the number of one's followers or companions 2a1) he was gathered to his fathers, i.e. died

I love the NIV rendering, “ ‘Help me overcome my unbelief!’ ” Beloved, we just collided with another unmistakable index-card opportunity. In fact, you might say that the purpose of our entire series is to make this exact request of Christ. Can you imagine how our lives would be transformed if we began petitioning Christ every day to help us overcome any areas of unbelief? Why don't we get started today? You see, we're not unlike the father in the scene. Perhaps we're quick to say, “I believe!” But no sooner do those words come forth from our mouths than we are convicted by the Spirit of truth, realizing how utterly paralyzed we are by unbelief at times. Therefore, a fourth means might be the following.

4. Confess our unbelief to Christ and request His help to overcome it. Jesus Christ will never turn us away when we come to Him with gut-level honesty and request what we lack. Because without faith it is impossible to please God, you and I will constantly have new challenges to believe God. If they were easy, they wouldn't require faith. We will find that we can walk on water in countless areas while drowning in unbelief in another. Let's learn to confess our unbelief and ask Christ to empower us to overcome it.

The NASB rendering of Romans 4:20 offers us a fifth means to gain more faith. Of Abraham the Scripture says, “yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.”

5. We can grow in faith. Thank goodness, our faith also develops, maturing and growing as we continue to walk with God. I believe the more we practice faith, the more faith we'll have to practice. I am reminded of the *Amplified Version* of Psalm 37:3. “Trust (lean on, rely on, and be confident) in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and feed surely on His faithfulness, and truly you shall be fed.” I love the idea of feeding on God's faithfulness. Dear One, those who continually feed on God's faithfulness are far more likely to have a ready supply when the challenge arises because it abides in them. In fact, might we say that the more we feed on God's faithfulness, the fatter of faith we will become? How's that for a diet reversal? I'm thrilled to know we can binge on God without guilt!

We could extend our list of hows even further, but I think we have compiled five very distinct means of possessing and exercising faith.

To let the precepts soak in, please list them in order below:

We are concluding our first week of study together, having considered the vital whys and hows of faith. I'm already growing, Beloved! I hope you are too. With the whys and hows fresh on our minds, let's refresh our memories about the whats.

Categorized into our five-statement pledge of faith, exactly what is God calling us to believe? Write our pledge from memory on the lines below.

five-Statement Pledge of faith

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Dear One, are you more prepared to believe God than you were before we started? I certainly am. Bless God, I think we're on the right track!



Lord, the how that resonates most to me from our lesson today is ...

Because ...

My primary request of You as I complete today's lesson is ...



B E D T I M E M E D I T A T I O N

A series of horizontal lines for writing.