

The Promised Land



DailyLife
Five Oaks Church

Week 1: March 11–17, 2017

Day 1

March 13



Pray / Ask for discernment in evaluating the examples life gives you.

EVERY EXAMPLE IN LIFE inevitably forces us to the very same place, the place where we decide what we're going to do with what we now know.

When we are exposed to an example, either good or bad, we choose one of two distinct paths forward. We choose either to learn from that example or to ignore it, thinking we know better. Often we choose to go our own way and, inexplicably to everyone else but ourselves, are expectant of a different outcome than the one the example showed us likely would result.

In the New Testament, Paul holds up the Hebrews of the Old Testament book of Numbers as an example for future generations of Christians. After starting with Paul's summary, we will then rejoin the original story as it happened. Finally, we will consider the implications of what we looked at this week.



Read / 1 Corinthians 10:1–15



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, weaves contrasting themes together. Terms like *unaware* (ignorant), *not pleased* (displeased), *desire*, *temptation*, and *judge for yourselves* (discern) are all referenced. To whom do these specific words apply, and why might that be important for you?

Ponder awhile upon whether these verses are more upsetting or comforting to you, and why? Don't just go with the first thoughts that come to your mind, but instead take time and let the Holy Spirit guide your reflection.

Ignorance as a defense requires convincing those in judgment that your actions were innocent because you lacked the knowledge that your actions were wrong. Could the Hebrews, Paul's audience, or any of us claim such a defense of our actions? (Note: Sin is choosing not to submit to God's will.)

Day 2

March 14



Pray / When my faith fails, Jesus, remind me that you never fail.

THE POSTER PERSON for when faith fails just has to be Peter, period.

The rock on which Christ built his church (see Matthew 16:18) was someone who was so human and ordinary that his own faith evidently failed regularly. The Bible is filled with other instances from Peter's life, but it seems like the whole walking on water incident (see Matthew 14:25–31) puts him at the top of the list. If it happened today, it probably would be on one of the other disciples' Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, or Twitter accounts with the hashtag #EpicFail.

Today's passage talks about some equally dependable, regular people who also had an uncanny penchant for failing faith, only they preceded Peter and us by many, many years. If we are honest about it, most of us probably would find another perfect example if we looked in a mirror. The good news is that God is still who he is, even when we forget who he is.



Read / Numbers 13:1–2, 26–33



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Consider exactly who it was who were sent out to scout the land. Note that it was not the twelve guys who were deemed most expendable. What lessons can be learned about godly and ungodly leadership from these people?

In several places, had the narrative stopped right at that point, the outcome would have been so very different. Put in some imaginary stops as you read and consider how it would have prevented a failure of faith. Where was there a point of no return?

Verses 31–33 are the true mirror of what has happened. God’s promises are somehow suddenly and incorrectly dependent on something that is not God. How do you react when faced with challenges that are insurmountable by your own strength?

Day 3

March 15



Pray / God, correct my outlook on life and death to reflect your plans.

BETTER OFF DEAD. . . . What does it take for that to be a rational thought? In the 1980s, John Cusack played the main character in a comedy movie by the same name. Happily, through all his misadventures of attempting suicide after being dumped by the girl of his dreams, he ends up getting a better girl, a cooler car, and maybe, just maybe, realizes he actually would not be better off dead.

Ironically, in today's passage the Hebrews do just the opposite, going from on their way to the Promised Land, following Moses and a God who miraculously freed them from slavery, to actually thinking they would be better off dead. As a matter of fact, they even make a list of the many ways. It seems almost like a ludicrous movie plot from our vantage point, yet those very crazy desires were almost fulfilled by God himself.



Read / Numbers 14:1–12



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Whenever something goes bad, and you then make a list of all the somethings that have ever gone bad, does that process take you to a better place—one where you are you closer to God for it? Consider some new alternatives.

The Hebrews lost faith in both God's past power and deliverance, but in doing so, they also were forgetting his future promises. In what ways in your own life may you have this tendency, and in what ways might you restrain and retrain those tendencies?

There are many bad examples and many good examples presented in the text. When your faith is overwhelmed by feelings and fears, to whom should you always turn for aid, and with what posture?

Day 4
March 16



Pray / Holy Spirit, thank you for interceding when I pray.

SO MUCH INTERCESSION GOING ON . . .

Parents intercede for or between their children. Coaches question a referee's unfair call. Managers defend their employees' actions to upper management and give credit where credit is due. Social Services or Child Protection may step in. If someone's addiction has gone too far, an intervention is staged. If you're the person for whom the intercession occurs, you may not even be aware it is happening. However, it does not change the fact that there are times where you simply need someone more powerful, or knowledgeable, to intercede on your behalf.

Romans 8:26–27 tells us that when we pray, it is the Holy Spirit himself who intercedes on our behalf. That's pretty amazing, yet it points to our need for an intercessor or, more correctly, a savior.



Read / Numbers 14:13–20



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Moses does not defend anyone's actions. He begins instead by appealing to God's character and seeking mercy. What does this tell you about Moses's understanding of God, and how did he gain such knowledge?

Moses's actions in this specific situation bring God's forgiveness to the people. The tabernacle and temple sacrifices bring God's forgiveness to the people, but only limitedly, until they sinned again. Intercession is always limited by the power of the intercessor and points to a need for a greater intercessor. Christ, through his sacrifice, is this intercessor. Why is his intercession different?

Consider how you pray. Are you thankful for God's past provisions? Do you know his character well enough to appeal to who he is with your requests like Moses did? Are you reminding him of his promises in faith that he will make good on them?

Day 5

March 17



Pray / That God's consistency will be ever more evident to you.

HUMANITY'S TRAGIC CLAIM TO FAME is that we can consistently take what is right and make it wrong.

The world around us throws seemingly insurmountable obstacles at us. Although we face strong enemies, we imagine them to be stronger than God. We gravitate toward and continually reimagine worst-case scenarios in our minds. We make choices that enable our faith to fail, which then gives doubt and fear a foothold. Instead we need to remember what God has done, is doing, and promises to do when we seek him in repentance. Thank God that Jesus rescues us from our fears and our doubts. How amazing that he seeks to redeem us rather than deliver us to the destruction we so readily and mistakenly seek.



Read / Hebrews 13:8; Isaiah 40:8



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

God never changes. God’s Word (the Bible) never changes. What valid reasons can you think of as to why we assume he changes, his Word changes, or that only certain parts of his Word or certain promises in it remain true today?

Are there things in your life that you need to realize you are treating as though they have immortal value when they do not? Compare those things against God’s everlasting Word and promises, and correct your priorities as needed.

If you realize that relying on your strength never will be good enough, please talk to church staff, a pastor, or your small group leader about how you can know the God whose Word is trustworthy and never changes because it is against his nature to do so.

Portions of this study were adapted from Ed Stetzer and Trevin Wax, eds., The Gospel Project Chronological: God Delivers, Vol. 2, Adult Personal Study Guide ESV (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2015). Used by permission.

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