

The Seven Circles of Faith

In the chapter on *Learning to Trust*, we listed two definitions for faith. What were they? (Turn back to page 54 to review those definitions.)

a.

b.

According to Romans 10:17, how does faith grow? How can I develop a stronger faith in God? Biblical faith is always centered in the Word of God because true faith always has an object, Jesus Christ. And it is in the Word of God that we learn more about Him.

Read Psalm 37:1-11.

¹ Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; ² for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. ³ Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: ⁶ He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. ⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. ⁸ Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret -- it leads only to evil. ⁹ For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. ¹⁰ A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. ¹¹ But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.
(NIV)

These verses talk about developing our faith. And it does so by employing a series of seven synonyms for faith. Think of these as seven concentric circles, starting small at the center, and then growing and enlarging as each builds upon those that have preceded it.

I. Do Not Fret - v. 1-2

What does it mean to “fret?” Look up the word in a dictionary for a more precise definition and record your findings below.

Why does David start out this way? Who were his eyes on initially?

What causes us to be envious of others? (See Psalm 73:3)

What should we do instead? (See Proverbs 23:17)

II. Trust in the Lord - v. 3a

The Hebrew word translated “trust” means to confide in, to place one’s hope and confidence in someone.

Rather than focusing on evildoers (v.1), who should we focus on?

What goes right along with this Biblical trust? (See also James 2:14-26)

The Hebrew word that is used is an intense word that conveys the idea of “slamming” one thing on another. It is the idea of taking our problem quickly off of our backs and “slamming” it onto the Lord. The reason that we do not have to fret is that there is someone far more able to handle our problems than are we.

What does Psalm 62:8 tell you about trusting in the Lord?

III. Dwell in the Land - v. 3b

How do you think would an Israelite reading these words have understood them? (See Deuteronomy 30:20)

The land was the Promised Land, the inheritance of Israel. It was God's unique provision for them to maintain and enjoy. To “dwell in the Land” for the Old Testament believer was to embrace the promises and provision of God for him. For Christians, this concept is akin to walking in the Spirit (See Ephesians 5:18 and Galatians 5:22, 23).

For a moment, look at Hebrews 4:1-2.

Hebrews 4:1-2 ¹ *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*
² *For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. (NIV)*

Verse two describes people in Old Testament times. What benefits did they have?

What mistakes did they make?

What can we learn from their mistakes?

Go back now to Psalm 37. What did David command them to do while dwelling in the land? (Psalm 37:3)

What was it that would have displaced the nation from the land?

IV. Delight Yourself in the Lord - v. 4

In this verse, there is both a condition and a promise. What are they?

The Condition:

The Promise:

What does it mean to “delight yourself in the Lord”?

V. Commit Your Way to Him - v. 5

The same word, commit, is used in Proverbs 16:3 - *"Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established."* It literally means to “roll” your burdens on the Lord. While they may cause you anxiety, they are not too great for Him.

In Psalm 37:5, we are to commit our “way.” In Proverbs 16:3, we are to commit our “works.” Are they similar? What do they mean?

VI. Rest Patiently in Him - v. 7

The word “rest” means to be silent, to be still; to forbear, cease, stand still. It can be applied to speech, work or motion: to wait with silent patience and submission.

Often, this “rest” is to be done in the midst of problems, struggles and doubts about an uncertain future. Os Guinness has said, *“Faith's task is to join hands with the past and the future to hold down God's will in the present.”* (*In Two Minds*, p. 286.)

Read Psalm 46:10. When we “cease striving,” what should we remember?

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. (NIV)

How do you “rest” in the Lord while still doing good (v. 3), cultivating faithfulness (v. 3) and going on your way (v. 5)?

VII. Wait for the Lord - v. 9

To wait means “to hope strongly, to trust, implying firmness and constancy of mind; to hope for; to wait for; to expect; to wait patiently and steadily until it is effected.” (*Old Testament Word Studies*, William Wilson, p. 470.)

Read Psalm 40:1. When we wait on God, what will he do?

Psalm 40:1 *I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

In Psalm 37, David has pictured for us a series of seven concentric circles describing for us how faith develops:

- a. Do not fret over evildoers. Get your eyes off men.
- b. Trust (slam your problems) on the Lord.
- c. Dwell in the Land. Walk in the provision and promises of God.
- d. Take delight in the Lord.
- e. Commit your way to the Lord. Roll your burdens off of yourself and onto Him.
- f. Rest patiently in Him. Cease striving and choose to submit to God.
- g. Wait patiently for the Lord. Be firm and constant in your mind as you wait on Him.

The result of this type of faith is described in the next two verses. Read Psalm 37:10-11. What happens as a result of trusting the Lord?

In the space below, summarize what you have learned about faith today.