

CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

INCREASE OUR FAITH

29

SERIES

In dedication to all the soul-winners that need a Bible study on the faith.

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“And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” So the Lord said, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (Luke 17:5-6).

It is interesting how that the disciples asked this question in the middle of Jesus’ ministry and not at the beginning. We would expect them to ask that question in the beginning of his ministry before they would have seen many miracles. It shows up in Luke 17 instead of the beginning of Luke. At this point in Luke 17, the apostles have seen many with diseases healed, demons cast out, lepers cleansed, the paralyzed healed, the dead raised and many more. Also, during one of the great storms while they were on a boat and in great danger, Jesus commanded the storms over the water to be calmed and immediately the wind ceased and the waves subsided. Without a doubt, they had seen the supernatural more than any other human beings on earth. So what could cause them to ask Jesus, “increase our faith”?

In the next few sections of this study we will answer that question and try to understand the meaning of this scriptural passage.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is trust, assurance and confidence in God. Living by faith is shown by our service and obedience to God. We all have faith, but we don't always use that faith. We know that we are born with a "measure of faith." Whether we use it or not is another thing.

Romans 12:3

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

The Book of Hebrews gives a breakdown of this faith.

Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (ESV).

Faith in its pureness is complete confidence or assurance in a belief. The assurance is based upon God and that confidence gives you a strong conviction that it is so. It does not mean that we don't all struggle with unbelief, doubt or wavering. We are human so we will have this, however, if we can harness the faith that we are born with and use it in our trust in God, great things can happen.

FAITH AND DOUBT

Many people think that faith cannot reside where there is doubt, however we know that this is not correct. It is very possible to have doubt and faith coinciding in the same conversation. We sometimes believe, but there is this lack of complete faith which is doubt. It is our fallen human nature that fails to exercise complete faith. The story of the father who

brought his son that was possessed with a spirit that caused him to be a mute asked Jesus to heal his son.

Mark 9:23-24

“‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

After this, Jesus cast out the devil and healed the boy. While belief was required for the impossible to take place, the boy’s father still had “unbelief.” Even Abraham, the man of faith that the writer of Hebrews uses as a great example of faith had doubt and at times was failed the test because of unbelief. His unbelief led him to trying to help God fulfill his promise of a son and in turn Ishmael was born. This definitely was not the promised that God gave Abraham. It does not mean that it’s okay to have doubt and unbelief.

AS A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

Jesus gave the promise to the disciples that if they had faith as the size of a grain of a mustard seed, that it was enough for a miracle to take place.

Luke 17:6

*“So the Lord said, “If you have **faith as a mustard seed**, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”*

However in so many other areas of scripture, he shows the connection of faith and miracles and how the amount of faith is important.

Matthew 8:26

*“But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, **O you of little faith?**” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”*

Matthew 9:28-30

“And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” And their eyes were opened...”

Jesus spoke of the Roman soldier who had great faith showing that the measure that we use is important.

Matthew 8:10

*“When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found **such great faith**, not even in Israel!”*

So Jesus is not endorsing unbelief or little faith. Why does he say that if we had faith as the size of a mustard seed? He could have used any seed that the Jewish people were familiar with, but he didn't. He chose to use the plant that had the smallest seed of them all. It was intentional. There is no contradiction. He was saying whatever the size of your faith, just use it. He was describing the power of faith whether small or large. Oftentimes we allow doubt and fear to overcome our faith. It's easy for us humans to use doubt. It's an instinct in us. It's easier to believe bad news than good news. If it's a bad doctor's report, we believe it almost immediately. If it's a great report we say “incredible.” Credible means believable. Incredible means unbelievable or not believable. Even if it is so great, we still have doubt!

EXERCISING FAITH

It's part of our human nature. But our human nature is at odds with God. He wants us to use the faith that we have already within us. We were born with the measure of faith. Belief has to go beyond knowledge. It

has to have evidence that you really believe. There has to be fruit that shows you believe. Faith without evidence is not faith.

James 2:14,18

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?... But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

So, if you have a need, don't be lazy with your reliance on doubt. Use your faith that God gave you. You must exercise your faith. Why do we use the phrase “exercise your faith”? It is because it does not come easy for us. Our faith muscles are weak because we oftentimes rely on logic and rational thinking instead of using our faith. If we can get past that and believe in God for the supernatural more things would happen in our lives.

But we question others when they talk about miracles, the supernatural, God speaking to them, etc. We need to change our expectations and start believing for God to do the supernatural in our lives. How do we continue to believe though when God didn't do the miracle that we asked him to do in the past? We make things so complicated. We will never know in our lifetime why some things are answered and others not in our lifetime. That is not a reason to stop believing. We are not God and every request we have of him does not have to be answered the way we want it. Otherwise, we would be God or at least in charge of God. He is our Creator, and we are his creation.

The three Hebrew children had such great faith when they were faced with the Babylonian king throwing them in the fiery furnace because they would not worship him. They believed God would save them from the danger and they spoke with great faith, but they also knew that they were not God and didn't know his will. God saved them in one of the greatest miracles of their time.

Daniel 3:16-18

*“...O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and **He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not**, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”*

Start using your faith. What needs do you have right now? Exercise your faith in God. Have others bind together with you in prayer and watch what God does. He is a miracle working God!

For more Information
Paul Baumeister
P.O. 2366, Elk Grove, CA 95759

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