

Faith: What Is It and How Do I Get It?

Air Dates: March 7 - March 11, 2022

Day One

When you hear the word "faith," what is your reaction? The whole subject of faith can seem very obscure and fuzzy. However, since the Bible says that without faith, it's impossible to please God, we need to make sure we have it because we really want to please God, right? But how can you tell if you have faith? And what can you do to increase your faith?

The Bible gives us a definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: "*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*" So, the first thing we hope for as Christ-followers is that we will spend eternity with Jesus in heaven because we've put our trust in him and him alone. That's the first step of faith that is required in order to please God. Have you taken that step?

Then the Bible says, "*...the righteous will live by faith*" (Galatians 3:11). Paul wrote "*For we live by faith, not by sight*" (2 Corinthians 5:7). So, after you have placed your trust—your faith—in the redemption Jesus provides for your eternal salvation, you face this challenge of living by faith.

Now, in your faith journey, there are times when your faith is strong, and there are times when doubts arise. Doubt is the opposite of faith. You may have doubts about your relationship to God. Perhaps you look at your failures and wonder if God could continue to call you his child since you've failed badly. Maybe you doubt if God really hears your prayers. All of us have occasional doubts.

In James 1:7 and 8 we read: "*That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.*" Doubt makes you double-minded and unstable. Double-minded means you believe God today and tomorrow you doubt. Then you become unstable, wobbly, ineffective, discouraged, unreliable.

It's obvious if you want to please God, you need to get rid of doubt. But just because some doubt enters your mind doesn't mean you've lost your faith. It's how you respond to the doubt that will determine whether that doubt takes over and makes you unstable, or whether you are victorious and your faith increases.

Day Two

Faith: What is it and how do I get it? Since without faith it's impossible to please God, one of our highest priorities should be to grow in our faith, because you really want to please him, as do I. The first symptom to a lack of faith we looked at is doubt.

Another symptom is the need to control everything. Are you a controlling person? I tell you honestly that I am. Certainly there are many things I should be controlling—myself mostly and my walk with the Lord. But when I try to control every person in my life and manipulate circumstances all the time, it is evidence of lack of faith on my part.

If you share this controlling tendency, think about it: Why are you trying to control every situation? Because you believe you know best and you believe that you can make things better and you are

convinced that you are capable of straightening things out, if you were only in control? If so, where is your trust: in God or in yourself?

Did you ever realize that this controlling obsession is really lack of faith to believe that God knows what he is doing, his way is best, and you can trust him? When you and I keep trying to control everything, it is evidence of our lack of trust in our Heavenly Father who has told us to cast all our cares on him, to give him our heavy burdens, to let go and allow him to work.

What do you do if you're a controlling person? Well, you pray about it every day and ask God to help you with this tendency. You'll have to change some thought patterns and continually be conscious of the fact that when you're trying to control, you're not pleasing God because it shows a lack of faith, and without faith you can't please God. I have found that this simple reminder helps me greatly in my tendency to be an excessively controlling person.

So, what is faith? It is the opposite of doubting and controlling. Does that mean if you ever doubt or try to control, you have no faith? No, it just means that your faith needs improving. It's got some holes in it that need repair. That's true of all of us. None of us has perfect faith at all times about everything. But since having faith in God is so important, you and I need to be aware where our faith is weak and start shoring it up.

Day Three

I find that frequently my faith is like a roller-coaster: up and down. Some things are easier to believe than others. Some days are easier than others. Can you relate to that?

Well, interestingly there are many people in the Bible who struggled with the same thing. Abraham had faith to believe that God could give him a son in his old age and lead him to a promised land he had never seen. But he didn't have faith to believe God could deliver him from his enemies, so he lied about Sarah. Abraham had great faith in one area, and little or no faith in another.

I think of Peter who had enormous faith to step out of a boat and walk on the water to Jesus. But then that faith weakened as he looked at the waves beneath him, and he started to sink. Peter had great faith one moment and none the next.

When you read the Psalms, you realize that King David certainly had his share of the ups and downs of faith. He's full of praise and joy over a victory one day, and the next day he wonders if God has forgotten him and he's going to be killed. These examples tell me that it's possible to have some faith and some unbelief at the same time.

In Mark 9 we read about the man who brought his son to Jesus for healing and said, "*...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.*" "*If you can?*" said Jesus. "*Everything is possible for him who believes.*" *Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"* (Mark 9: 22b-24). And in spite of the fact that the father's faith was tentative, Jesus healed his son.

Jesus didn't tell this man, "Well, when your faith is perfect, come back and I'll heal your son." No, Jesus heard his confession of unbelief and his cry for help and healed his son.

Doesn't that encourage you? We don't have to have perfect faith in order to come to Jesus with our needs and requests. You can bring the little bit of faith you have and ask him to help you overcome the huge area where your faith is weak.

So, wherever your faith is weak today, confess it to the Lord and then ask him to help you there in that unbelief area. He will, and he'll honor the faith you exercise.

Day Four

Would you describe yourself as a person of faith? All of us need to be people of faith because without faith it's impossible to please God. So, that's why we're asking the question: What is faith and how do we get it?

Jesus said, "*Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.*" (Matthew 17:20b).

Have you ever stood in front of a mountain and commanded it to move? Is that what Jesus wants us to do? That sounds like mission impossible, doesn't it? Besides, why would we even want to move a literal mountain? That's not my problem. The mountains in my life are people and circumstances and money and stuff like that, how about you?

Jesus used mountains because mountains represent obstacles –big obstacles that stand in our way. And then he contrasts that huge obstacle with the smallest thing he could think of—a mustard seed. He says even if your faith is no bigger than a tiny mustard seed, you can use that little bit of faith to move a huge obstacle.

What is Jesus teaching us through this illustration? I think it's this: our faith doesn't have to be as big as our problem. God is perfectly capable and willing to move our mountains for us, however large and impossible they seem, if we can show him faith the size of a mustard seed.

That comes as great comfort to me because I know how tiny my faith often is. In some situations it's so tiny you can hardly see it. But when I come to God with my tiny, tiny bit of faith and say, "Lord, you see this mountain here. It is huge. I cannot move it and it is a major obstacle in my life. You've promised me to move my mountains if I have any faith at all to believe you. Well, here's my faith. It's about the size of a pinhead; not much at all. I can't boast of my great faith, but I bring you what I have and ask you to please move my mountain."

So, when you come with your puny little dab of faith and ask God to move your mountain, you're exercising faith in God, not faith in your faith! It is not your faith that moves the mountain; God moves the mountain. But he can't get to work on your behalf until you come with your thimble-full of faith and ask him to move it.

Remember this today: your faith doesn't have to be as big as your problem. Come with the little faith you have and ask God to move your mountain. Then, when he does, your faith will grow. That's the way it works.

Day Five

We need faith to please God. But how can you get more faith? Well, it's not a pill you swallow and there are no shortcuts. Faith comes through hearing and obeying the Word of God.

Where are the holes in your faith? That's where you need an extra application of God's Word. Perhaps there is a fear that continues to haunt you. Dig into the Word of God and find the passages about fear. Write those Scriptures down; memorize them so that when your faith is weak, you can apply the Word of God directly to your unbelief, and your faith will increase.

Previously I mentioned the man in the Bible who came to Jesus to have his son healed. He said, "If you can..." and when Jesus confronted him with his unbelief, he admitted it. He said, "Help me, Lord, with my unbelief." Jesus did and healed his son.

Now, if you met this man the next week and asked him, "Do you still believe Jesus has the power to heal?", his answer should be very confident. The "if you can's..." of his faith should be wiped out. If the man showed any hesitancy at all to believe in Jesus' power, we would wonder what was wrong with him. What does it take to make a believer out of you, mister?

Has that ever happened to you? God answers your prayer one day, meets your need, moves your mountain, but the next time you face a difficult situation, you have many doubts and uncertainties. Recalling how God has met your need in the past is one way to build your faith.

Faith begets faith. A growing faith comes through exercising the little faith you have today, asking God to help you overcome your unbelief, and then you'll have more faith for tomorrow.

Remember: without faith, it's impossible to please God. Keep asking God to help grow your faith—to help with your unbelief area. That's how faith grows.