

FAITH IN THE MIDST OF REASONABLE DOUBT, PART 1

Scripture used: Mark 9:23-24 (NLT)

OVERVIEW

Many of us are confused when it comes to our faith. We think that faith means believing without even doubting the existence of God or His love for us. But that's not what the Bible teaches us! Everyone has doubts about their faith. Jesus Himself questioned the Father when he was on the cross, giving us permission to do the same thing. So don't feel bad about doubts! Instead think of them as necessary to growing your faith. Doubts help you strengthen your faith to the point where it will sustain you, no matter what.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Faith is not the same as facts. We will always deal with uncertainty when we believe. You can never believe in something with scientific certainty! Addressing our doubts and concerns with other believers will let us build up our faith to the point where it will keep us, not the other way around.
- 2) The story of the demon-possessed boy and his father in Mark Chapter 9 brings up three questions about faith.
 - a. The question of religion. While the disciples argued with Jewish scholars about the nature of the boy's possession, the father and his son continued to be afflicted. All they wanted was to be free of this demon, not to listen to people argue the finer points about religion. What is the point of religion?
 - b. The question of suffering. The father in this story cries out passionately to Jesus, asking for both him and his son to be healed. All they want is an end to their suffering. What is the point of all human suffering?
 - c. The question of evil. The son had been possessed by a demon since he was a small child. Neither he nor his father did anything to deserve this affliction, and they had been praying for healing for years. What is the point of all the evil in the world?
- 3) Jesus reveals three powerful things about himself to us.
 - a. He is greater than any religion. Religion doesn't save anyone. What saves us is our relationship with Jesus. We must never confuse the followers of Jesus with Jesus Himself! Matthew 7:23 (NLT). All pastors, even our own pastor, are only human. They will make mistakes, but that shouldn't destroy your faith. If a light bulb burns out, you wouldn't blame the power company!
 - b. He is with us in our suffering. Jesus answered the father by questioning him "How long?" several times. He is asking when the man will realize that he can dump his heavy burdens on Jesus and trust Him. The man is not alone! Jesus is trying to show us that He is always with us, always carrying us, always protecting us. Like a father suffers for his son, so too does Jesus suffer for us.
 - c. He has the last word over evil. By casting out demons and then rising from the dead, Jesus proved that He is ultimately the victor over sin and death. By living for Him even in times of suffering, we can become instruments of God's will. We can inspire others to become followers of Christ. The smallest amount of faith, directed at Jesus, will move mountains!

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Faith is not science. We will never be completely free of doubts so long as we believe. Do you feel like a "bad Christian" when you have doubts? What is your usual response in times of doubt?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Mark Chapter 9 is a story of a family going through a hard time. They still turned to Jesus, despite the failure of religion to answer their prayers. Where is religion failing you in your life?
- 3) **DO** - God uses us during the most challenging times. Our right thinking and right action can be the inspiration that brings others to Christ. Identify and write down an area in your life where you are currently struggling. Pray over this area, imagining yourself as a beacon of hope that inspires others to greater faith and a life-saving relationship with Jesus!