

Increase Our Faith – Mustard Seeds

Mark 9:23-24 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

- This is how I believe most of us feel most of the time
- This is often our prayer when we need a miracle, or a word and nothing seems to be happening. We believe we need more faith.

So how do we get more faith – How do we stop unbelief?

- The first thing we try is to “just believe harder.” Like it’s a muscle that I can tense up and my faith goes up.
- But you will very quickly find that you cannot will yourself to have more faith.

I want to discuss this in 2 parts.

- First, I want to remove a common misconception that really falls into the excuse category.
- Then I want to look at what actually works.

You have probably heard a message on faith where you are told that all you need is the tiniest amount of faith and then great things are possible.

This comes from this verse:

- **Matthew 17:20** - So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Or this verse:

- **Luke 17:5-6** - And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 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."

Does having little faith really sound like something Jesus would want?

- **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 6:30** Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
- **Matthew 16:8** But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"

But sermons are preached that we just need a small amount of faith. (pic of necklace)

- It really stems from mistranslations:
- **Luke 17:6 (NIV)** He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."
- **Luke 17:6 (NLT)** The Lord answered, "If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you!"

But in your experience, has tiny faith ever really worked out? Or why did the guy from Mark 9 plead for Jesus to help his unbelief? And why did the disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith?

What is going on here?

- The word “as” sometimes translated “the size of” or worse, “even as small as” is the word “hoce” meaning “in the manner of” or even “how”.

So a better translation would be:

Matthew 17:20 - So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith in the same way as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

- When you read Matthew 17:20 in context, does having small faith even make sense?
- **Matthew 17: 14-20** And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰ So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Increase our Faith

- In Luke 17:5-6 the disciples ask for Jesus to increase their faith and Jesus responds by telling them to have faith like a mustard seed.
- How is that helpful? Well, they already had a lesson on mustard seeds. Jesus wanted them to remember what they had been taught earlier and apply that.
- **Luke 13:18-19** Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."
- Another is **Mark 4:30-32** Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; ³² but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."
- So when the disciples asked for an increase in faith, and Jesus told them to have faith as a mustard seed – they knew what He was talking about.
- Mustard seeds grow to be what they were created to be in spite of outward circumstances.
- In other words – **If you want more faith – be who you were created to be – despite outward circumstances.**

If people tell you that you are something other than what God says you are – Be who God says you are.

If the trials and junk of life make you feel like everything is going against you, remember that God said He is for you.

When you feel like something is impossible that God has called you to, remember that God is in you.

No matter where you are in life, Be who God says you are.

Ok, so we want an increase of faith – Now what?

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Yes, this verse is not about faith, it is about us remaining faithful and Jesus' attitude towards redemption BUT... it gives a description of Jesus
- Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith
- What does that mean? Author = creator of it. Finisher = Completer of it.
- Our faith comes from Jesus.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God.

- Rhema is the spoken word of God. So how do we hear God?

Let's look at that.

How many here know someone that if you ask them to do something you know it will get done even without you following up?

- I know that if I want to have a conversation about physics, mechanics, or motions in space, Creighton will light up and be ready to join in.
- If I have a conversation about gardening, Terri will have a lot to contribute.
- If I were to talk about art, drawing styles, mediums for painting – Lindsay will be excited to be a part of that.
- If I wanted to invite Jehovah's witnesses or Mormons over to have an opportunity to share the Gospel with them, I better invite Britney or she would be disappointed.
- I could discuss camping and hiking with John, Mark, or Mike and they will know far more than me.
- Abby is more than willing to share homeopathic remedies for whatever I ask her for.
- I could go on.

Why do I know these things? Why do I have zero doubt that if I asked or showed interest in any of those topics those people would be happy to share their knowledge with me?

Because I know them. Because I have listened to them.

- We begin to have complete expectations in what someone will do when we really know them.
- We get faith in a person by knowing the character of someone.
- There are certain things we just know people will do because we know them.
- Best way to get to know people is not by experiences – sometimes people act differently than normal, but by knowing their thoughts – intimate time with them

- Going back to Abby and her homeopathic remedies. Very few times have I ever asked her for one. And in fact, the topic rarely comes up.
 - But that has not changed my opinion of her. I still believe she will help. I still believe she wants to find the right tincture. Why? Experience has told me otherwise, but I know Abby's heart. I know her character.

So back to how we hear God

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God.

- Rhema is the spoken word of God. So how do we hear God?
- The same way we get to know anyone - Intimate time with Him
- Best way to know God's character is not through experience, but by intimate time with him
- We often base our faith on our past experiences. But we do that without all the information. – Hindsight is 20/20 – but how far in the past does it have to be?

So here is the thing. The answer to how do I increase my faith is a trick question.

- Stop trying to increase your faith. Get to know Jesus. Not know about Him. Really know Him. Then know Him more.
- We are often pursuing a miracle, a word, something. STOP
- I'm not saying give up on your miracle or whatever.
- I am saying don't make that your reason for pursuing Jesus.
- Spend intimate time with Jesus and faith in who He is will be a by-product.

- When we understand God's character and know He is on our side we will believe Him for anything that is a part of His character.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.