

Discussion Guide for Essentials, Week 2

Faith in Jesus

Text: Mark 9:14-29; James 2:14-24

1. The Fake vs. the Real

Mark began by describing how our culture majors in *fake* things but that “fake faith” won’t work.

- What do you think “fake faith” looks like in today’s world?
- How can we recognize the difference between genuine and imitation faith in ourselves?

2. The Word “Faith”

The Greek word *pistis* means trust, allegiance, or faithfulness: not just belief.

- How does that definition expand your understanding of what it means to have faith in Jesus?

3. Faith by Association (*Mark 9:17-19*)

The disciples were close to Jesus but couldn’t act with His power.

- What does “faith by association” look like in modern Christian life?
- Have you ever fallen into this type of “name-only” faith?

4. Faith of Desperation (*Mark 9:21-24*)

The father cried, “*I do believe; help my unbelief.*”

- When have you experienced faith mixed with doubt?
- How does Jesus’ response show grace to people who struggle with weak or wavering faith?

5. Faith of Submission (*Mark 9:28-29*)

Jesus said, “*This kind can come out only by prayer.*”

- What does it mean that real faith is found in *submission* rather than self-reliance?
- How can prayer reshape our faith from desperation to dependence?

6. James 2: Faith in Action

James wrote that “faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead.”

- What does genuine faith *do*?
- Why do you think Scripture so often connects believing and obeying?

7. When Words Aren't Enough

James warns against faith that is just talk, emotion, or intellectual debate.

- Which of those “four nots” (words, emotions, ideas, or beliefs) do you most tend to confuse for real faith?
- How might you take a practical next step toward lived obedience this week?

8. Abraham's Example

James says Abraham's faith was “*made complete by what he did.*”

- How does obedience complete faith?
- Where might God be asking you to take an obedient step right now?

9. Growing Real Faith

Mark gave six ways to increase faith: evaluating, training, applying, praying, surrounding, and doing.

- Which one of those is most needed in your spiritual life right now? Why?

10. Faith's Focus

James K.A. Smith writes, “The real question is not *Do you have faith?* but *To whom or to what do you entrust yourself?*”

- What are some false objects of faith people often trust in?
- What would it look like for you to entrust yourself fully to Jesus this week?