

Essentials, Week 2

Title: Faith in Jesus

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

Introduction

- Our world is full of *fake* things: fake news, fake friends, fake everything.
- But one thing that can't be fake: **faith**. Fake faith has no power to save or change us.
- **Essential #2: Faith in Jesus.**
- Greek word for faith: **pistis**: trust, allegiance, faithfulness, fidelity. It's relational, combining belief with faithful action.

Mark 9:14-29

A desperate father brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus after the disciples fail to heal him. Jesus teaches that real faith trusts, prays, and submits to God.

Three Levels of Faith

1. **Faith of Association** (vv. 17-19)
 - The disciples were *around* Jesus but couldn't heal the boy.
 - They had *association* without *submission*.
 - Being connected to faith doesn't mean having real faith.
2. **Faith of Desperation** (vv. 21-24)
 - The father says: "*If you can do anything, help us.*"
 - Jesus replies: "*Everything is possible for the one who believes.*"
 - The father's prayer: "*I do believe; help my unbelief!*"
 - Honest faith: weak but real. Desperation often drives us to authentic dependence.
3. **Faith of Submission** (vv. 28-29)
 - Jesus: "*This kind can come out only by prayer.*"
 - True faith submits fully to the Father's will: not self-reliant but dependent.
 - This is the faith Jesus models: "*Not my will, but yours be done.*"

Deeper Dive: James 2:14-24 Real Faith Works

James, who likely witnessed the Mark 9 moment, describes what *real faith* looks like.

Four Things Faith Is Not

1. **Faith is more than the words I say.**
 - “If someone claims to have faith but has no deeds, can such faith save them?” (v. 14)
 - Claiming isn’t the same as possessing.
 - “Not everyone who says, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom.” (Matt. 7:21)
2. **Faith is more than the emotions I feel.**
 - “If you say, ‘Go in peace, keep warm and well fed,’ but do nothing... what good is it?” (vv. 15-17)
 - Compassion without action isn’t faith, it’s sentimentality.
 - Real faith acts on what it feels.
3. **Faith is more than an idea I debate.**
 - “You have faith; I have deeds.” (v. 18)
 - Faith isn’t just a theory or a theology to discuss; it’s a life to be lived.
 - Talk without obedience is still unbelief.
4. **Faith is more than a truth I believe.**
 - “You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder.” (v. 19)
 - Intellectual belief alone is not saving faith.
 - The difference: **trust + obedience + allegiance.**

Faith in Action

James illustrates true faith through **Abraham** (vv. 20-24):

- Faith and actions *work together*.
- Abraham’s obedience *completed* his faith.
- Real faith obeys because it trusts.

“Faith is something we do, not just something we think.”

Faith builds arks, moves to unknown lands, marches around walls, dips in rivers, gives, forgives, and loves enemies.

How to Strengthen Your Faith This Week

1. **Evaluate your faith.**
 - Is it Association, Desperation, or Submission?
2. **Train your mind.**
 - When you read “believe,” think “faithful.”
3. **Apply faith to Scripture.**

- Ask: *“What does faith do with this instruction?”*
- 4. **Pray for greater faith.**
 - *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”*
- 5. **Surround yourself with people of real faith.**
 - Faith grows in community.
- 6. **Do the next right thing.**
 - Living by faith = consistent obedience.

Conclusion

- Faith is more than a claim; it's an active allegiance.
- As James K.A. Smith writes:
*“The question isn't Do you have faith?
The question is To whom—or to what—do you entrust yourself?”*
- **Our faith is in Jesus.**
- **Prayer:** *“Lord, we believe; help our unbelief.”*