Quarter Two: Growing in a Relationship with God

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Lesson 8—Having Faith

Monday: Jesus Sees Our Faith

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- **Last Week:** "Practical Prayer"
  - 2nd lesson on prayer: Biblical examples of prayer life for a believer
    - Practical tips on prayer

- **This Week:** "Having Faith"
  - Study on faith: what it is, how to handle doubt & unbelief, & how to grow it

Memory Text: "Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see" (Heb 11:1, NLT).

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday**: Just Give Me a Sign! (Ryan)
  - Mark 8 – Pharisees desire for proof; our own lack of faith / desire for evidence; what we put our faith in
- 2. **Monday**: Jesus Sees Our Faith (Jill)
  - Various Scriptures – how Jesus perceives faith & it's not always what we expect; how He strengthens our faith & how to handle doubt
- 3. **Tuesday**: Faith Is Not a Feeling (Rise)
  - Various Scriptures – role of faith in salvation; difference between faith & feelings
- 4. **Wednesday**: Examples of Faith (John D)
  - Heb 11 – Biblical examples of faith & practical steps to grow our faith as Christians
- 5. **Thursday**: The Faith of Jesus (James)
  - Rev 14:12 – walking in relationship with Jesus & possessing His faith

Monday: Jesus Sees Our Faith

Mark 4:40; Matt 15:21 – 28; John 2:23 – 25; Luke 7:1 – 10; Mark 9:24

- Three-fold focus:
  - How Jesus perceives faith
  - How He strengthens our faith
  - How to handle doubt

How Jesus perceives faith & strengthens our faith, even in the midst of doubt

- Our perception: strong in church = strong in the faith

- God's perception: 1 Sam 16:7 – "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"
    - God's perception is inward – not always readily apparent

- Mark 4:40 – "But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?'"
    - The calming of the storm on the sea
        - **Takeaway #1: Faith is demonstrated by outward actions**
        - You can follow Jesus outwardly while not following Him in your heart
        - Claimed to be disciples; people thought they were Christ followers
            - Inside, they didn't follow Him; didn't trust Him; weren't converted

- Matt 15:21 – 28 –
    - Jesus & disciples in region of Tyre & Sidon

    - V2 22 - Canaanite woman came, begging Jesus for help for her demon-possessed daughter
        - **Takeaway #2: Faith reaches across multiple barriers to the Source (Jesus)**
        - Religious – heathen religion vs Judaism
        - Cultural & ethnic – Canaanites were hated by the Jews & vice versa
        - Gender
            - Woman of the OT were given status & privilege
                - Miriam led the women in worship
                - Deborah served as judge, & was also a mother & wife
                - Abigail was recognized for her ability to navigate political & familial tension

            - Status of women evolved or changed
                - Greek (Hellenistic influence) into the Jewish way of thought
                - By the time of Jesus, little difference between the Talmudic & Hellenistic view of thought, in regards to women

            - Gender wall, in Jesus' day:
                - Religious leaders would cross the street to avoid contact with a woman
                - Devout men routinely prayed & thanked God that they had not been born a woman
                - Women were not allowed to testify in court, which relegated them to the category with Gentiles, minors, deaf-mutes, & undesirables (gamblers, insane, etc)
                - Women were illiterate – Talmud said, "It is foolishness to teach the Torah to your daughter."

    - Vs 23 – "But He answered her not a word."
        - Disciples said: "Send her away"
    - Vs 24 – Jesus said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
    - Vs 25 – She worshiped Him & said, "Lord, help me!"
        - Disciples thought Jesus was acting as the Jews did toward the Gentiles
        - Jesus' response was an implied rebuke to the disciples

        - **Takeaway #3: Faith does not remove opposition, it outlasts it**
            - Faith endures, even in the face of opposition or discouragement
                - Would we have given up?
            - It's Jacob – I will not let You go unless You bless me
            - It's Abraham – I will not waiver in unbelief, even with decades of waiting
            - It's Joseph – I will endure through silence & suffering until You deliver
            - It's Hannah – who went her way & ate & was no longer sad, even though the promise of a child had not yet appeared (took it by faith)
            - It's Job – though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him
            - It's the 3 Hebrews on the plain of Dura – but if not…. We will still worship God alone
            - It's Paul –perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.
            - It's Jesus – for the joy set before Him, endured the cross

    - Vs 26 - 28 – "But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread & throw it to the little dogs.' (27) And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' (28) Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."
        - Jesus manner of interaction
            - Every interaction is redemptive
                - Show us what's in our heart
                - Increase our faith in Jesus

        - Contrast:
            - In Israel, Jesus was trying to convince people He was the Messiah
            - In Gentile territory, this woman was so convinced He was the Messiah that He could not discourage her efforts.

        - **Takeaway #4: Faith is refined & rewarded**
            - Refined: the woman grasped the promise by faith:
                - While there were many blessings given to Israel, was there not also a blessing for her?
                - Jesus was refining, purifying her faith
            - Rewarded: her daughter was healed

- Mark 9:24 – "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'"
    - Context: Jesus coming down from mount of transfiguration
        - Disciples sought to cast out demon for father's son
        - Failed
        - Had been occurring since childhood

    - Vs 22 – Father's cry: "But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."
        - Father is uncertain of Jesus' power / lacks faith
        - **Takeaway #5: Faith, or lack of it, can be expressed**
            - Don't repress / suppress questions – express them
            - God invites dialogue

- Isa 1:18 – "'Come now, & let us reason together,' says the Lord…"
- John 20 – Thomas expressed doubt
    - Jesus reacted with presence, not shame
    - Invited Thomas to put his fingers in His side
- Job's discussions with God
- Matt 14 – Peter, walking on water, Lord save me

- Vs 23 – Jesus' response: "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.
- Vs 24: Father asks for help: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"
    - **Takeaway #6: Faith asks for more faith**
        - The father believes enough to bother asking, but could believe more
        - Use your existing faith to ask for more faith

How Jesus perceives faith & strengthens our faith, even in the midst of doubt

- #1: Faith is not always determined by outward actions
- #2: Faith reaches across multiple barriers to the Source (Jesus)
- #3: Faith does not remove opposition, it outlasts it
- #4: Faith is refined & rewarded
- #5: Faith, or lack of it, can be expressed
- #6: Faith asks for more faith