

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-4 Faith—Believing Always

This lesson will discuss faith, as another “Essential of Christianity.” What does it mean to have faith? The Bible teaches us that “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb 11:1). Faith means you can believe something will happen even before you see it happening. This is not just using your imagination or powers of your mind. To have faith in someone means to believe in and trust that person. This lesson teaches you that the Christian’s faith is in God. We can believe that he hears our prayers. We trust that he will answer in his time and in his way.

Jesus had already had a long day teaching the crowd when a group of Jewish community leaders approached. Jesus could see that they needed something desperately. In fact, it was something that could not wait. A Roman centurion asked the leaders an urgent favor. He was used to giving orders and expecting his army to go into action. Whether it was policing a town such as Capernaum or engaging in war, his men followed their commander. He and his men were a disciplined unit and this commander was quite at ease on the battle field. He understood authority.

But now he was in a situation that was out of his control. His much loved servant was sick and near death. He could do nothing for this dying man. His commanding would not heal the man. But maybe there was one thing he could do. He had heard of a healer, a man of faith, who was known to pray to God and see God go into action. This inspired the Roman, who also had faith that God was able to heal. In reality it was this faith that made him reach out to Jesus in the first place. Without faith in God, he would not have even asked Jesus to come and heal his servant.

His thoughts were, “Maybe, if Jesus will come and pray for my dear servant, he will be healed.” The commander felt in his heart that a miracle could happen today. He did not know if a Jewish prophet would reach out to help him, an unclean Gentile. He did have faith that if Jesus gave his attention to the situation, his servant would be healed. To make sure that Jesus would come, he asked some of the revered Jewish leaders of the community to go and make his request. The Jews loved this Roman soldier because of all the help he had given them. He was at peace with them, even making great sacrifice to build their synagogue.

The centurion’s faith was so great, that he would reach out no matter the barriers. Even though Jewish tradition would not allow a Jew to enter the home of a Gentile, he believed Jesus could talk to God on his behalf.

When the elders came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, saying, “This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue” (Luke 7:4-5). Jesus saw their faith at work and went with them.

Jesus was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did

not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." The elders though the centurion deserved this favor, but he himself felt unworthy. So, he asked Jesus to just give the word. He trusted that Jesus' prayer of healing would bring his servant back from the edge of death. He wasn't asking for himself, but on behalf of another person.

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (Luke 7:9). Then the men who had been sent, returned to the house and found the servant well!

The Book of Hebrews declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb 11:6). Just suppose the Roman commander had possessed no faith. The question is, would he have even asked Jesus for a miracle? Even if the need is great, those without faith do not believe enough to ask God to move on their behalf. When we have faith in Jesus Christ, we neither hesitate nor cease asking him on behalf of our needs. With great faith we approach the throne of God, presenting our needs. We believe, just like the commander did, that our God will answer. We only need to believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Some people today demand proof or a sign, before they will believe. True faith is believing in what we hope for and being convinced that we do not yet see will happen. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

This story is **important** because it teaches that God answers our petitions if we have faith, even though we do not deserve it and feel most unworthy.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that without faith in God the Roman commander would not have asked Jesus on behalf of his servant. We ask God because we have faith that he exists and will answer our prayer. By faith we come to Jesus for salvation. By faith we come to Jesus with our needs, great and small. By faith we believe he hears and answers.

Review Questions:

1. What is the definition of faith?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see," you are right.
2. Why was the servant in the account healed from a very serious illness?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Because his master, in faith, asked Jesus for the healing," you are correct.
3. Why was Jesus pleased to heal the servant?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Because the commander had such great faith," you have answered correctly.

Assignment: Listen three or four times to the story or until you have a grasp on the main facts. Faith brings people to God. Think about how faith has brought you to God. Someone else's faith may be as important to your life as your own faith. Think about how God has strengthened your faith, using a friend or pastor or family member. Gather two or three friends together and tell them about your faith journey in a 5- or 10-minute testimony.

Together, memorize the definition of faith: "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). Then memorize the necessity for faith: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).