

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-12 Personal Growth: Building Faith

Is there someone in your family or group of friends with a problem that no one is able to help? He or she may seek your help or advice, but you see no change in the person as you counsel them. They may feel Christians do not have the answer. So they are now using other methods to ease their pain. What have you learned from your experience? Maybe the problem is still there and you have accepted that this is just how things are to be in this case. Maybe you have decided that God cannot deal with such issues. Or you may assume that problems are the result of behavior someone has refused to stop. You might even think they are getting what they deserve.

Mark's Gospel relates the story of Jesus, Peter, James, and John, coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration. They found the other disciples in the middle of a loud and noisy crowd on the street. The teachers of the law were arguing with the disciples. Jesus asked what they were arguing about. A man in the crowd, who had brought his only child to the disciples, answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

If someone brought such a child to you, what counsel would you give? What is the first thing you would do? And what next?

"You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

Jesus said, "Everything is possible for one who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the unclean spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many thought he was dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. Jesus gave him back to his father. They were all amazed at the greatness of God.

Later, privately, the disciples asked. "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

Jesus said, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:14-29).

Matthew recalls that Jesus added that they had failed because they had so little faith. “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt 17:20).

Demon possession was responsible for the boy’s condition. The question was not whether Jesus had the power to heal the boy, but whether the father had faith to believe it. A person who truly believes and prays in faith will set no limits on what God can do. One condition of a person is not harder for God to remedy than any other condition. As a minister, you must have the faith to believe he can do anything. You must be spiritually prepared through your personal times of prayer—even with fasting—to build your faith.

The boy’s father admitted his unbelief and asked Christ to help him to overcome it. But the disciples did not realize their unbelief. Since faith is never perfect, belief and unbelief are often mixed. Jesus didn’t only rebuke them for their lack of faith; he told them what to do. They had to have the faith to believe miracles could happen. He told them that even a tiny amount of faith can be used to move mountains. The disciples had possibly taken for granted the power given to them by Jesus. Maybe they were acting in their own strength. Lack of prayer indicated they had forgotten that their power over the demonic spirits was from the Lord.

How can we as counselors and pastors increase our faith? The apostle Paul tells us, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17, KJV). Take time away from things in your life and seek a word from God. Meditate on the Scriptures that you have memorized. This builds your faith.

The work of the gospel is to pray and seek a word from God. The ministry of the gospel is to believe all things are possible with God and to help others believe. Prayer and fasting is not just a time set aside to avoid food or to wait in silence for God to speak. It is a time you set aside to communicate with God—the joys, sorrows and needs of your life and ministry. Prayer and fasting is the time you spend sharing yourself with God and learning to hear his voice. Your faith will grow as you hear a word from the Lord.

As a counselor, pastor, or a Christian friend, others will count on you to believe God can do all things. As the father sought help for his son, he looked to others to help him believe that help was possible. Yet it was his faith that Jesus responded to. We must open our eyes to the needs of people in our lives and be prepared through prayer to minister to them. As we call upon God, he will help them believe for impossible answers.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that each of us needs to build a consistent prayer life and increase our faith by hearing God’s Word. Only then can we bring people’s needs to God and expect him to answer.

The **main truth** of this story is that God responds to those who believe. Though one’s faith may be small, nothing is impossible with him. Spending time with the Lord and his Word helps to build our faith. We need to stay constantly connected to Jesus.

Let’s **review**:

1. What is the work of the ministry? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “The work of the ministry is to believe that all things are possible with God and to help others believe,” you are correct.
2. Why did Jesus say the disciples could not set the child free? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, “Because they had so little faith,” you answered correctly.
3. How does a person get faith to believe God can do great things? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “Faith comes by prayer and by hearing a word from God,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story and tell it to another person in your own words. If you were to tell someone how to counsel a person with a seemingly impossible need, where would you begin? We see from the story that preparation in prayer and God’s Word daily has to come before you encounter the need. Here are some suggested steps to follow:

- A. Each day pray and expect God to speak a word to you.
- B. Invite the Spirit of God into your life by setting time aside for just you and him.
- C. Remember that you are preparing yourself for that day’s ministry.

Memorize the following verse: “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20).