**Faith in Everyday Life**

**Introduction**

Jesus had been teaching the crowds with a variety of parables (Mk 4:1-34). The crowd was very large so he taught from a boat (Mk 4:1) and at evening instructed His disciples to go to the other side of the lake (Mk 4:35). A horrible story arises and while the disciples fear for their lives Jesus is asleep in the boat (Mk 4:36-38). They wake Him up and he silences the storm (Mk 4:38-39).

* Mark 4:40: “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Faith is something we know that we need as Christians, but we often excuse ourselves for not having it. This is one of those moments we rush to the disciple’s defense and excuse them for failing to have faith. However, we learn a lot about the type of faith Jesus wants us to have:

a) Faith is necessary for following Jesus (still struggling with faith after spending time with me?)

b) Faith will be tested

c) Faith must be increasing (**still** no faith?)

**1. Faith focuses on the power of God in all circumstances**

Just because a situation becomes difficult or stressful does not mean that we can abandon our faith. Let us consider some examples of people who have kept their faith in the midst of difficulties.

***Abraham***

* Genesis 15:6: Abraham believes the promises of God
* Rom 4:19-21: Abraham knows this is impossible from a human perspective
* Heb 11:17-19: Faith in middle of large test!

a) The intensity of the test kept rising (Abraham kept meeting them with faith)

b) His faith increased because he meet each challenge with confidence in God’s power

***Hezekiah***

Assyria is the most powerful nation in the world at the time and they decide to attack Judah. Hezekiah takes action to prepare for the Assyrian invasion:

* Cut off the water supply (2 Chron 32:3-4)
* Rebuilt wall and made it better for defense (2 Chron 32:5)
* Made a lot of weapons and shields (2 Chron 32:5)
* Appoints military officers (2 Chron 32:6)
* 2 Chron 32:7-8

Hezekiah meets the invasion by preparing in every possible way for the Assyrian army. But he was not the first person to prepare for the Assyrian army. This army had defeated many fortified cities before! Hezekiah’s faith is seen in preparing for the invasion but knowing that it is only God who can deliver. The king of Assyria mocks Judah for trusting in the Lord (32:15) but Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet simply go to the Lord (2 Chron 32:20).

a) A Faith that looks to the power of God is not inactive (Hezekiah is very active)

b) But faith realizes God is more powerful than our strongest enemy

***Ezra***

The time is 458 BC and Artaxerxes, the king of Persia allows Ezra and several to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13). Ezra and those who return are carrying valuable gifts to take back to the temple in Jerusalem (7:14-16, 19; 8:24-29). The journey was going to be a difficult one! Ezra had bragged about God’s power and care so much he did not feel right about asking the king for troops so, instead, he requested everyone fast and pray before the journey.

a) Ezra did not simply want to talk about God’s power but show he had faith God could protect

b) Ezra wanted his faith to show even in stressful circumstances

**Lessons**

a) Whatever we are going through we can have confidence that God is more than able to help

Difficulties are not the time to abandon faith but the time to see how God works in order to deliver you. Our confidence in the future is seen not in who our leaders are but the power of God. The same man who counted his many sufferings for Christ (2 Cor 11:23-29) also said all the struggle does not compare to eternity with God (Rom 8:18).

b) These stories are not just history lessons but reminders our faith is meant to be lived out

Ezra has been spending a lot of time with God’s law (Ezra 7:10-12, 14). After spending so much time reading these stories he talks about God’s power to the king. Then he realizes that he must live by faith. Ezra reminds us that talking about faith is incomplete, but we must live it.

c) Where is my focus?

As I go through trials, difficulties, and my faith is tested do I focus on the difficulty in front of me or the power of the God I serve?

**2. Living by Faith put us in the minority**

We will try to illustrate this by looking at 1 Samuel 13-17. There are a lot of detail about that we are going to skip over but I want to highlight the actions of Jonathan, Saul’s son, and David. The backdrop to all of these stories is that Israel is at war with the Philistines.

Jonathan leads a successful attack on a Philistine military outpost and this causes the Philistines to seek revenge (1 Sam 13:3-5). Many of the army realize the Philistines are the superior power so they run away and become deserters (1 Sam 13:6-7). They try to get as far away as possible so they can avoid the wrath of the Philistines. Israel is basically unarmed for this battle (1 Sam 13:19-23). Jonathan and his armor bearer cross over to the Philistine’s military outpost (1 Sam 14:1). He knows the power of the Lord and is confident that God can save with many or few (1 Sam 14:6-7). Jonathan has faith in an unlimited God. When the Philistines call Jonathan and his body guard up Jonathan expresses a confidence in God the rest of Israel seems to be lacking (1 Sam 14:12-14). The Lord gave victory (1 Sam 14:23) through Jonathan (1 Sam 14:45).

a) Faith makes us a co-worker with the Lord (1 Sam 14:45)

In 1 Samuel 17, the Philistines offer a way to prevent a bloody battle. Instead of an entire army fighting, two men will settle the issue. Whoever wins will rule over the other nation. The Philistines select Goliath of Gath and Israel runs in fear (1 Sam 17:11, 24). The men of Israel show their focus by asking, “Have you seen this man” (1 Sam 17:25)? Despite Saul’s attempts to talk David out of fighting Goliath, David fights and kills the giant. David knows God can save (1 Sam 17:34-37) and He delivers David (1 Sam 14:47, 50).

**Lessons**

a) Jonathan and David act alone

b) Israel (God’s people) failed to have faith and Jonathan and David stood out as exceptions

c) Is my faith ready to rise to the occasion?

d) Am I modeling faith to God’s people?

We often quote/reference Hebrews 10:24 which calls us to motive each other to good works. Obviously, we should motivate each other to strong, deeper faith. Do we ever sound like the Israelites running and hiding? Do we ever sound like Israel talking about how mighty Goliath is? This does not mean that we cannot admit concern or express a difficulty we are experiencing but are we a picture of faith in the ups and downs of daily life?

**3. Folly of Lacking Faith**

* Matthew 16:5-12

In 16:1-4 the Pharisees and Sadducees have tested Jesus by asking for a sign. Jesus then takes the opportunity to warn His disciples about following their teaching. We are given the note that they forgot to bring bread (16:5) so that is on their mind when he says what he says in 16:6: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Their misunderstanding leads Jesus to rebuke them for their lack of faith and understanding.

14:13-21: Feeding of 5,000 men + women and children (14:21)

15:29-39: Feeding of the 4,000 men + women and children (15:38)

It is almost humorous that Jesus has to remind them about the fact that He can take care of them (16:9-10). You can almost hear Him saying, “Do you really lack faith after all I have done to take care of you?” But the reality is when we do not exercise faith in our daily lives we look as foolish as the disciples.