

We are **progressively living** in a **world**

Where we **have** to **decide** – **HOW MUCH FAITH**
do **I Truly Have** - in **Jesus Christ** as my **LORD**

We are **called** to **INCREASING LEVELS** of FAITH
in **WHO** **Jesus Christ** **IS**
& in **WHAT** **Jesus Christ** Can **DO**

Let me **give** you **an example** of “**Increasing Faith**”

1. **I believe** there is a **higher power**
2. **I believe** that power is **God**
3. **I believe** what the **Bible says**
4. **I believe** I **want** to go to **heaven**, so I'll ask **Jesus** to be my **Savior**
5. **I believe** Jesus Christ is **LORD** over **every area** of my life
6. **I believe** Jesus can do **ANYTHING** he **wants** to, in my life
7. **I am willing to DIE** for my **faith** in Jesus Christ

Our **focus** today is

Faith Challenged - & **Faith Increased**

Let's Pray

When our daughter Danielle was 10 yrs old

She & I climbed the back-side of Half-Dome
in the Yosemite Valley – with some friends

The 1st day of hiking

we were in the beautiful back country
& it was all FUN & INSPIRING

maybe like the beginning

of a New Christians - Walk with the Lord

But - That night, we (literally) had a bear

knock our tent down on top of us,
as he rustled around our campsite

& that took some Faith

to set our tent back up & get back to sleep

maybe like a New Christian

Facing the First Challenge of their Faith in Jesus

But then the next morning, after hiking some more

we crested a Rock-Hill

& there it was in front of us

A massive, seemingly straight-up climb

to the top - of Half-Dome

To give you an idea of what we were facing
I want to put up 2 pictures

This – is the View Going UP
What is called - the “Cable Trail”

CABLE TRAIL – GOING UP PIC

Notice the safety cables anchored into the rock,
& the 2x4's placed every 8 feet or so

& THIS is the view Going DOWN

CABLE TRAIL – GOING DOWN PIC Leave UP until Video

Notice the death-drop
on either side of the trail

if you were to get out from under those cables

& notice the height of the cables –
Perfect for an adult - & Scary enough for an adult

But Danielle was 10 yrs old

& she couldn't really use those cables -
they were too high for her

She was tied to me
& I was holding on to the cables

Going up was hard enough

but going down – she had to - sit down on her shoes,
& SLIDE from one 2x4 to the next

Trusting that I was holding the rope
& that I would not let her slide off the trail

Let me just play a quick video for you - < 1 min

& watch toward the end of the Video –
for a Picture of Dani & I – at the Top of Half-Dome

PLAY VIDEO

That is an experience - that Danielle & I will never forget

& I believe it's a perfect picture
of what it LOOKS like – & what it FEELS like

When Our FAITH in Jesus Christ
is CHALLENGED

It is ONLY when our FAITH is CHALLENGED

That we find out –
What LEVEL of Faith – we truly have

THAT is what this text is about in Mark Ch 9

In our Last Msg in Mark
we went up - The Mt of Transfiguration with Jesus

Today – Jesus & the inner-three disciples
are coming back down the Mountain

& they're Probably skipping down the mountain
after their Mountain-Top experience

Which (btw) is what Danielle and her friend did,
as we came down that mountain in Yosemite

But – at the base of that Mountain

The FAITH of the other Disciples
& the FAITH of one Desperate Father

Was about to be CHALLENGED

Mark 9:14 (NLT)

14 When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them.

This - is an intimidating situation for the Disciples

Jesus isn't there

they have a large crowd around them
& there are instigators arguing with the Disciples

What I'm saying is

this event as Super Applicable to our world today

R. Kent Hughes says of this first Verse

The other nine disciples were being heckled and taunted by a group of leering, self-satisfied scribes . . . the scribes were deriding them for their powerlessness, and were blaspheming Jesus as well.

I'm pretty sure something similar to that
happened in PORTLAND last night

So – the crowd is Intimidating the Disciples
the instigators are Arguing with the Disciples

& we read in Mark 9:15-16 (NLT)

15 When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet him. (& Jesus immed. takes control)

16 “What is all this arguing about?” Jesus asked.

This word for ARGUING means Combative Altercation

so maybe the ‘spirit of Antifa’
was around even then

In any case - the Disciples
were just glad Jesus showed up when he did

Cont'g - Mark 9:17-18 (NLT) → →

Mark 9:17-18 (NLT)

17 (The disciples remained silent, But) ***One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, “Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won’t let him talk.***

18 ***And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn’t do it.”***

For the **Disciples** things **had been**
going **relatively easy** - **up** to this **point**

Like Danielle & I Hiking in the **back country**
before we **got** to the **Real Challenge**

& the **other 9 disciples**
were **Continuing** the **Ministry**

while Jesus & **the 3** - were on the **Mt of Transfiguration**

But – **here’s** what **happened**

the **Disciples** **turned a corner**
& **suddenly** what was **before them**
was **like nothing** they’d **ever seen**

The Challenge before them
was **like climbing** straight up
a **treacherous mountain rock**

& they were trying to climb it
but this was **NOT** a Normal Day
or a Normal Path
or a Normal Enemy

The situation was getting the best of them
& the crowd was jeering & taunting . . .

& they thought – any minute – they were going to
slip off that safety cable - & fall to their death

& then Finally, Jesus shows up

& the Disciples probably thought
they were “Out of the Woods”

but there was still
an important lesson to learn

Mark 9:19 (NLT)

19 Jesus said to them, “You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Do you sense any frustration from Jesus
kinda “in-between” the lines there?

Do you think that’s pretty Non-Christian-Like

For Jesus to be Frustrated
with the Lack of Faith of the People?

Do you remember when God

was **frustrated** with the **Israelites** –
back in the **days** of **Moses** in the **Wilderness**?

Do you think God **gets Frustrated** with our **Lack of Faith**?
Apparently – He Does . . .

Continuing - Mark 9:20-22 (NLT)

20 So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth.

21 “How long has this been happening?” Jesus asked the boy’s father (I love the calmness). He replied, “Since he was a little boy.

22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him . . .

If you’ve ever **wondered**
what the **enemy’s goal** in **your life** is . . . **Here it is**

Jesus said in John 10:10 (NLT)

10 The [enemy’s] purpose is to steal and kill and destroy

That is the **only goal** of **your spiritual enemy** for **you**

& this **particular Demon** – had **been trying**
to **accomplish** his **goal** in this **boy’s life**
since this boy was **very young**

& **his father** was **Desperate** to **save his son**

& so – the father says to Jesus – at the end of v.22

Mark 9:22(b) (NLT)

22 . . . Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.

Then – notice carefully v.23

Mark 9:23 (NLT)

23 “What do you mean, ‘if I can’?” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.”

**Do you see how Jesus URNS this question
into a CHALLENGE of this father’s FAITH**

**Jesus says, “What do you mean ‘if I can?’”
You’re kidding me right?**

**Do you think Giving this Demon a little firm direction
is harder than CREATING the WORLD?**

**Jesus is saying, “This is NOT about, if I can”
This is about – DO YOU BELIEVE**

**This is a Direct CHALLENGE
to this Father’s FAITH**

& so then we read – what I think is one of the
Greatest Responses to Jesus in the Bible

Mark 9:24 (NLT)

24 The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!”

This Father – seemed to instantly GET IT

His FAITH needed to INCREASE
RIGHT THEN - & RIGHT THERE

**Let me finish the story about climbing Half-Dome
with 10 yr old Danielle**

I pointed out the 2x4’s every 8 feet in the video

**& I mentioned that Danielle
could not really USE the safety cable – (*too high*)**

& so - on the way back down

**with that “Certain Death-Drop”
looming on both sides of the rock**

**Danielle had to sit on that rock - & SLIDE
from One 2x4 to the Next**

**Being held only by a rope
connected to her father**

**& when it got super steep & scary
Danielle FROZE on the rock**

& she had to decide RIGHT THEN - & RIGHT THERE
if she had Enough Faith in her Father

to trust that he would be able to hold onto her

if she missed that next 2x4
& started sliding down that rock face

& Danielle's Faith in me
was CHALLENGED – Right at that POINT

& partly because of that day
Danielle knows Today

That her Earthly Father
will ALWAYS Hold on to her

& in the years that have passed since then

Danielle knows – EVEN MORE SO
that her Heavenly Father will ALWAYS hold on to her

THAT is the benefit – of FAITH that is CHALLENGED

& so – Back to our Text

with the Father's FAITH CHALLENGED
& with his Prayer to Jesus to INCREASE his Faith

We read in Mark 9:25-27 (NLT) → →

Mark 9:25-27 (NLT)

25 When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. “Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak,” he said. “I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!”

26 Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, “He’s dead.”

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up.

Mission Accomplished

The **Demon** was **GONE** from **the Boy**
& the **Father’s Faith** – was **Greatly Increased**

There’s just **one** more **lesson**
that **has** to be **learned**

Mark 9:28-29 (NLT)

28 Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, “Why couldn’t we cast out that evil spirit?”

29 Jesus replied, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer.”

Jesus had **Previously Given** the **disciples**
the **authority** to **cast out demons**

& **so** they ask, ***why couldn’t we do it?***

I can probably best explain - from Ministry Life

There are some situations we go into

Where just kinda Walking in the Spirit,
& maybe a short prayer thrown up on the way in

Will take care of things spiritually

BUT – sometimes we turn that corner

& what lies in front of us - looks Spiritually Daunting
Like climbing straight up a Rock Face

& at times like that

We've got to STOP – We've got to say HOLD ON

This one is going to take
some Serious Spiritual Preparation

We can't walk lightly
into those Spiritual Situations

Because we know
the enemy is especially entrenched in there

& that is when we have got to Pray Fervently

We've got to get Fully Prayed Up
We've got to put on The Full Armor Of God
& We have GOT to be Full of the Holy Spirit

When Jesus says

This kind can be cast out only by prayer

He's talking about the *Real Thing*

About *Intense Prayer*

with *Real Supplication*

He's talking about being *Truly Spiritually Ready*

& that's exactly HOW we need

to approach matters - that CHALLENGE our FAITH

We turn the corner - & we see it ahead

It is DAUNTING

& we've GOT to approach it correctly

We need to know – Every move we make - *Is Serious*

& could mean *Spiritual Life or Death*

& our Spiritual Enemy is THERE

Trying to Discourage us,

& Challenge us,

& trying to throw us Off Balance

so he can get us to

“Slip off the path” & *Slide Into Oblivion*

& So – we’ve Got to approach these “Faith Challenges”

In the **Full Armor of God**

Full of the Holy Spirit

& Fully Prayed Up . . . Ready to meet the enemy

So - **Next time** you **face** a **Spiritual Situation**

that **looks** like the **straight up Cable Trail of Half-Dome**

Cry out to **Jesus** – **like this father did**

Tell him you **BELIEVE** - & **Ask him**

to **INCREASE YOUR FAITH** - to **match** your **need**

& then **know this** – **for sure**

The **BIG Spiritual Victories**

are **NOT WON**

with **LITTLE Spiritual Preparation**

The **Bigger the Battle** – the **Steeper** the **Spiritual Climb**

The more we **must** be **PREPARED**

We’ve got to **Trust God**

to **Increase our Faith**

& **we’ve got** to be **Spiritually Ready**

for the **Challenge** that **lies before us**

Let’s Pray

Numbers 14:10–12 (NLT)

10 But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle.

11 And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them?

12 I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!”