

The Struggle Between

My Faith
And
My Focus

Part III

Week One.... A Firm Foundation Comes From a Fixed Focus

Principle #1

Whatever Gets Your Attention Gets You

Principle #2

*If You Keep Looking At What They Have;
You'll Start To Question What God Gave You*

Principle #3

When we can't explain what we see, we begin to doubt what we believe.

Principle #4

Don't Allow What Is Temporary To Cause You To Stop Trusting

Last Week....

Principle #1

Observation Of The Problem Will Cause You To Overlook The Evidence

Principle #2

Their Focus Kept Them From Participating In What God Had Planned

Principle #3

Their Focus Had An Impact On Their Identity

Principle #4

Their Focus Produced a Pattern That Passed to the Next Generation

DON'T ALLOW THIS PATTERN TO BE REPEATED

Key Passage

John 20:19-29 (NLT)

19 That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them!

“Peace be with you,” HE SAID. 20 AS HE SPOKE, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!

24 One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), *was not with the others when Jesus came.*

25 *They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it UNLESS I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”*

26 Eight days later the disciples were together again, and *this time Thomas was with them.* The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them.

“Peace be with you,” he said.

27 Then he said to Thomas, *“Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. DON’T BE FAITHLESS ANY LONGER. BELIEVE!”*

28 *“My Lord and my God!”* Thomas exclaimed. 29 Then Jesus told him, *“You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”*

Introduction

The Bible defines **FAITH** plainly in Hebrews 11:1:
“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith, by its very nature, **operates in the unseen**. It does not **wait on proof**...
IT PRODUCES CONFIDENCE BEFORE PROOF SHOWS UP.

When you start **desiring evidence**, it is often an indication that **your faith** is not as strong as it **needs to be**.
It's not that you **don't have faith**...but that **your focus** has shifted from **TRUST TO PROOF**.

YOUR FOCUS CAN AFFECT YOUR FAITH

Faith is not just about **what you believe**... it's about what you **choose to focus on**.

If your **focus is wrong**, your **faith will be weakened**
EVEN WHEN THE TRUTH IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.

This Is What We See In John 20 with Thomas....

Thomas didn't just doubt...**his focus** had been affected by:
what he missed AND what he experienced

Introduction

We live in a world that teaches us:

Verify everything

Trust what you can count

Believe what you can see

But the Kingdom operates differently.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:7:

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Faith does not follow sight ~ Sight must submit to faith

And when that order gets reversed...faith begins to weaken.

Jesus says in John 4:48...

“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means BELIEVE.”

A constant need for signs can indicate a weak spiritual condition.

His Absence Affected What He Believed

John 20:24-25 (NLT)

24 One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), **was not with the others when Jesus came.**

25 *They* told him, “*We* have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “**I won’t believe it UNLESS I SEE** the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

Sometimes it’s **not rebellion** that weakens your faith...**it’s absence.**

Romans 10:17 ~ Faith comes by **hearing**... but if you’re **NOT PRESENT**, you’re not hearing.

Thomas **missed the moment** where Jesus **SPOKE PEACE** and **SHOWED PROOF.**

He missed the Word ~ *Didn’t Believe the Witnesses*

Absence made him **SKEPTICAL** of what **SHOULD HAVE STRENGTHENED HIM.**

His absence created space for doubt to develop...

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—

The less we sit under *the Word*, *The more* we lean on *our own conditions*

The Pain He Experienced Paralyzed His Faith

John 20:24-25 (NLT)

24 One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came.

25 They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

Thomas didn't just miss something...he went through something.

He witnessed The crucifixion ~ The suffering

Sometimes our faith is wounded by disappointment, grief, betrayal, or unanswered prayer.

And when pain is deep enough, it doesn't just hurt your heart...

it starts shaping your expectations.

Thomas saw Jesus die... But what he saw was NOT THE FULL STORY.

What you see in one season may not be what God is doing in the next.

What you've been through can try to tell you what God can't do.

THE IMPACT

Now His Faith Is Conditional ~ His Focus Was Fixed on Physical Evidence

Thomas reduces faith to: What I can see What I can touch

The Pain He Experienced Paralyzed His Faith

John 20:24-25 (NLT)

24 One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came.

25 They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “**I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.**”

Notice the shift:

Before the cross ~ He followed ~ After the cross ~ He requires proof

John 11:14-16 (NLT)

14 So he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

15 And for your sakes, I’m glad I wasn’t there, for now you will really believe. Come, let’s go see him.”

16 Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “**Let’s go, too—and die with Jesus.**”

PAIN MADE HIM PROTECTIVE.

He’s essentially saying: “**I believed once...** and **look how that turned out.**”

When You Are Looking **Through The Lens of Pain** ~ **Even Truth Looks Suspicious**

When what you hoped for doesn’t happen **the way you expected...**
it can make your heart **hesitant to believe again.**

“Unless I See Something Different”

The Pain He Experienced Paralyzed His Faith

John 20:26-27 (NLT)

26 Eight days later the disciples were together *again*, and this time *Thomas was with them*. The doors were locked; but suddenly, *as before*, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said.

27 *Then he said to Thomas*, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. *DON'T BE FAITHLESS ANY LONGER. BELIEVE!*”

Jesus Meets Thomas Where He Is

He does not *condemn* him....He *corrects* him

Psalms 34:18 (NLT)

18 The Lord is close to *the brokenhearted*;
HE RESCUES those whose *spirits are crushed*.

THE SOLUTION

THEY BOTH SHOWED UP

Mature Faith Is Built On Trust Rather Than Verified Evidence

John 20:29 (NLT)

29 Then Jesus told him, "You believe *because you have seen me*.
Blessed are those who believe WITHOUT SEEING ME."

Jesus doesn't *hate evidence*, Jesus is not *against evidence*,
But he warns against *a faith* that *requires seeing before trusting*.
Evidence is a gift that *supports faith*; It becomes a trap when we won't *trust God without it*.

JESUS REVEALS A HIGHER LEVEL OF FAITH

There is a faith *that responds to evidence* ~ But there is a greater faith that **RESTS IN TRUST**
Jesus lifts the conversation from **SIGHT TO TRUST**
Mature faith is not built on *what you can verify*... but on *who you can trust*.

FAITH FUNCTIONS WITHOUT PROOF

Faith Takes Jesus At His Word

Mark 9:31 (NIV)

31 He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.
They will kill him, *and after three days he will rise.*"

The issue wasn't *lack of information*...It was *lack of focus* on what had *already been said*.

Mature Faith Is Built On Trust Rather Than Verified Evidence

John 20:29 (NLT)

29 Then Jesus told him, "You believe *because you have seen me.*
Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

*The goal is not just for you to believe after you see...
But to trust Him enough to believe before you see.*

Faith That Trusts Without Visible Evidence

Romans 4:18-21

18 Against all *hope*, Abraham *in hope believed* and *so became the father of many nations,*
JUST AS IT HAD BEEN SAID TO HIM, "So shall your offspring be."

19 *Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—
since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead.*

20 Yet he did not waver *through unbelief regarding the promise of God,*
but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,

21 BEING FULLY PERSUADED THAT GOD HAD POWER TO DO WHAT HE HAD PROMISED.

HE HAD NO EVIDENCE... BUT STRONG FAITH

In Conclusion

Absence Can Affect What We Believe

The Pain We Experience Can Paralyze Our Faith

Mature Faith Is Built On Trust Rather Than Verified Evidence