

Increase Our Faith

August 5, 2018

I Introduction

A) These times require faith

- 1) Have you ever viewed your faith as less than a mustard seed?
- 2) Have you ever asked Jesus to increase your faith?
- 3) **SLIDE** Today's message: Increase Our Faith

B) Definition of faith

- 1) Webster's: allegiance to duty or a person
- 2) Martin Luther: faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace
- 3) **SLIDE Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)** Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
- 4) Derek, 5, came home from kindergarten with a tooth in an envelope. Annette hugged him and told him they would put the tooth under his pillow that night for the tooth fairy. "You really expect me to believe that some funny looking person dressed in a pink tutu comes into my room at night and takes my old tooth and leaves me a dollar?" Derek asked. "I'm in kindergarten now, Mom! I don't believe in baby stories anymore."

"Oh no!" Annette said. "If you don't believe in the tooth fairy I guess we'll just throw it away and you won't get anything but a new tooth in its place. I'm so sorry, I thought you were a believer."

Annette walked out of the room and took the envelope with her. A few minutes later she heard Derek talking to Lisa, 9. "Derek, you dummy" Lisa said. "Do you know how many dollars I got from the Tooth Fairy? I got enough to buy a Barbie. Think of all the money you won't get. Think of that new 'Star Wars' toy you want."

A minute later Derek came back to Annette and said, "Hey Mom, about that Tooth Fairy thing. I forgot, I thought you

meant that other fairy, you know like on 'Oz.' I believe in the Tooth Fairy. I hope you still have my old tooth!"

Some people are willing to believe in anything as long as it benefits them.

Real faith isn't always convenient; sometimes it costs the believer.

—Sibling Revelry, p. 36 Fresh Illustrations

II The Request

A) **SLIDE** Luke 17:3-5 (NIV) [Jesus said,] ³ So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him." ⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

- 1) Jesus begins this exchange by telling His disciples - and us - to forgive others "seven times in a day"
- 2) In other words, we are to keep forgiving no matter what
- 3) Their response: Increase our faith!
- 4) As He had done many times, Jesus' response does not seem to fit at all

B) **SLIDE** Faith and forgiving

- 1) What does forgiving have to do with increasing our faith?
- 2) The disciples recognized that what Jesus had instructed them to do was beyond their human ability
- 3) I am sure we all have experienced how difficult it is to forgive someone
- 4) Now imagine forgiving that person over and over and over
- 5) Therefore, the disciples knew they needed help
- 6) Thus, "Lord, increase our faith."

C) What type of answer would you expect?

- 1) A spiritual answer
- 2) Pray more - how much more?
- 3) Search your life for sin - how often?

- 4) Search for unforgiveness - how far back do I go?
 - 5) Spend more time with the Scriptures - how much & how often?
 - 6) But, that is not what they received
- D) **SLIDE** Jesus' answer
- 1) It does not seem like an answer at all
 - 2) Jesus' answers always require us to dig deep
 - 3) He never gives us a 1, 2, 3 answer that we can turn into legalism
 - 4) **Luke 17:6 (NIV)** ⁶ [Jesus] replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."
 - 5) **SLIDE** A mulberry tree has an extensive root system, so uprooting one would be as impossible as repeatedly forgiving someone
 - 6) **SLIDE** Stopping here, how many of us would respond, "Well, I don't have the faith of a mustard seed?"
 - 7) However, Jesus is not finished
 - 8) He does not tell us the answer
 - 9) He SHOWS us the answer
- E) **SLIDE** **Luke 17:7-10 (NIV)** [Jesus continues,] ⁷ "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹ Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"
- 1) End of Jesus' answer
 - 2) **SLIDE** We have gone from forgiving to faith to serving
 - 3) Jesus' response to the original request to increase their faith was not a "to-do list" but a "to-do life"
 - 4) From the Founders' Bible: Anyone familiar with agricultural life knows that to "come in from the field" means the end of a long

day of hard work. Country folks work from "can see" to "can't see"-from sunup to sundown; there is no such thing as an eight-hour workday, especially when plowing or tending sheep. Plowing was usually behind oxen or mules with a wooden plow that often broke when it hit something hard. Imagine following stubborn animals for twelve or fourteen hours, hitting rocks and tree roots, and having to stop frequently and make repairs. And tending sheep can be exceptionally difficult, for sheep are among the most self-willed of God's creation.

- 5) Jesus' answer to our request to increase our faith is to tell us to imagine we are a slave who has just come in from a long, hard day's work
- 6) Are we to expect the Master to serve us? Are we to expect a nice cool shower and an easy chair? Are we to expect a reward for doing what we were supposed to do?
- 7) This sounds harsh and seems to have little to do with faith
- 8) Yet, Jesus always tells us the truth and always gives us the answer we need, not the answer we want
- 9) Our works do not earn us standing in the Kingdom of God
- 10) Our works are extension of our faith in Jesus; therefore, doing our duty increases our faith
- 11) Can we see the relationship between passion, service, sacrifice, and faith?

F) **SLIDE** Faith of a mustard seed

- 1) **SLIDE** Translates into not much faith at all
- 2) Faith and duty are intricately tied together
- 3) Duty is simply doing what we are told to do; it is obedience to our King
- 4) When I go to work, I have duties to perform
- 5) I should not expect a blue ribbon or a day off because I fixed a computer, taught a class, or showed up on time
- 6) There was a time when I would look around to see who was not there and feel superior because I was

- 7) As if I were racking up points with Jesus
- 8) Then Jesus politely but clearly pointed out that I was supposed to be there
- 9) As followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a duty to follow and obey Him
- 10) Obedience to Jesus increases our faith
- 11) If I will not serve as He has served, then I do not need more faith
- 12) I need more obedience
- 13) Founders' Bible: Servants simply do the will of their Master, regardless of the conditions, regardless of their feelings, regardless of the hour of the day or how hard it seems. And when they have obeyed, are they meant to marvel? No-they simply have done their duty; they have done *only* what they ought to have done.
- 14) Cornerstone
 - a) Cleaning the church and the storage building
 - b) Teaching a Sunday school class - men, women, couples
 - c) Conducting a Bible study
 - d) Helping with movie night
 - e) Volunteering to serve wherever needed
 - f) They all have to do with doing our duty
 - g) And we are to accept those duties without expecting recognition or reward
 - h) The Lord has been giving us new ideas for Sunday school, Jesus' Toy Box, after-school tutoring, walking the streets again, knocking on doors, starting new Bible studies
 - i) None of these will be possible unless we answer the call to do our duty
 - j) Note: I am not saying we do not acknowledge one another and encourage one another
 - k) I am saying that if I serve expecting such, then I am wrong

15) **SLIDE** Job vs. Duty

- a) Working for Jesus should never be considered a job
- b) Working for Jesus should not depend upon our feelings, wants, spare time, etc.
- c) We don't give stickers for those who come to Bible study, who teach a class, or who come for praise and worship practice
- d) I should not parade in front of you all the hours I spend laboring over messages
- e) We teach, we come to practice, we volunteer, we study, we join a class - we do this because our Lord asks us to do so

III **SLIDE** Conclusion

- A) The sum of the whole is that the blessing of God is only to be looked for by those who are not wanting in the discharge of their own duty. ⁵ -- **John Witherspoon**, Signer Of The Declaration
- B) **SLIDE** All that the best men can do is to persevere in doing their duty... and leave the consequences to Him who made it their duty, being neither elated by success (however great) nor discouraged by disappointment (however frequent and mortifying). ² We must go home to be happy, and that our home is not in this world. Here, we have nothing to do but our duty, and by it to regulate our business and our pleasures. ³
-- **John Jay**, Original Chief Justice Of The U.S. Supreme Court, Author Of *The Federalist Papers*
- C) **SLIDE** The point of Jesus' illustration seems to be: Faith grows as one uses it as a servant; its end is service, and it is never an end in itself. Bible Background Commentary -
- D) Philip Henry, one day upon visiting a tanner, found him so busy tanning a hide, that he was not aware of his approach until he tapped him on the shoulder. The man was startled by Mr. Henry's unexpected arrival and exclaimed, "Sir, I am ashamed you find me here." "Nay," replied Mr. Henry, "may the Lord Jesus when He comes find me discharging, with the same faithfulness and zeal, the duties of my calling." Bible Illustrations -