



Hard Sayings of Jesus

Lesson 6: Unbelievable Faith

Opening Prayer

Introduction

Over the last few decades, increasing numbers of Americans have identified themselves as “spiritual,” but not “religious.” They’re leaving churches and rejecting doctrinal formulations.

- 1.) List some reasons why you think that might be taking place.
- 2.) Why is it sometimes difficult for you to hold on to your faith?

Studying God’s Word

Sometimes it seems wise to treat faith like a poker game: only gamble what you’re willing to lose. If you put too much trust in any particular promise, it’s just going to hurt so much more if it doesn’t come true.

It’s interesting to see that Jesus goes in the other direction. He doesn’t want us to lower our expectations of what he’ll do in us and through us and for us. He raises them. When it comes to the promises Jesus attaches to faith, he “ups the ante.”

Matthew 17:14-20 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” ²⁰ He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, 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.”

1. What “failure” had the disciples had?
2. Identify what Jesus says the source of the problem was.

3. Explain the unbelievable promise Jesus makes about faith. Why might we struggle with?

4. Discuss the following about faith...
 - Agree or disagree (and why?): Jesus means that as long as we believe, we'll be able to make anything happen.
 - **Matthew 8:8-10** The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."
 - When is something truly "faith"?

5. In the following passages, note and explain what words are most comforting to you in your life of prayer?
 - **John 14:14** "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."
 - **John 15:7** "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."
 - **John 15:16** "Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

6. Describe what Jesus seems to be offering in these passages. Is he serious?

7. If Jesus is clearly saying that as long as we're connected to him in faith, we can pray for anything and God will give it, there are only a few possible reactions we can have.

Matthew 26:36-46 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." ⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." ⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." ⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. ⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

8. Analyze the content of Jesus' prayer. How do you know that he earnestly meant it?

9. Explain what was at the heart of Jesus' prayer.
10. How does this remind us what the heart of our prayer always is?
11. Agree or disagree (and why?): God granted Jesus prayer.
12. Connect this to the "blank check" that Jesus gives us in John chapters 14 and 15.

Summary

- Faith is a living, active, powerful thing. Through faith, God moves mountains.
- The heart of a believer's prayer is "Lord, bless me the way you know is best."
- Knowing God's loving response to us is an encouragement for our faith.

Prayer